

Stepping Up to Vaccinate

Art for the Earth

A Gift of Gratitude

RUTGERS CAMDEN MAGAZINE

SPRING 2021

FULFILLING

Dreams



**Dreams Fulfilled, a Rutgers “Big Idea,”
supports first-generation students and their
families on the path to graduation day**

RUTGERS CAMDEN

Rutgers-Camden Magazine Vol. IV, No. 2 Spring 2021

Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden student Leslie Demark SNC'21 gives Camden resident Norma Bell her first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at the Camden County vaccination clinic at the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Camden. More than 400 nursing students and faculty volunteered in two county clinics vaccinating residents. For more, see page 4.

Hoy esta
haciend
historia



Todo lo que
necesitas
es amor...y
esta vacuna!



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Michael Seganic

EDITOR

Sam Starnes

ART DIRECTION

Karaamat Abdullah

PROOFREADER

Stefanie Charles

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jeanne Leong

Christina Neal SNC'21

PHOTOGRAPHER

Jonathan Kolbe

EDITORIAL SUPPORT

Akua Asiamah Andrade

Michael Ballard

Margie Brining Berenato CCAS'15

Kate Blair CCAS'11

Kate Brennan CCAS'02

Stefanie Charles

Sean Downey

Jeanne Leong

Todd Lineburger

Cal Maradonna SBC'74, GSBC'79

Tom McLaughlin

Scott D. Owens CCAS'04, GSC'10

Julie Roncinske GSC'13

Beatris Santos

Joseph C. Schiavo CCAS'82

Julie Still

Robin Todd GSBC'18

Mary Clare Venuto CCAS'07, GSC'09

Kristin Walker CCAS'88

Patrick Wallace CCAS'02

Nyeema C. Watson CCAS'00, GSC'15

Rutgers–Camden Magazine

303 Cooper Street

Camden, NJ 08102-1519

FEATURES**6 ART FOR THE EARTH**

A New View–Camden, a public art project supported by Rutgers–Camden, seeks to strengthen the environment and the community.

8 FULFILLING DREAMS

Rutgers University–Camden's leadership in establishing access, ensuring affordability, and partnering for success is the template for a Rutgers "Big Idea."

16 A GIFT OF GRATITUDE

A faculty member who wishes to remain anonymous has given a \$3.5 million gift—the largest ever to Rutgers University–Camden—supporting academically distinguished law students with an interest in public service.

DEPARTMENTS**4 NURSING STUDENTS STEP UP TO VACCINATE**

More than 400 nursing students and faculty volunteered at two Camden County sites, including one in Camden at the Salvation Army Kroc Center.

5 RESEARCH

Two Rutgers–Camden professors are leading projects funded by the National Science Foundation to combat COVID-19.

20 SCARLET PROFILES

A nursing alumna continues to work in emergency rooms despite battling COVID-19 twice; a Haitian immigrant who graduated from Rutgers Law School is now a federal magistrate judge who cherishes inducting new American citizens.

24 ALUMNI NEWS

Alumni competition with Rutgers–Newark benefits student food pantry; Rutgers School of Law–Camden Alumni Association honors three alumnae.

We welcome your feedback on this issue of Rutgers–Camden Magazine. If you have questions or comments regarding the content of the magazine, please contact Sam Starnes at sstarnes@camden.rutgers.edu or 856-225-6857. For alumni address changes, please visit ralumni.com/mynews or call 848-932-7260.

CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

Rutgers University–Camden has always been a place of new beginnings. Many of our graduates might not have been able to attend college or enjoy the success they've had in their careers if they hadn't found us. For generations, we have provided an outstanding, affordable education to a diverse, and diversely talented, undergraduate population. In recent years, we've also created innovative, interdisciplinary doctoral programs, which seek to address the challenges of the 21st century, and we continue to provide outstanding professional and master's degrees in a range of fields. We are Rutgers in South Jersey, from first-year students to proud doctoral degree recipients.

At the undergraduate level, I'm proud to say that even during a pandemic, our foundational commitment to fulfilling the dreams of first-generation students and their families continues to earn us high marks nationally as a research university that provides great value and opportunity for its students. *Washington Monthly* magazine in fall 2020 once again named Rutgers University–Camden as a “Best Bang for the Buck” university, which recognizes institutions that enable students to attain their degrees at affordable prices. The magazine ranked Rutgers–Camden 66 among national universities based on such factors as social mobility, research, and promoting public service, and 27 in the Northeast in terms of providing social mobility opportunities.

Similarly, *U.S. News and World Report* gave strong marks to Rutgers University–Camden in its 2021 rankings. Among national universities, Rutgers–Camden posted higher rankings in the following national categories: Top Performers on Social Mobility (26), Top Public Universities (71), Best Colleges for Veterans (108), Best Value (140), and Overall (153).

Taken collectively, these rankings indicate that Rutgers–Camden is a place of access and affordability, and that we are making a difference for our students and for New Jersey. We provide students with a world-class Rutgers education at an affordable price. Our faculty mentor our students in internships, research, and civic engagement projects, and our students enjoy personalized support as they work to achieve their goals. I hope you share my pride that Rutgers–Camden is recognized as a great value.

But we are not resting on our laurels. As Vice Chancellor Nyeema Watson notes in our cover story that focuses on Dreams Fulfilled, a recently launched Rutgers Big Ideas fundraising campaign to encourage and support first-generation students, the university continues to strive to help more young people on the path to higher education. When Dr. Watson says “Rutgers–Camden has always been a place where we are successful with students who are the first in their families to go to college,” she speaks as a Rutgers–Camden alumna who was a first-generation college student.

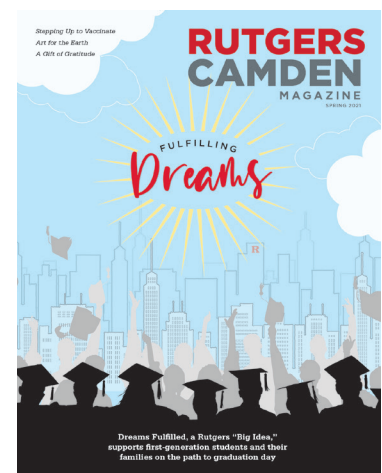
Continuing to enhance our commitment to first-generation college students and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds is more important than ever in light of the pandemic and its resulting economic downturn that has impacted millions. I hope you will join us in supporting our students through the Dreams Fulfilled campaign and our many other initiatives. For more about it, please read the cover story that begins on page 8 of this magazine and visit support.rutgers.edu/big-ideas/dreams-fulfilled. Your support of our students today can help a young person transform their life with a world-class Rutgers education.



Margaret Marsh

Margaret Marsh, Ph.D.
Interim Chancellor

ON THE COVER



Dreams Fulfilled, an initiative in the Rutgers Big Ideas campaign, has three goals: help students from lower-income families find their way to college, help them pay for tuition and expenses, and support them academically to ensure graduation. Cover design by Karaamat Abdullah.

NURSING STUDENTS STEP UP TO VACCINATE

By Christina Neal SNC'21

Students from the Rutgers School of Nursing–Camden answered the call to help “get shots into arms” when vaccines for COVID-19 became available. More than 400 nursing students and faculty volunteered at two Camden County sites, including one in Camden at the Salvation Army Kroc Center.

Camden City Councilmember Angel Fuentes, who received a vaccine shot at the Kroc Center, applauded the Camden clinic that opened in February and provided free vaccines to city residents. “People ask, ‘What about us? The minorities, Hispanic Americans, and African Americans?’” he said. “There are no excuses here in Camden city. Residents from all over the city can come to the Kroc Center and get an appointment for their vaccine. This is very essential for our community.”

Rutgers–Camden partnered with Cooper University Health Care and other community organizations to

staff the Kroc Center clinic. Rebecca Bryan, the School of Nursing’s director of community development, said the nursing school is proud to play a role in protecting Camden residents. “Many community members in cities like Camden struggle daily with basic social determinants of health, such as safe housing, the ability to socially distance, technology, food security, and adequate health care services,” Bryan said. “At many clinics, the overwhelming majority of vaccine recipients have been white, suburban individuals. Offering vaccines at the Kroc Center is a game changer for a community where so many residents of color who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic are frontline workers.”

Nursing students also volunteered at the Camden County vaccination center in Blackwood, checking in community members, answering questions, and administering vaccines. The clinics gave



PHOTO BY JONATHAN KOLBE

Rutgers School of Nursing–Camden senior Sophia Troccoli checking in residents at the vaccination clinic in Camden.

