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RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN

A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI, FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS

magazine

Local Impact, Global Reach

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Here in Camden, new life has come to a campus that is once again buzzing with the excitement of students and faculty finally together again. As we look ahead to the joy of commencement and the warmer months of summer, we're bringing you inspiring stories of perseverance, connection, and discovery. These stories celebrate the incredible, life-changing impact that Rutgers-Camden makes right here in our beloved community and around the world.



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN MAGAZINE IS DIGITAL

Scan the QR code to view the inaugural digital issue of Rutgers University-Camden Magazine and enjoy an immersive experience for each story in this issue.

Message from the Chancellor



As I approach my first anniversary as chancellor of Rutgers University-Camden on July 1, I look back with deep pride over what we have been able to accomplish together. We have myriad reasons to celebrate our beloved community.

You will find numerous stories of celebration in this new, digital edition of *Rutgers University-Camden Magazine* that focuses on our university's "Local Impact, Global Reach." A rich menu of stories feature our extensive international outreach, including a 25th Learning Abroad trip to South Africa, which has hosted almost 1,600 students, faculty, and alumni on transformative journeys since launching in 1996, and a first-person account by Rutgers-Camden alumnus Edwin Smith who earned a degree here after being exiled from his native South Africa during the fight against apartheid. A story about the work of the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice begins with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Greg Pardlo, an associate professor of creative writing who is a co-director of the institute, doing significant work in Africa, but then transitions to the important work the institute is doing on campus and in Camden. Other international stories with global reach and local impact include an in-depth look at accomplished faculty experts analyzing the war in Ukraine, and the story of a couple who escaped Afghanistan under the Taliban to find a safe haven to continue their graduate and legal studies at Rutgers-Camden.

You will also find feature stories highlighting the great work we do in South Jersey, including a commitment to diversity and inclusion, support all of society through educating nurses in the Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden, outstanding work in the School of Business-Camden, and the story of a professor of public policy who is a national leader in the protection of voting rights. Alumni stories include a profile of Corrine Bradley-Powers, founder of an iconic soul food restaurant in Camden that won a James Beard America's Classics Award, and Lauren Bianco, a young woman who overcame great challenges to earn her degree at Rutgers-Camden and go onto a career of helping others.

These fantastic stories come together at the end of an academic year when we have been slowly emerging from a pandemic. The inspiring work and the people celebrated in this magazine demonstrate the resourcefulness and the resiliency that this campus has shown and continues to show in challenging times. I look forward to celebrating more anniversaries as chancellor of Rutgers-Camden, and I could not be prouder to be a part of this community.

Dr. Antonio D. Tillis
Chancellor

Chancellor's Cabinet Takes Campus to New Heights

BY ALINA O'DONNELL

The Chancellor's Cabinet at Rutgers University–Camden has welcomed three new leadership hires. Working closely with Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis, they will leverage their collective experience and unique perspectives to elevate the reputation and awareness of the campus, expand its network of supporters, and enrich the student educational experience.

MARSHA BESONG, Ed. D.

Vice Chancellor of Student Academic Success

Marsha Besong—who has served as assistant chancellor for student academic success since December 2016—was promoted to vice chancellor for student academic success in February with an acting start date of June 2021. Starting as director of the Educational Opportunity Fund for two years, her seven-year tenure at Rutgers–Camden has focused on helping students to reach their academic and career goals. As vice chancellor for student academic success, she has already helped to implement several innovative initiatives, including Alpha Alpha Alpha, an honor society for first-generation students, and Bridging First Generation Students (B1GS), a student organization for undergraduates. Prior to Rutgers–Camden, she worked in student success and affairs, strategic planning, and school reform efforts for two elementary schools at Drexel University. She holds a bachelor of arts in African American studies from Temple University, a master of science in nonprofit management from Eastern University, and a doctor of education in leadership and innovation from Wilmington University.



ENDIA DECORDOVA, MBA
Vice Chancellor for Advancement



Endia DeCordova, a mission-driven development and communications executive, joined Rutgers–Camden as the new vice chancellor for advancement in March. In this position, DeCordova serves on the Rutgers University Foundation leadership team and advises Chancellor Tillis in all matters related to the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of fundraising prospects. With more than 12 years of experience in academia and other professional settings—including her most recent role as associate vice president for development and strategic initiatives at the University of Connecticut Foundation—DeCordova brings extensive knowledge in community engagement, fundraising, strategic communications, and project management. She holds a bachelor of science in communications from Morgan State University and a master of business administration from the University of Hartford.