Rutgers–Camden nursing students an opportunity to help contain the virus’s spread and get hands-on experience while fulfilling clinical rotation and volunteer requirements. “I was emotional after administering the vaccine for the first time because I have seen personally how sick the infected can get,” said Anastasia Dudzinki, a senior nursing student from Franklin Park who worked at the clinic in Blackwood. “The vaccine feels like the first rays of sunshine after months of rain.”

.....
Christina Neal, a senior nursing major from Franklinville, New Jersey, volunteered at the vaccination clinic in Camden.

New Chancellor

As of this magazine’s deadline, the search for a new chancellor for Rutgers University–Camden had not yet been completed. Be on the lookout for an announcement and visit camden.rutgers.edu for updates. Interim Chancellor Margaret Marsh has filled the role since Phoebe Haddon stepped down in June 2020 after six years as chancellor.



Rutgers–Camden soccer coach Tim Oswald passed the 200-win mark.

Athletics Update

Rutgers–Camden athletic teams played abbreviated, conference-only schedules with no fans allowed in the spring semester. Basketball, volleyball, soccer, baseball, softball, lacrosse, tennis, cross country, golf, and outdoor track all competed. (Indoor track was the only team not to compete.)

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Rutgers–Camden at Forefront of Virus Research

By Jeanne Leong

Two Rutgers–Camden professors are leading projects funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to combat COVID-19.

Andrey Grigoriev, a biology professor and founding director of the Rutgers–Camden Center for Computational and Integrative Biology, has been awarded a \$188,253 NSF Rapid Response Research grant to study the origins of COVID-19



GRIGORIEV

to anticipate how to stop its future mutations.

Mathematics professor Benedetto Piccoli is sharing an NSF grant with researchers to create a tool to help mayors and governors assess the impacts of different social distancing levels and travel restrictions.

Men's soccer coach Tim Oswald earned his 200th victory in his 15th season at Rutgers–Camden when the Scarlet Raptors bested New Jersey City University 2–0 on March 17. Oswald has led the program to a post-season tournament in 13 seasons, including reaching the NCCA Division III final in 2013.

For details on sports, please visit scarletraptors.com.

Research conducted by Grigoriev's team, which includes Rutgers–Camden undergraduate and graduate students, aims to help shed light on how to combat COVID-19 and how the virus can spread. Work includes searching for and interpreting variants in many genomes, including viruses and their hosts. "We are looking a few steps ahead in this battle with the virus," Grigoriev said. "Coronaviruses have been infecting people and animals for many years, and we only learned about the deadly representatives of this virus family 18 years ago. Sadly, new coronaviruses are very likely to come along again. The good news is that despite their different pathogenicity, the members of this family have similar biology. If we can understand it in detail now, we will be more prepared for another possible pandemic."

Piccoli, the Joseph and Loretta Lopez Chair Professor of Mathematics and vice chancellor for research at Rutgers–Camden, is collaborating with engineering and computer science professors from Cornell and Vanderbilt universities to develop a mathematical model that government officials could use to manage human mobility during a pandemic or another crisis. Using publicly available data, the tool will simulate the effect of the spread of a virus in a particular



PICCOLI

geographical area by assessing the effect of transportation systems and evaluating the effect of strategic lockdowns and closures.

In his Rutgers–Camden lab, Piccoli and his team are working on designing the models and running simulations. The current version of the model includes an economic evaluation of the impact of combined policies for lockdowns, testing, and contact tracing. By showing how people move around locally, the tool could help to contain COVID-19 and aid economic recovery efforts. "Integrating data from virus infections, decision-makers will be able to analyze different scenarios and optimize the strategy to contain the spread while avoiding too severe measures," Piccoli said.

Two Rutgers–Camden graduate students are working on the project, and as it progresses, undergraduates will begin processing data and designing the computer codes to simulate the various scenarios they will study. Piccoli's team also is working closely with the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers–Camden to apply the model in South Jersey.

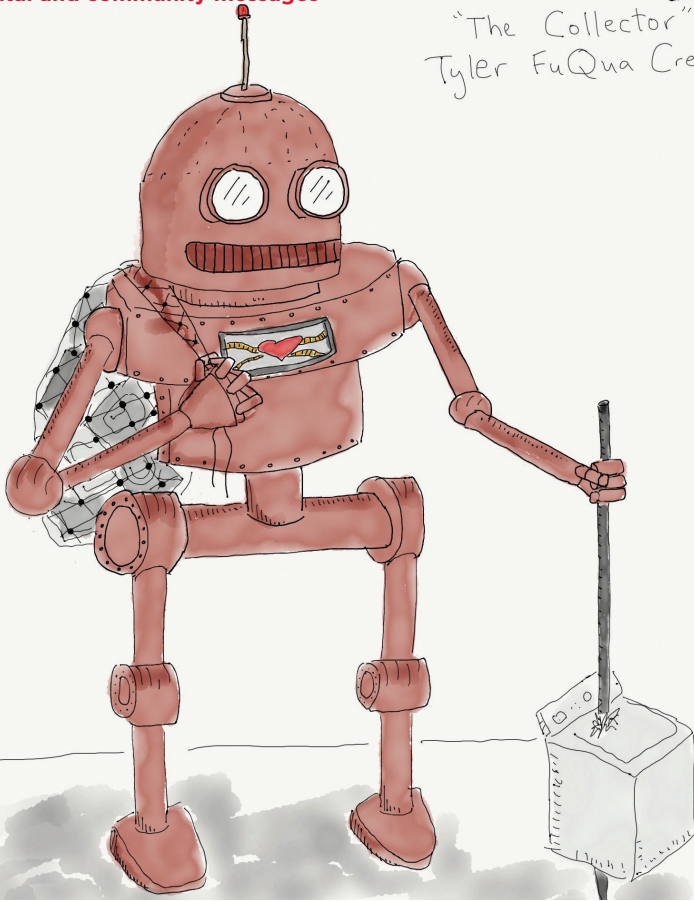
In a collaboration with the Rand Institute last year, Piccoli worked with a Rutgers–Camden research team that created models to provide data about a potential hospital bed shortage in South Jersey for the expected increases in people contracting COVID-19. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy cited a research brief the team issued in mid-March in a letter to the White House about the need for quick interventions.

THE ARTS

ART FOR THE EARTH

A New View–Camden, a public art project supported by Rutgers–Camden, conveys environmental and community messages

MECHAN 11
 “The Collector”
 Tyler FuQua Creations



Mechan 11: The Collector by Tyler FuQua

By Sam Starnes

A 15-foot tall robot known as *Mechan 11: The Collector*, recently installed beside the State Street Bridge in Camden, stands as much more than a piece of art: The garbage-collecting giant with a glowing heart has something to say about preserving the planet. The robot is one of a series of outdoor art pieces that have transformed six locations in the city that once were unauthorized dumping grounds.

The public art project, A New View–Camden, is funded by a \$1 million grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge and administered by the Rutgers–Camden Center for the Arts (RCCA) and Cooper’s Ferry Partnership. The grant was awarded in 2019 and the project had been scheduled to open in June 2020, but was delayed until Earth Day of this year due to the pandemic.

Rutgers–Camden staff and faculty

played a major role in winning and administering the grant. Noreen Scott-Garrity, RCCA’s associate director of education, said the art is a form of “creative placemaking” that will establish focal points for city residents and those who visit Camden. The pieces are in high-visibility locations and will be seen by commuters on PATCO and River Line trains, as well as several main thoroughfares. “People are going to feel good about their city,” Scott-Garrity said. “That’s the most important thing to us, but commuters also are going to do a double take when their PATCO train goes by a giant panther,” she said, referencing the artwork *Invincible Cat*. “This is about changing the perception of the city both from within and from the outside.”

Kimberly Camp, a native of Camden who is an accomplished artist, museum administrator, and gallery owner, served as one of two curators who selected eight artists from 131 nationwide who submitted proposals. “This is about reclaiming our environment through art—it’s just that simple,” Camp said.

Nancy Maguire CCAS’88, RCCA’s director for exhibitions, said the exhibit also helps to cultivate the arts in the city. “We are serving residents, and we are building something that will sustain and strengthen the artists’ community in Camden,” Maguire said.

Activities and tours will be held in connection with the art, and the Stedman Gallery at Rutgers–Camden will highlight the project by hosting a virtual exhibit about the project.

In addition to the six art installations, two additional artists were selected to participate. Tom Marchety, owner of The Factory, has created Pod Park—movable

benches and tables made of reused timber under metal roofing—that are featured at each of the art installations.

Camden photographer Erik James Montgomery created 75 portraits of Camden residents in a project called “Camden is . . . Bright Not Blight.” Montgomery’s portraits, which celebrate Camden residents, can be seen

throughout the city, often decorating boarded-up houses. Each resident’s portrait is paired with the text “Camden is . . .” and completed with one word chosen by each subject.

Montgomery said the portraits allow residents to celebrate the city that they call home. “The city for so many years has been looked at as a place of poverty and

crime and corruption, but now we can see people who are here with a passion and who really have a vested interest in Camden,” said Montgomery, whose numerous community education efforts includes teaching in the Rutgers Future Scholars program.

A New View-Camden

These six art installations will remain in place through October. For more details about the artwork and events related to the project, including a map of the locations, visit anewviewcamden.com.

1: *Invincible Cat* by DLK Design on Pershing Street near Whitman Avenue—a 36-foot long black panther made from car hoods.



ARTIST RENDERING

2: *Bio-Informatic Digester: Waste as Fuel for Biodiversity* by Terreform One at Chestnut and Orchard streets: A machine that utilizes mealworms to eat Styrofoam packaging and e-waste.

3: *Turntable* by SLO Architecture at Cooper’s Poynt Waterfront Park: Thousands

of two-liter soda bottles cut to create a futuristic windmill around a dome made of recyclable materials as a tribute to a long-lost Camden windmill and RCA Victor.



ARTIST RENDERING



MAP OF INSTALLATIONS

4: *Touching the Earth* by Athena Steen and Josh Sarantitis at Fifth and Erie streets: A series of clay and earth installations to be built by Camden residents.

5: *Mechan 11: The Collector* by Tyler FuQua Creations beside the State Street Bridge over the Cooper River: A 15-foot tall robot picking up litter. [seen on page 6]

6: *The Phoenix Festival* by the Myth Makers at 1401 Federal Street: Two 22-foot tall bamboo sculptures of birds and an open amphitheater for gatherings and events.

FULLFILLING Dreams

Dreams Fulfilled, a Rutgers “Big Idea,” supports a three-part plan for students and families: Establishing access, ensuring affordability, and partnering for success

By Sam Starnes

What sort of difference can financial support make in a student’s life?

Consider the impact on the lives of twin brothers George and Washington Hill, Camden residents who in 1957 were granted full-tuition scholarships to Rutgers University–Camden, then known as Rutgers College of South Jersey. “Rutgers made it possible for us to go to college,” Washington said.

The brothers—whose father was a postal clerk and mother a domestic worker—graduated from Rutgers in 1961 and went on to exceptional careers. Washington earned his medical degree from Temple University, and for more than 50 years, has been a practicing obstetrician and perinatologist, serving as president and chief of the medical staff at Sarasota Memorial Hospital in Florida. George, who earned a master’s degree

from Howard University and a doctorate in biochemistry at New York University, led a distinguished career in biomedical research and academia, serving as the first vice chancellor for equity, diversity, and inclusion at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

What would their futures have been had they not received support from Rutgers? “I’m not sure where else we would have gone,” Washington said.

In 2011, on the 50th anniversary of their Rutgers graduations, the brothers established the Hill Family Center for College Access at Rutgers–Camden with a \$200,000 gift. Since its inception a decade ago, the Hill Center has helped more than 3,600 high school students to apply to college. “It’s heart-warming and rewarding to know that the gift we were able to provide—with the intention of being able to provide for students from Camden—is bearing fruit,” George said. “When you’re able to provide support and see the impact it has on the lives of students, that’s what investment is all about.”

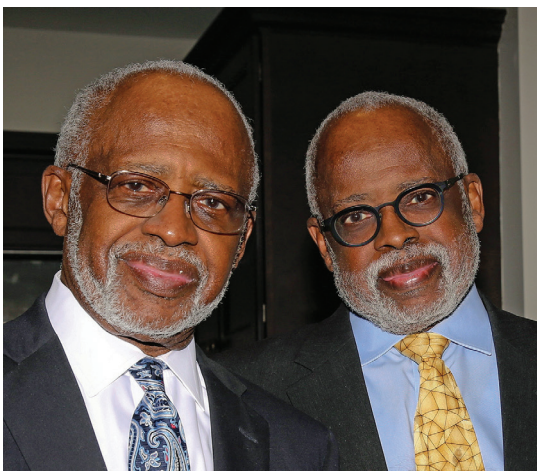
A Big Idea: Dreams Fulfilled

The counseling provided by the Hill Center is one plank in a comprehensive strategy at Rutgers–Camden known as Dreams Fulfilled, an initiative in the Big Ideas fundraising campaign launched by the Rutgers Foundation this spring. The linked programs under the Dreams Fulfilled umbrella have three goals: help students from lower-income families find their way to college, help them pay for tuition and expenses, and support them academically to ensure graduation.

Many of the students who benefit from this array of programs, particularly those focused on college preparation, are from Camden and surrounding towns. “Camden is a challenged community socioeconomically, but not challenged in the sense of the aspirations, desires, and motivations of our young people,” said Nyeema Watson, vice chancellor for diversity, inclusion, and civic engagement, who is a lifelong resident of Camden and an alumna of Rutgers–Camden. “Our young people need support to go to college to make their dreams a reality. We know that through our pipeline of support we can fulfill this dream for young people and their families. It’s exciting to highlight these programs for our alumni and supporters in the universitywide Big Ideas campaign. We believe that students we support today can go on to be the Hill brothers of the next generation.”



WATSON



“RUTGERS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO GO TO COLLEGE,”

said Washington Hill, at right, with his twin George. The Hills, both 1961 graduates from Camden, received bachelor’s degrees that led to exceptional careers in science and medicine. A gift from the brothers established the Rutgers–Camden Hill Family Center for College Access in 2011.

A Pipeline of Dreams

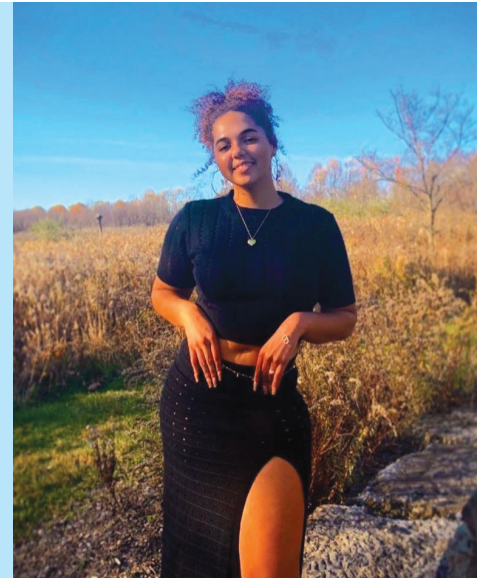
Programs in the Dreams Fulfilled pipeline consist of pre-college preparatory programs that reach out to students as early as third grade, including the Rutgers Future Scholars, Ignite, and the Hill Center; initiatives that help Rutgers–Camden students pay for college and avoid student loan debt, such as Scarlet Promise Grants and Bridging the Gap, a groundbreaking grant program that helps all New Jersey families making under \$100,000 annually cover all or most costs of tuition and expenses; and services that support all Rutgers–Camden students academically on the road to graduation, including the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), TRiO, the Student Success Office, and tutoring, learning, and disability services. (For an overview of the programs, see pages 14–15.)

Many of the Dreams Fulfilled programs and similar initiatives to support students have existed for decades at Rutgers–Camden. The scholarships offered to the Hill brothers, for example, happened 64 years ago, and the EOF program in 2018 celebrated a 50-year-anniversary. “Rutgers–Camden has always been a place where we are successful with students who are the first in their families to go to college,” Watson said. “With Dreams Fulfilled, we have a comprehensive strategy on how to do that—a strategy that works.”

Bridging the Gap, which launched at Rutgers–Camden in fall 2016, has been replicated at universities throughout New Jersey and across the nation, including Harvard and Princeton. The program

“BRIDGING THE GAP HELPED COVER A GOOD AMOUNT OF COSTS THAT OTHERWISE I MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD. WITHOUT IT, MY GRADUATION DAY MAY NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.”

- Tamia Taylor, a Class of 2020 graduate in childhood studies and psychology



benefits lower-income New Jersey families by closing the gap between federal and state sources of financial aid and the balance of tuition and the campus fee. Its first cohort of 89 students graduated in May 2020. “Bridging the Gap helped cover a good amount of costs that otherwise I may not have been able to afford,” said Tamia Taylor, who earned Rutgers–Camden bachelor’s degrees in psychology and childhood studies in 2020. “Without it, my graduation day may not have been possible.” Taylor is now working toward a master’s



and a doctorate in counseling psychology at Chatham University in Pittsburgh.