TONI MOONEY SMITH, MSC
Vice Chancellor of Marketing and Communications



In October, Toni Mooney Smith joined Rutgers University–Camden as vice chancellor for marketing and communications. She immediately hit the ground running in this new senior leadership role, working to heighten awareness of the Rutgers–Camden brand while elevating the integrity of that brand, increasing exposure in national media outlets and accelerating momentum in the university’s rise in the national rankings. Mooney Smith most recently served as executive director of marketing and communications for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Houston, where she edited an award-winning alumni magazine, among numerous other initiatives. Her resume also includes director-level communications roles in health care and academia, specializing in strategic communications, brand strategy, marketing, crisis communications and public affairs. Mooney Smith holds a bachelor of arts in communications from the University of Houston and a master of science in communications from Northwestern University.

FEATURE STORY

25 Years of Learning Abroad in South Africa



25 YEARS LEARNING ABROAD
IN SOUTH AFRICA



The Learning Abroad program in South Africa marks 25 years of educational journeys, sensational sightseeing, and one encounter with a hungry baboon. _____

BY SAM STARNES



T

he first time Rutgers University-Camden sophomore Tyrone King Jr. set foot on an airplane, he took a seat on an enormous jet embarking on a 16-and-a-half-hour flight from Newark, New Jersey, to South Africa. He was nervous boarding, and thought, “Oh my gosh! Should I have packed a parachute?” But once the plane was in the air, he realized, “It really just felt like a train ride.”

King, a first-generation college student from Camden who is a music major with an emphasis in music education and a minor in Spanish, traveled for the Rutgers–Camden civic engagement-oriented course “Community Service, Social Change, and Knowledge of Place in South Africa” in March. He said the trip, which included a visit to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment, and immersive civic engagement projects with a K-8 school and women’s shelters outside of Cape Town, was transformative. “I definitely plan to go back to South Africa,” he said.

King received a Learning Abroad scholarship, which covered most of the expense of the trip. “I hadn’t thought about going to Africa, because I never thought that financially I would be able to,” he said. “I’m fortunate that I have been able to do something that my parents and my older sister were not able to do.”



Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis and a group from Rutgers–Camden in front of the Nelson Mandela statue at The Drakenstein Correctional Centre.



Cal Maradonna on his first trip to South Africa in 1996. Image courtesy Cal Maradonna

KING was among a group of students, faculty, and alumni who traveled to South Africa for three Learning Abroad courses that included the 10-day trip. This year’s trip marked the 25th to South Africa since Cal Maradonna, a Rutgers–Camden alumnus who was then dean of students and is now director of off-campus programs for the Rutgers School of Business–Camden, founded the long-lasting tradition. Maradonna has led the trip, which has been sponsored the School of Business–Camden every year since 1996 except for the two previous years when the pandemic prohibited travel. He developed and continues to teach “Doing Business in South Africa,” which was the foundational course for the program.

Since Maradonna launched the program, a total of 1,567 students, faculty, and alumni have made the annual journey. “I really love South Africa,” said Maradonna, who has visited South Africa at total of 40 times, and once met Nelson Mandela. “I had a great experience on my early visits. My goal became to bring as many people with me as possible to have that experience.”

The genesis of the trip dates back to 1995, soon after Maradonna had overseen opening of a new bookstore in the Rutgers–Camden Campus Center. A visiting contingency from the University of Namibia asked for help in opening their own bookstore and developing other student services. The next thing Maradonna knew, he was off to Namibia, which had gained full independence from neighboring South Africa five years before. “I didn’t know where Namibia was,” he said. “I’ll be honest with you—before that, I had never heard of Namibia.”

But soon he learned it well, spending a month there in June of 1995, and then again in October of that year, in addition to traveling in South Africa. Maradonna, who had been on a Rutgers–Camden Learning Abroad trip to Moscow in 1984, had always thought, “I would like to lead a trip.”

“My goal became to bring as many people with me as possible to have that experience.”