Joan Maya Mazelis, a Rutgers–Camden sociology associate professor

who is an expert on poverty and has been studying student loan debt for five years, has interviewed many students at Rutgers–Camden about how they pay for college. “Rutgers–Camden is really a trendsetter,” said Mazelis, who has been awarded a National Science Foundation grant for her research into student loan debt. “Bridging the Gap makes it possible for some students to avoid loans completely.”

Another benefit of programs supporting first-generation students is that these efforts help Rutgers–Camden better reflect the rich diversity of New Jersey’s demographic makeup. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia noted in a report that the likelihood of Black and Hispanic students enrolling in Rutgers–Camden was much greater as a result of Bridging the Gap. Watson said that the pre-college programs focusing on Camden youth—Rutgers Future

Scholars, Ignite, and the Hill Family Center for College Access—as well as the learning assistance programs such as EOF, also serve to increase the number of students of color at the university. “A key element of Dreams Fulfilled is addressing racial inequity in access to and getting through college,” Watson said. “A goal of this initiative is to make sure that we are open and welcoming to all types of students to come here and to get their education.”

While programs that support students with scholarships and financial aid are common components of college fundraising campaigns, asking donors to help pay for programs that support first-generation students with mentoring and tutoring services once they enroll is less common. A unique aspect of the Dreams Fulfilled effort is the inclusion of programs that help students graduate, said Jason Rivera, Rutgers–Camden’s vice chancellor for student academic success. “Getting students into college is critically important, but getting them out is even more important,” Rivera said. “We talk more rarely about how once a student has gained access, what do they do next? How do we actually help those students who are part of our community succeed? How do we navigate this system



RIVERA

and structure so not only are they getting access, but they are making it through with as little debt and as little stress as possible? The way we work on getting them out is making

sure they have all the support they need. Once they graduate, they can use their degree and what they’ve learned to transform their lives and the lives of their families.”

Rivera, who grew up in difficult circumstances in Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan, attests to the significance of a family seeing one of its own be the first to earn a college degree. “I was a homeless high school kid and the first in my family to graduate,” he said. “Every one of my nieces and nephews have gone to college and done well. It creates a pathway for your family to see it is attainable.”

Mazelis said earning a college degree has two significant impacts on first-generation students from families who live at or below the poverty line: the first is the increased lifelong earning

power that comes with the degree; the second is a sense of pride that resonates through a family. “At Rutgers–Camden commencement every year, you can see the pride students and their families have at passing this amazing milestone,” she said. “It shows the sense of accomplishment and the ability to be a role model. It has symbolic power as well as practical usefulness.”

Beyond boosting individuals and their families, the effort to help more New Jersey residents earn college degrees has economic impact statewide. “It’s good for the state of New Jersey to have more educated citizens,” Watson said. “As a land-grant university, Rutgers is here for the public good. This is the work we should be doing. It requires many hands to make it possible.”

RUTGERS–CAMDEN RECOGNITION

RANKED


26

NATIONALLY AS A TOP PERFORMER FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY BY *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT*, WHICH ALSO RATED RUTGERS–CAMDEN 71 IN ITS LIST OF TOP PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND 140 IN ITS BEST VALUE CATEGORY.

NAMED A

“BEST BANG FOR THE BUCK”

UNIVERSITY BY *WASHINGTON MONTHLY*, WHICH RANKED RUTGERS–CAMDEN 66 NATIONALLY BASED ON SOCIAL MOBILITY, RESEARCH, AND PROMOTING PUBLIC SERVICE.



“NO ONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD WENT TO COLLEGE . . . RUTGERS FUTURE SCHOLARS MOTIVATED ME TO GO ON A DIFFERENT PATH.”

- Alexa Pena, a 2020 graduate who earned a certificate as a Spanish medical interpreter

A Story of Support

Alexa Pena was a Camden middle school student when one of her teachers recommended she should apply for the Rutgers Future Scholars program, which mentored academically talented students. She was accepted, and soon the program ignited in her the dream of higher education. “No one in my household went to college,” she said. “Rutgers Future Scholars motivated me to go on a different path.”

After six years of participation in Rutgers Future Scholars and counseling from the Hill Family Center for College Access, Pena, who had moved to

Pennsauken in high school, enrolled at Rutgers–Camden as a biology major in the fall of 2015.

Even though she had support from the Rutgers Future Scholars and EOF, she found college difficult in her first semester. “It was really hard,” Pena said. “Coming right out of high school, I was like, ‘OK, college is too hard for me.’”

She tried to persevere, but in her second semester, she met a more difficult challenge: She fell seriously ill and needed brain surgery, which forced her to miss the spring semester. “I was getting used to college, and then, oh my gosh, I had to have brain surgery.”

Such setbacks often cause students to never return to finish their degrees. But Pena said even though she was recuperating and out of school, she continued to get encouragement from Marsha Besong, assistant chancellor for student success who directs the Rutgers–Camden EOF program, and her EOF counselor, Randi Ferguson, assistant director of the program. “Marsha was always in touch with me asking, ‘How are you doing? Are you OK?’” Pena said. “Randi was always in touch, too.”

Pena recovered and returned to take a full load of classes in fall 2016. She worked with EOF counselors who helped

her with a time management schedule, as well as tutoring and mentoring. “Just having someone to talk to when you are having stress was so beneficial,” she said.

After changing her major to psychology, Pena excelled, earning a professional certificate as a Spanish medical interpreter. She also made the dean’s list and completed two internships before graduating in spring 2020. She is now applying to graduate school, with plans to focus on a career working with those who have communications disorders. She said she could not have done it without the chain of support she received.

Although she was the first in her family to attend college, she was not the last. Her sister, Jacquelyn, who is five years younger, has followed in her



footsteps. Jacquelyn participated in Rutgers Future Scholars through middle school and high school, and is now in her first year as a nursing major at Rutgers–Camden.

Avoiding Student Debt

Bridging the Gap, as well as Scarlet Promise Grants, a universitywide program that supports students with emergency financial needs, helps to minimize or eliminate the need for student loans.

Mazelis said that nationwide about two-thirds of college graduates finish with student loans averaging more than \$30,000, a burden that can delay young adults from attending graduate school, buying homes, getting married, and starting families. By helping students to avoid and minimize student loan debt, it allows them to transition to adulthood more easily. “Not having debt frees young adults to be able to think about their futures and to plan with a wider array of possibilities,” Mazelis said.

Mazelis said the efforts to help students graduate once they enroll is critical and directly relates to student loan debt. “People who go to college and never complete their degrees often end up with a lot of student loan debt and not a really clear way to pay it off,” she said. “It happens more than we wish it did. There are students who are very close to graduating—maybe a year or even a semester away—and they look at their student loan debt so far and they are just not sure it’s worth it. I always encourage my own students by telling them, ‘If you have loans, and you are already here,

do what you can to finish your degree, because you’ll be better positioned to pay them off.”

She said Rutgers–Camden’s programs, particularly Bridging the Gap, which is a degree-completion program that requires students to take 30 credits per year and graduate in four years, is “a fantastic endeavor” that helps students to avoid the pitfalls of student loans.

Craig Westman, vice chancellor for enrollment management and the senior administrator behind the Bridging the Gap program, said he is excited about the opportunity for the



program to gain support from alumni donors. “Alumni know what a difference a Rutgers degree has made in their lives,” he said. “They can now provide a pathway to students in this generation to get a Rutgers degree.”

Westman added that the financial difficulties posed by the pandemic have increased the need for student support. Bridging the Gap awards to students are based on annual adjusted gross incomes; families with incomes of \$100,000 are eligible for grants, and families with annual incomes of \$60,000 or less will have tuition and the general campus fee covered by the program. “Families have some real fiscal challenges now,” he said. “Money from donors will go to those families that have the greatest need.”