CAL MARADONNA, *director of off-campus programs*

Maradonna organized the first Learning Abroad trip to Namibia and South Africa in the spring of 1996, building it around a sociology course. While the trip was enjoyable, it had its challenges, including one memorable afternoon near Cape Town. “We went to Cape of Good Hope, a two-hour bus ride,” he said. “We were coming back and there were all these baboons on the side of the road. Somebody in the bus opened a window, and the biggest, ugliest-looking baboon I’ve ever seen jumped on the bus. It started running up and down the aisle. People were screaming. Three women locked themselves in the bathroom.”

Maradonna said a quick-thinking student got the baboon’s attention and threw an apple out the window. “The baboon followed it out and we shut the window,” he said, adding that no one got hurt. “Half the people on the bus were crying and half were laughing. I said, ‘I am never doing this again.’”

But Maradonna, of course, would do it again—24 more times. And he plans to lead the trip again next year.

An Alumna's Perspective

SANTA BANNON-SHILLEA CCAS'97 was a junior on that first trip and recalls the baboon. "It was rifling through all our bags for food," she said. "I thought, 'I'm going to take a picture of this if it's the last picture I ever take.'"

In another fraught episode, Bannon-Shillea and a few other friends were in a van that got lost for part of an evening from a caravan in Etosha National Park in Namibia. They had seen a lion kill a springbok—a medium-sized antelope—and they asked the driver to slow down so they could take photographs, which led to them getting lost. She said that episode, like the baboon encounter, was frightening, but "we survived, and we have lots of really hilarious stories to tell about it."

Bannon-Shillea, a graduate of Cherry Hill East High School, and a group of six students she made friends with on the trip adopted the nickname of "the African Queens" after her mother borrowed the title from the classic film starring Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart to describe them that way. "We're all still friends to this day," she said.

"I tell them they absolutely take some sort of study abroad, it is really mind-expanding."

SANTA BANNON-SHILLEA CCAS'97

Now an art dealer living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Bannon-Shillea was a single mom at the time and had to take out a loan to make the trip, but said it was well worth it. She still owns a painting she bought a gallery in Cape Town. "I don't know where I had the audacity to go into a gallery and buy something," said Bannon-Shillea, who now runs her own art gallery. "That's the first piece of original art I ever bought in my life."

Although she has since traveled many places in the world, Bannon-Shillea often thinks about the trip and tells others about it. "I'm so glad Cal had the idea to do this," she said. "It was life-changing for me."

Studying abroad is something she encourages all college students to do, including many who have worked as interns for her. "I tell them they absolutely take some sort of study abroad," she said. "It is really mind-expanding."



Antonio D. Tillis, Chancellor of Rutgers University-Camden and Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria

A Focus on South Africa

AFTER INITIAL TRIPS included both Namibia and South Africa, Maradonna trimmed the itinerary back to visit only South Africa. The Rutgers Law School added “South African Constitutional Law” to the Learning Abroad program in 2003. Rutgers Law School Co-Dean Kimberly Mutcherson has taught the course several times and traveled to South Africa with her students in March. “Teaching this course and traveling with students has been one of the highlights of my academic career,” she said. “South Africa’s post-apartheid Constitution is so different from our own, and the contrast allows to me to talk to students both about the symbolic power of constitutions and the difficulty of making constitutional promises a reality.”

Mutcherson said there also are many “beyond the classroom learning” benefits. “The opportunity to travel with students and get to know them in a different setting is an incredible gift,” she said. “I remain close to several of our Rutgers Law alums who went on trips to South Africa with me and they all remember the experience with enormous fondness. I am particularly struck by one graduate who committed herself to becoming a world traveler after going to South Africa and whose adventures around the globe I have been able to follow on Instagram.”

Civic engagement courses were an early addition to the trip, and they continue today. Amanda Holloway, assistant dean of students, who has taught the South Africa civic engagement course six times, including the most recent trip, first went on the trip in 2000 when she was a Rutgers-Camden sophomore studying urban studies. At the time, Holloway, who grew up in Bellmawr, New Jersey, had never traveled beyond the East Coast of the United States. The trip had a powerful impact on her. “It developed my love for travel and learning about other cultures,” Holloway said.