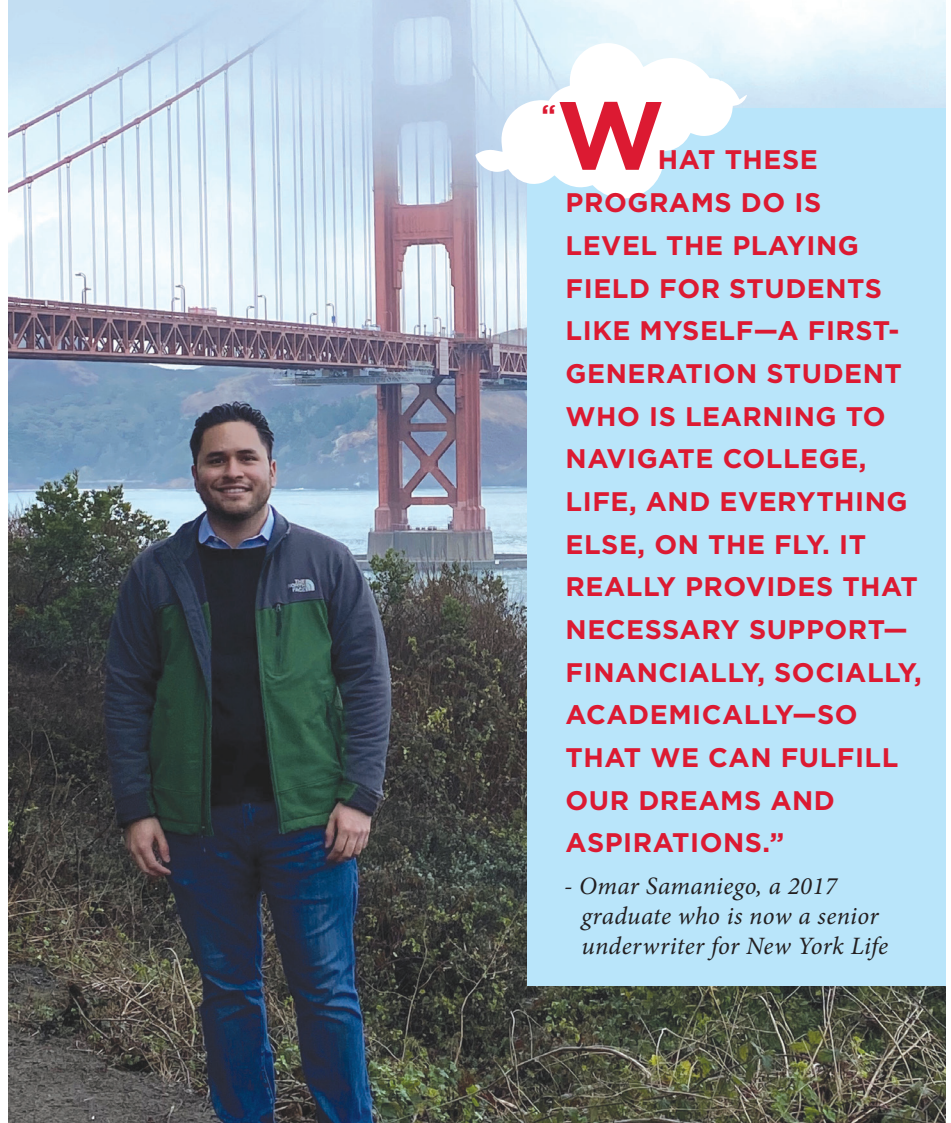
A Student Success Story

Omar Samaniego, a 2017 graduate from Camden who benefited from financial support through the EOF program and also the Alfred Santiago Scholarship, said he graduated with only a few thousand dollars of student loan debt. “I paid it off before completing my first year at my job,” said Samaniego, who lives in Camden and works in Philadelphia as a senior underwriter for New York Life.

He said the financial support he received allowed him to concentrate on his studies and not work long hours in a part-time or full-time job to make ends meet, as many Rutgers–Camden students do. “I was able to focus all of my energy on school,” he said.

In addition to the financial support, the mentoring and guidance he received through the EOF program was critical. He started his first year at Rutgers–New Brunswick, but barely got by with marginal grades. He transferred to Rutgers–Camden for his sophomore year and connected with EOF counselors who helped him to develop a plan for improving his academic performance. “That support was the most important factor in my progress,” he said.

Ultimately, he graduated magna cum laude and had two job offers six months before he graduated. He said the financial support and the mentoring at Rutgers–Camden were critical to his success. “What these programs do is level the playing field for students like myself—a first-generation student who is learning to navigate college, life, and everything else, on the fly. It really provides that necessary support—financially, socially,



“WHAT THESE PROGRAMS DO IS LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR STUDENTS LIKE MYSELF—A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT WHO IS LEARNING TO NAVIGATE COLLEGE, LIFE, AND EVERYTHING ELSE, ON THE FLY. IT REALLY PROVIDES THAT NECESSARY SUPPORT—FINANCIALLY, SOCIALLY, ACADEMICALLY—SO THAT WE CAN FULFILL OUR DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS.”

- Omar Samaniego, a 2017 graduate who is now a senior underwriter for New York Life

academically—so that we can fulfill our dreams and aspirations. All of those combined factors really are what got me to where I am today.”

Samaniego said his life could have been dramatically different had it not been for the the help he received from Rutgers–Camden. “Without the

monetary and social support, who knows?” he asked. “I don’t know what I would be doing now. I was able to reap the benefits of all these programs and graduate and start a career.”

Tom McLaughlin contributed to this story.

You Can Help Fulfill *Dreams*

Gifts to Dreams Fulfilled, a Rutgers Big Idea, benefit numerous Rutgers-Camden initiatives that focus on college preparation, affordability, and academic support.

College Preparation

The Rutgers Future Scholars program each year helps to connect 250 low-income, academically promising students from Camden City schools to the promise and opportunities of a college education. Future Scholars receive academic support, enrichment, personal guidance, and mentoring from middle school through high school. Those who complete the program and meet admission requirements are guaranteed free Rutgers tuition and fees.

Camden Ignite is a collaborative education program focused on increasing student achievement in East Camden and North Camden. Through after-school and extracurricular learning, the partnerships serve students in grades 3–8 by promoting academic success, positive social and emotional development, and family engagement. It has served more than 3,000 students since 2011.

The Hill Family Center for College Access prepares Camden students and families for success in college through workshops, support, and mentoring. A gift from Washington and George Hill, brothers who grew up in Camden and graduated from Rutgers-Camden in 1961, established the Hill Center. More than 3,600 students have received counseling since 2011.



Camden Ignite serves students in grades 3–8.



Siatta Davis, left, of the Hill Family Center for College Access, helps Camden students apply to college.

Affordability

Bridging the Gap is an innovative Rutgers–Camden program that helps New Jersey residents reduce the cost of tuition up to 100 percent. More than 4,300 students, including 89 who graduated in spring 2020, have benefitted from the five-year-old program that closes the gap between federal and state sources of financial support and the balance of tuition and the general campus fee.

Scarlet Promise Grants are universitywide need-based financial aid awards that range from \$500 to \$5,000 per year. Students receive Scarlet Promise Grants as part of their comprehensive financial aid packages, and Rutgers also awards the grants for hardship appeals, such as the death of a parent, loss of employment, and health emergencies. Rutgers launched Scarlet Promise Grants in 1991 under the name Rutgers Assistance Grants.

Learning Support

New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), a statewide program that began in 1968, started at Rutgers–Camden with five students and increased to 55 students the following year. It now annually serves about 275 students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Students benefit from one-on-one academic coaching, workshops, experiential learning, summer programs, and tuition grants.

TRiO Student Support Services

provides services that are specifically designed to increase the retention and graduation rates of first-generation and low-income students. Services include one-on-one professional and peer tutoring, academic coaching, and academic enrichment and financial literacy workshops. Eligible participants receive financial aid and scholarships.

The Rutgers–Camden Learning Center

is a supportive learning community that provides an array of academic support services to assist students in achieving their academic goals. Students receive academic coaching, learning assistance, and tutoring.

The Office of Disability Services

assures equal opportunity, access, and participation in the university's courses, programs, activities, services and facilities.



Rutgers Future Scholars supports low-income, academically promising students on the path from middle school to college graduation.

Rutgers Big Ideas

Rutgers Big Ideas are large-scale projects that take advantage of the university's unique strengths and capacity, embodying the creativity, innovation, vitality, and engagement of Rutgers, New Jersey's academic, health, and research powerhouse. In addition to Dreams Fulfilled, two other Big Ideas projects focus on Rutgers–Camden:

- **The Rutgers–Camden Innovation Community Hub (RICH)** will develop, cultivate, and disseminate innovative entrepreneurial solutions that address sustainable socioeconomic growth in underserved, vulnerable communities.

- **The Rutgers University Crime Lab Unit** will be a multi-agency forensic lab that will provide shared, streamlined services for Camden County and other New Jersey stakeholders—a one-stop-shop for the region's crime investigation needs.

To learn more about these Rutgers Big Ideas, visit support.rutgers.edu/big-ideas, and look for future articles. If you have questions or would like to discuss a gift, contact Scott Owens CCAS'04, GSC'10, acting vice chancellor for advancement, at scowens@camden.rutgers.edu or 856-225-6028.

A Gift of Gratitude



Standing, from left, Rutgers Law School in Camden Dean Kimberly Mutcherson and Rayman L. Solomon, former dean and University Professor; seated, from left, Solomon Scholars and first-year law students Eric Newman and Dara Omotayo. Photo by Jonathan Kolbe.

A law faculty member who wishes to remain anonymous has given a \$3.5 million gift—the largest ever to Rutgers-Camden—supporting academically distinguished law students with an interest in public service



By Sam Starnes

Every year, the letters arrive. Addressed to the Rutgers Law School in Camden faculty member who gave the school \$3.5 million, the letters come from former students-turned practicing attorneys who found a required course the faculty member taught years before “complicated and abstract,” said the faculty member/donor who asked not to be named. “They’ll say, ‘You know what? I didn’t enjoy your class when I was taking it, but boy, I appreciate it now.’ Those are very gratifying moments.”

Those moments are among the key factors motivating the largest donation ever to Rutgers University–Camden. “I get a real rush from student success,” the faculty member/donor said. “If I hear about one of my students who has thrived or has conquered some great professional challenge, my heart just bursts with joy.”

The \$3.5 million gift announced in January, combined with an earlier \$50,000 gift in March 2020, launched the Rayman L. Solomon Scholars endowment, named for a former dean and designed to attract students to Rutgers Law School in Camden who have distinguished themselves academically and demonstrated a commitment to public service.

The faculty member/donor said other motivating factors for the gift include gratitude for the “institution that has given me so much” and the law school’s mission of offering access to all. “Rutgers Law School is first and foremost a tool of social transformation,”

the faculty member/donor said. “It takes a lot of kids who are first-generation professionals and it gives them access to the most elite corners of our society—whether it’s in private practice, or in government, or the judiciary. I think that movement and transformation are critical to society. My hope is that by enhancing the profile of the school and its student body, this gift will open more such opportunities to all of our graduates.”

Kimberly Mutcherson, co-dean of Rutgers Law School, said “This gift is transformational in multiple ways. Rutgers Law School is nationally recognized for its commitment to providing an excellent legal education to a broad range of students. Thanks to this generous gift, Rutgers Law School will be able to recruit even more students with outstanding academic credentials. The Solomon Scholars will receive an annual stipend and a range of personalized programming to prepare them for elite careers in law.”

Scholars Committed to Service

Kobie Allen, a native of Franklinville in Gloucester County, New Jersey, is one of three first-year law students selected for the program in the 2020–2021 academic year. “I’m very humbled to be among the inaugural class of the Rayman L. Solomon Scholars, especially as a South Jersey native,” said Allen, a 2017 graduate of Williams College who recently worked as a paralegal in Cherry Hill.



PHOTO BY NICOLE DEBRUYNE

Allen, who studied Arabic and political science at the American University in Cairo while an undergraduate, said his experience in Egypt had a profound impact on him. “Living abroad really opened my eyes to the value of the rights we have as Americans,” he said. “Yet, those rights are only as powerful as our ability to enforce and protect them. It is important to me that people have awareness of their rights and the ability to get legal help. Whether it’s consumer fraud, environmental

damages, or anything in between, I want to be able to reach out and give legal assistance. If I’m using my degree to help people change their lives for the better,



that’s the focus of the big picture.” Solomon Scholar Dara Omotayo, a 2020 psychology graduate of Texas Tech University, said her

experience as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate women’s studies course inspired her plan to pursue a career as an education lawyer. “Most of my students were Black men or young women, many of whom were just starting to grasp what it truly means to belong to minority groups in this country,” Omotayo said. “My experience with them inspired my passion for education and civil rights law.”

Eric Newman, a native of Wayne, New Jersey, is a Solomon Scholar who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2019 with a degree in economics with a concentration in real estate. He said he wants to build a successful career in real estate law while helping communities. “I want to be able to listen to people’s hopes and concerns with regards to their respective neighborhoods in order to do what I can to make those neighborhoods happier, healthier, safer, and more affordably livable places,” Newman said.



Solomon’s Legacy

Solomon served as dean of Rutgers Law School in Camden from 1998 to 2014 and as provost of Rutgers University–Camden from 2014 to 2015. He remains on the Rutgers faculty as a University Professor of Law, one of the highest ranks bestowed by the university. “Under his leadership, the law school in Camden recruited a world-class faculty, heightened its national stature, and reinvigorated its commitment to social justice,” the faculty member/donor said.

“He is a man of compassion and integrity, and I am proud that the Solomon Scholars program will build upon that legacy.”

One example of Solomon’s compassion and integrity is his work to commemorate Black victims of a massacre more than one hundred years ago in his childhood home of Helena, Arkansas, a small town on the Mississippi River. Although Solomon has not lived in Arkansas since the 1960s, he has visited frequently and remained in close contact with family and the community. “It’s part of who I am,” he said.

Solomon and his brother helped lead the effort to establish the Elaine Massacre Memorial, which was dedicated in Helena in 2019. Estimates are that between 150 and 200 Black sharecroppers were killed in 1919 in what has been called Arkansas’ deadliest racial conflict. “The people who died should be memorialized,” he said.

A scholar of legal history, Solomon has researched and written about how the court cases in the wake of the massacre influenced the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 that said racial segregation of schools was unconstitutional. “The Elaine Massacre is an important part of civil rights history that has not been told,” he said.

Solomon, who earned his undergraduate degree from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and both a J.D. and a Ph.D. in American legal history from the University of Chicago, worked for the American Bar Foundation and Northwestern University before arriving at Rutgers Law School in Camden 23 years ago. During his tenure as dean of the law school, he hired more than one-third of the current faculty, expanded

the clinical and pro bono programs, and extensively redesigned the curriculum. He also oversaw capital campaigns and the construction of the new law building that added 50,000 square feet of space to the law school. “He did a spectacular job as dean,” the faculty member/donor said. “He built an outstanding faculty and built the new building, which nobody thought we would ever get. He is universally liked and respected by faculty and students alike, and he seemed like a really appropriate person to name the program after to honor him for his service and values.”

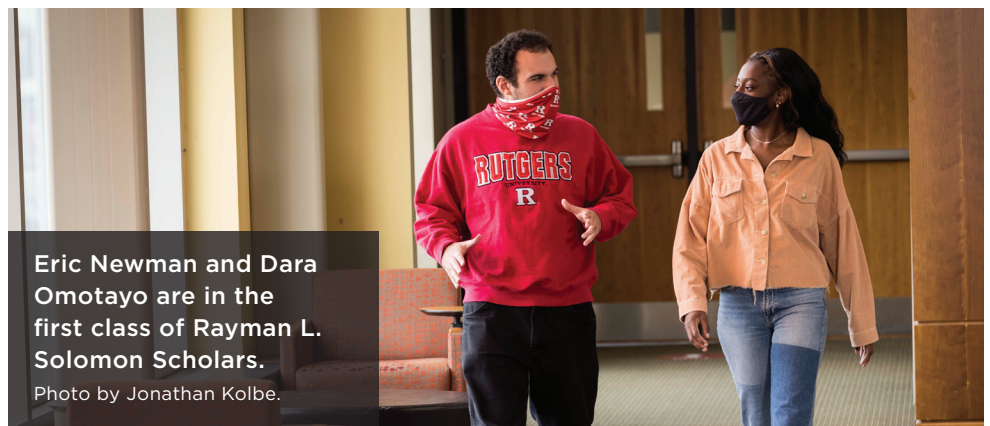
Solomon is moved by the gift named for him. “I am deeply honored by this incredible demonstration of selfless generosity made in my name by a valued friend and colleague,” he said. “While I may have been surprised that it was done in my name, I was not at all surprised by the donor’s commitment to helping our students, to strengthening the academic community at Rutgers Law School, and to furthering the goal of training graduates who are dedicated to improving the lives of every American. I am confident that this program will succeed in fulfilling this ambitious vision.”

Solomon said the gift will have significant impact on not just the students it helps, but for the entire the school. “By recruiting high-achieving students who demonstrate their commitment to public service, this innovative program will elevate Rutgers Law to the next level of prominence as a national public law school,” he said.

Hope of Inspiring More Gifts

The faculty member/donor is hopeful that the \$3.5 million gift will inspire more gifts to support the work the university does. “Rutgers Law doesn’t attract the kind of gifts that comparable private schools regularly get. That’s a shame, because the level of state support has been going down. Gifts are critical to the well-being of the university. I’m happy to give the gift, but hopefully inspire others as well.”

The faculty member/donor also hopes that someone will soon make a donation that exceeds their gift as the largest ever given to Rutgers University–Camden. “That would be wonderful,” the faculty member/donor said. “It’s a record I would gladly cede.” **R**



Eric Newman and Dara Omotayo are in the first class of Rayman L. Solomon Scholars.

Photo by Jonathan Kolbe.

SCARLET PROFILES



Nursing Graduate Committed to Care During Pandemic

Eric Gonzalez SNC'16, who suffered COVID-19 twice in 2020 in his work as an emergency room nurse, served with the New Jersey National Guard from 2006 through 2018.

By Sam Starnes

Contracting COVID-19 twice from patients he was treating during the pandemic has not discouraged emergency room nurse Eric Gonzalez from continuing to care for those in need.

Although the 2016 Rutgers School of Nursing–Camden graduate became extremely ill during his second infection, the reward of serving others outweighed the risk. “It feels great when I leave at the end of a shift and my patients tell me they are going to miss me and they are having a better experience,” said Gonzalez, who suffered from COVID-19 in the summer and again in the fall of 2020. “I treat people the way I would want to be treated if I went into the emergency room.”

Gonzalez, who served in the New Jersey National Guard from 2006 through 2018, has worked as a traveling nurse treating patients in emergency rooms in New Jersey and Pennsylvania during the pandemic. He said despite wearing appropriate protective gear, he

contracted COVID-19 in June, when he had milder symptoms, and again in late November when he experienced ten difficult days. “I had terrible body pains,” he said. “I didn’t have the cough or congestion or loss of taste like most everybody else did. My biggest symptom was hyperesthesia, which is sensitivity to the skin. I couldn’t lay on my back or any part of skin on my backside. I also had severe headaches.”

After recovering, Gonzalez went back to work, and was vaccinated early this year. He said the pandemic has been challenging, but that “It’s been the same for everybody—chaos, and overall a learning experience. It’s something we’ve never seen before. It’s something we have to keep learning about and prevent the spread of it.”

A native of Los Angeles whose family moved to Camden when he was 10 years old, Gonzalez said his interest in nursing began when he would go with his mother, who speaks Spanish and was often ill, to the hospital and doctor’s

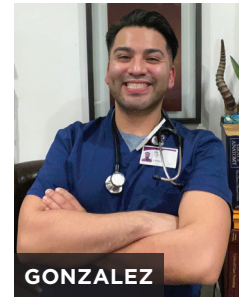
appointments to translate for her. “I liked how the nurses treated my mom, and I liked what the nurses did,” he said.

Gonzalez, whose family later moved from Camden to Pennsauken, joined the New Jersey National Guard when he was a junior in high school. He graduated from Pennsauken High School in 2008 and went on to serve in the National Guard for 12 years, ultimately as a chemical and biological weapons specialist with the 50th Chemical Company in Somerset, New Jersey.

Gonzalez, who attended Camden County College before enrolling at Rutgers–Camden, said he worked hard to improve his study habits and ultimately his grades when he was accepted in the School of Nursing. “I went from barely graduating high school to graduating college with honors,” said Gonzalez, who also served as president of the Student Nurses’ Association.

He said a psychiatric mental health course at Rutgers–Camden was a big influence on him. “We learned about therapeutic communication, and that has been the backbone of everything I’ve done in nursing. I get good feedback on the way I talk to patients and my coworkers, and it is because of that class.”

Regarding COVID-19, he said in March 2021 that he was encouraged that the situation was improving, but that people should continue to be careful. “I like to see the numbers going down and that people who are coming into the hospital are less sick,” he said. “We’ve learned that we need to protect ourselves.”



From Haitian Immigrant to Federal Judgeship

By Sam Starnes

Nancy Joseph was eight years old when she immigrated from Haiti to New Jersey. She took the United States oath of citizenship when she was a 19-year-old college student. Now a federal magistrate judge since 2010 with almost three decades of legal experience, Joseph, a 1993 Rutgers Law School in Camden graduate, finds herself on the other side of the equation, conducting the ceremonies that establish American citizenship for immigrants. “In no way would I have dreamed at the time of taking the oath that I would be in the position to one day administer the oath to others,” she said.

Joseph’s journey from Haiti to a federal judgeship is one she recalls happily each time she welcomes new American citizens. “Every naturalization ceremony is an anniversary for me,” she said. “It’s the anniversary of my own path to citizenship where I get to celebrate with the new citizens. I am celebrating my own path, but also my parents’ journey to the



Federal Magistrate Judge Nancy Joseph RLAW’93, left, and Sharon King RLAW’93 were moot court partners.

United States to become citizens and make a home in America, which in turn has opened up all sorts of opportunities that we never would have dreamed of. The ceremonies give us a chance to celebrate what this country is about—we are a country of immigrants, and each ceremony gives us a chance to celebrate that.”

Joseph’s parents left Haiti for the United States when she was only one year old, leaving her in the care of a dear family friend Joseph considers as a second mother. After getting established in America, her parents brought her and seven older siblings to Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1976. Joseph finished high school there and went on to graduate from Howard University in spring 1990. She started at Rutgers Law in Camden, where she was awarded a scholarship, the following fall. “I received a wonderful foundation at Rutgers Law School,” Joseph said. “I also had wonderful support from faculty who took an interest in me and encouraged me and fed my intellectual curiosity. Rutgers has a very special place in my heart for those reasons.”

Joseph, who interned with the Camden County Public Defenders’ Office while she was at Rutgers, was recruited out of law school in 1993 to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to become a state public defender working with juveniles. In 2000,



Federal Magistrate Judge Nancy Joseph RLAW’93 had the opportunity in 2019 to give the oath of citizenship to 92-year-old Uctorieuse Destin, who cared for Joseph when she was a child in Haiti.

she moved to a newly-established federal public defender’s office in Milwaukee, and ten years later was appointed federal magistrate judge in the Eastern District of Wisconsin. In addition to overseeing naturalization ceremonies, she handles a wide range of civil cases and pretrial proceedings in criminal cases. “There is never a dull day,” she said. “Just name a federal statute and we will see it in federal court.”

Joseph, who was a first-generation college student and the only member of her family to go to law school, is very civically involved in Milwaukee. She has established programs connecting with youth to open their eyes to the potential of legal careers. “I try to reach out and show kids the possibilities and plant seeds—hopefully, the same way that teachers in my life planted seeds for me,” she said.

A COMMITMENT TO CAMDEN



Cooper's Ferry Partnership president and CEO Kris Kolluri SBC'91 speaking at the RCA Pier opening on the Camden Waterfront in 2019 (above), and in 2018 signing the final steel beam of the 18-story waterfront tower with Dana Redd SBC'96, former mayor of Camden and chair of the Cooper's Ferry board (bottom right).

By Sam Starnes

Kris Kolluri's career has come full circle—a loop that returned him to Camden. A 1991 Rutgers School of Business–Camden graduate, his first job out of college was as a congressional aide helping Camden residents. Today, thirty years after earning his degree and embarking on a career that took him to Washington and several high-profile leadership positions in New Jersey, he is president and CEO of Cooper's Ferry Partnership, a nonprofit Camden economic and community development agency. The path back to Camden, Kolluri said, was meant to be. “I believe in Karmic

cycles,” he said. “Camden has and will always be my first love professionally. I fell in love with the city when I went to school here, and I'm still in love with the city.”

Kolluri, who was recently honored as one of 25 business school graduates worldwide to be named by AACSB International to its 2021 Class of Influential Leaders, immigrated to America from Coimbatore, India, with his family in 1985 when he was 15. They eventually settled in Voorhees, New Jersey, and Kolluri found Rutgers–Camden to be the perfect college for him. “For a young person who had just come to the country not knowing his way around, it had all the markings of a great small school that pays individual attention to students,” he said, noting that classes with professors Cal Maradonna and Carol Kaufman-Scarborough, among others, had significant impact on him. “They were able to infuse in their lectures the practical applications for the theories we were learning. That kind of learning environment was foundational to everything I've done since.”

After serving as an aide to Congressman Rob Andrews of New Jersey, Kolluri moved to Washington where he worked for Andrews and later as a senior legislative aide for Congressman Dick Gephardt, a Democrat from Missouri who served in national leadership roles. “To be able to have a seat at the table at that formative age and to have an opportunity to learn the tradecraft of legislation, policy, and the impact laws have on people was an extraordinary life lesson,” said Kolluri, who also earned a law degree from Georgetown University while working on Capitol Hill.

Kolluri returned to New Jersey in 2002 and has served in leadership roles

throughout the state, including CEO of the Rowan University/Rutgers–Camden Board of Governors, CEO of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority, and commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

He took over the helm of Cooper's Ferry Partnership in 2018. The nonprofit is the largest developer of parks in the city, and is its largest manager of infrastructure projects. Kolluri said another significant initiative is Camden Works, an effort collaborating with five other nonprofits to find jobs for Camden residents. “Camden is a great city with great people,” he said. “The residents want opportunities to build a better life for themselves and the generations to come.”

Kolluri strongly believes that pedigree and privilege, of which he had neither, should not be a determinant of having an opportunity to succeed. For him, it all started with his undergraduate studies. “Everything I've done in life harkens back to the early lessons I learned at Rutgers–Camden,” he said.



From South Jersey to Switzerland

Multilingual Rutgers-Camden alumna who has lived and taught for four decades in Europe supports scholarships for Camden students

By Sam Starnes

Jeannette Regan was a young mother when she enrolled at Rutgers University-Camden in the late 1960s. “It was very unusual for married women who were mothers to be at the university,” Regan said. She met only one other student who was married and had a child, and they became friends.

A native of Merchantville, New Jersey, whose family moved to Cherry Hill, Regan had graduated from Holy Cross High School in Burlington County and attended Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, where she majored in French. After taking a year off, she married and had a daughter, and then decided to continue her education at Rutgers-Camden. She had hoped to major in French, but it wasn’t offered as a major. Passionate about languages, she took some Spanish classes, but at an adviser’s recommendation, she majored in political science, which also was her friend’s major. “Her husband said, ‘This is the housewife’s major now,’” Regan said with a laugh. “We had great fun with that.”

Regan received her Rutgers-Camden degree in 1970, and began teaching at a Camden school with many native Spanish speakers. She said her Spanish courses helped her support many disadvantaged students.

While Regan and her first husband were in the process of divorce, she earned a master’s degree in political science at Temple University. There she met her future husband, a graduate student

from the German-speaking region of Switzerland, and their relationship blossomed over a few years. “We decided we would come to Switzerland, I would learn some German, and we would be here for maybe two years,” she said. “That was more than 40 years ago.”

She and her husband, a retired trade diplomat, have lived in various parts of Switzerland and now reside in Yvonand overlooking Lake Neuchâtel and the Swiss Jura Mountains. “We live in four languages every day,” said Regan, who is fluent in German and French, and understands Swiss German. “When the phone rings, we don’t know what language it is going to be at the other end.”

Regan earned a doctorate in educational psychology at the University of Lausanne and taught academic English there, as well as the universities of Bern and Fribourg. She has retired from these, but she continues to teach French-speaking Swiss doctoral students who are writing in English.

An avid reader and lover of nature who once hiked the entire length of Switzerland with her husband, she has been politically active in Switzerland

in a variety of causes, including gender equity, financial integrity, and the environment, which has been a focus of hers since the late 1960s. “I feel at home in Switzerland because there is so much concern for the environment,” she said.

Although she has lived abroad for more than four decades, she hasn’t forgotten her undergraduate alma mater. “Rutgers was great,” she said. “I had excellent teachers.”

When the pandemic began, Regan decided to give \$10,000 she had designated for Rutgers-Camden in her will to the Watson Family Scholarship, which supports students from the city of Camden who attend the Rutgers-Camden College of Arts and Sciences. “I thought with things uncertain and with the need so great that instead of waiting until I die, this would be a good moment to give,” she said.



Jeannette Regan
CCAS’70 in Bern,
Switzerland, near
the Swiss Alps.

CAMPUS COMPETITION FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Alumni generosity benefits food pantry for students

By *Mary Clare Venuto CCAS'07, GSC'09*

Rutgers University–Camden alumni stepped up to support students at risk of going hungry, an effort that pushed Rutgers–Camden to a victory over its sibling university in North Jersey.

A friendly weeklong competition in November 2020 between the Alumni Engagement offices of Rutgers–Camden and Rutgers University–Newark was dubbed the Raptors versus Raiders Food Drive Challenge (Rutgers–Newark’s mascot is the Scarlet Raiders). A total of 116 Rutgers–Camden donors gave either food or funds, compared with 105 from Rutgers–Newark. By having the most participants, which included alumni, faculty, staff, and students, Rutgers–Camden earned a \$1,000 bonus from the Rutgers University Foundation, putting the value of donations to the Raptor Pantry at \$7,100. “These generous gifts are very helpful to our students who have struggled in so many ways due to the pandemic,” said Maria Serra, Rutgers–Camden’s director of health services. “We very much appreciate

the support, as do our students who continue to use the Raptor Pantry.”

The competition addressed a serious concern affecting campuses nationwide. Estimates are that 20 percent of college students experience food insecurity, meaning that they do not have access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food to maintain good health. In response, Rutgers–Camden opened the Raptor Pantry in fall 2017. Since then, more than 1,200 students have visited the pantry more than 8,000 times to access free food. “Many of the students are so grateful that the pantry is here,” said Madrid Moore, the operations coordinator at the Student Wellness Center. “They say, ‘Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!’”

Although the campus competition has ended, alumni and others can still contribute food or money to the



Mayco Lucero, a first-year Rutgers–Camden student and a Rutgers University Alumni Association ambassador, helped to collect contributions.



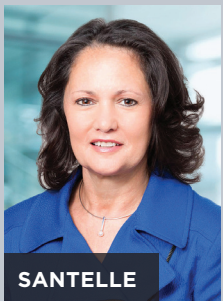
Raptor Pantry. For more information on how to donate, visit wellnesscenter.camden.rutgers.edu/donations.

The pantry has remained open during the pandemic, and is available to any Rutgers student via appointment. For more, visit wellnesscenter.camden.rutgers.edu/rucamden-raptor-pantry.

Mary Clare Venuto is acting director of alumni engagement and annual giving.

DISTINGUISHED LAW ALUMNI AWARDS

The Rutgers School of Law–Camden Alumni Association honored three alumnae during a virtual celebration in February.



SANTELE

Patricia B. Santelle RLAW’85 received the Arthur E. Armitage Sr. Distinguished Alumni Award. A leading attorney in the field of complex

insurance coverage, she is managing partner and chair of the executive committee at White and Williams LLP.

Santelle was the first woman in the firm’s history and in the city of Philadelphia to serve in that role in a major law firm.

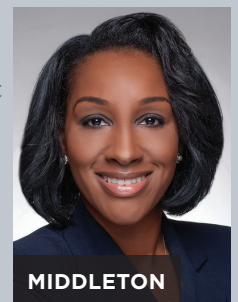
Ellen Loughney RLAW’84 was honored with the Honorable Joseph M. Nardi Jr. Distinguished Service Award. A municipal court case manager at Borgata Hotel, Casino, and Spa in Atlantic City, she has extensive experience as a trial lawyer and a history of volunteerism for her alma mater,



LOUGHNEY

county, and community.

Angella Middleton RLAW’15 received the Recent Graduate Award. A litigation associate at Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr, LLP, in Philadelphia, her practice focuses on representation of corporate and individual clients in labor and employment, white-collar crime, government investigations, and higher education matters.



MIDDLETON



HEALTH CARE



THE ARTS



BUSINESS



PUBLIC SERVICE



YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Today, Help Rutgers– Camden Make the World Better

Through research, nursing outreach, small business consulting, and civic engagement, Rutgers–Camden is supporting our communities during the pandemic. This isn't the first time the university has risen to the challenge and it won't be the last.

The time to make a difference is now.

Rutgers–Camden is a trailblazer in nursing, social equity advocacy, civic engagement, the sciences, and countless other areas that improve the human condition.

Today, you can help Rutgers–Camden continue to make discoveries, strengthen communities, and shape our society over the coming decades. You also can support students in need through the Rutgers–Camden Chancellor's Emergency Fund.

Together, let's better the world.
Today.

Visit support.rutgers.edu/covid19support

RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Rutgers University Foundation raises funds to support Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Rutgers University–Camden
303 Cooper Street
Camden, NJ 08102-1519

RUTGERS
—
SCARLET
PROMISE
GRANTS



DREAMS FULFILLED

SUPPORT TOMORROW'S LEADERS TODAY

For generations, Rutgers–Camden alumni have turned their dreams into achievements that make the world a better place. At a time when affordable access to higher education is more essential than ever, Scarlet Promise Grants give many students the leg up they need to distinguish themselves—a financial bridge to success. Scarlet Promise Grants help tomorrow's leaders fulfill their potential.

**Make a gift in support of
Scarlet Promise Grants today.**

[SUPPORT.RUTGERS.EDU/SCARLETPROMISE](https://support.rutgers.edu/scarletpromise)