“The opportunity to travel with students and get to know them in a different setting is an incredible gift,”

KIMBERLY MUTCHERSON, *co-dean of Rutgers-Law School in Camden*

She returned as a student in her senior year in 2002, and after earning a master’s degree and advancing through the ranks of staff at Rutgers-Camden, began to teach the civic engagement course, which is connected with the Department of Gender Studies. In total, counting two student trips, two trips as a staff member, and teaching the civic engagement course six times, she has gone on the trip a total of 10 times—and she plans to continue going.

Holloway loves sharing the experience with students. “The best part of leading the course is to see it through the students’ eyes and see them having a great experience,” she said. “Whether it’s developing a love for travel, or developing a love for learning about other cultures, or just developing a love for South Africa, it is always really rewarding.”



Kimberly Mutcherson, co-dean of Rutgers-Law School in Camden at the Cape of Good Hope during a previous trip to South Africa with Rutgers-Camden. Imagery courtesy Kimberly Mutcherson

Support and Service

FROM THE VERY FIRST TRIP, Maradonna has imbued the journey with a spirit of giving and support for South Africans. “We all had our luggage filled with books to donate,” Bannon-Shillea said of the 1996 trip.

On every trip, attendees have been asked to bring goods to donate to schools and other organizations that help those in need. Maradonna has guided students into connecting with many merchants and makers of crafts in the towns and villages the group visits, as well as local residents. “One of the things we never wanted to do was to take a bus through a township and look out the windows,” he said. “We walk through the communities. Many there live in horrible poverty, but they are proud of what they have accomplished since apartheid ended.”

Tyrone King Jr. enjoyed the connections and purchased hand carvings of an elephant and giraffe on the recent trip. “We met some awesome people who created a lot of beautiful arts and crafts,” he said.

King also relished the opportunity to interact with students in the Klipfontein Primary School in Bonteheuwel Township, near Cape Town, which he and his classmates visited and engaged in a service project. He had the opportunity to sit in the classes and to teach a lesson. “I want to be a teacher myself,” he said. “Being able to interact with the students was really awesome.”



When Maradona Met Mandela

A resplendent scarlet red Rutgers robe led to Rutgers–Camden’s Cal Maradona meeting South African President Nelson Mandela

BY SAM STARNES



(Pictured left to right) Sam Nujoma, former president of the Republic of Namibia, Cal Maradonna, and Ian Jacobs former associate provost at Rutgers–Camden during the 1997 Rutgers–Camden’s College of Arts and Sciences commencement.

In 1997, Cal Maradonna received an invitation from South Africa that was too good to pass up.

He had spent two years building a Rutgers University–Camden Learning Abroad program and establishing relationships with universities in South Africa and Namibia. The invitation came from the University of Fort Hare in South Africa, which was hosting a ceremony honoring Nelson Mandela, the revered leader who had led the struggle to replace South Africa’s system of apartheid with a democracy. They wanted a Rutgers representative to attend.

Maradonna, who had earned an undergraduate business degree from Rutgers–Camden in 1974 and a master’s in business in 1979, was dean of students at the time. Instead of the black commencement cap and gown befitting his degrees that he could have worn to the Mandela ceremony, he received permission to borrow one of the distinctive scarlet robes traditionally worn by Rutgers presidents and provosts. “I said, ‘I’m going to look good at this ceremony.’”

MANDELA,

who spent 27 years in prison, had been released in 1990. In 1994, the year apartheid ended, Mandela won the South African presidency in the nation’s first free elections and began a five-year term. As a young man in 1939, he had enrolled at the University of Fort Hare, but the school expelled him in his third year for organizing a student boycott. Now, almost 60 years later, it was honoring him.

Dressed in the Rutgers regalia, Maradonna lined up in a back room, behind a gymnasium where the ceremony was to take place and waited for the processional to begin. “I’m there. I’ve got my red robe on. Somebody taps me on the shoulder. I turn around. It’s Nelson Mandela.

“He says, ‘I’m Nelson Mandela.’ I said, ‘Yes sir. I know.’ He wanted to know what university I was from. He loved my robe. We had a three-minute conversation. It was amazing.”

Maradonna wasn’t able to get a photo—this was before the era of smartphones, and he didn’t have a camera with him or a photographer near. There also were limitations on photos of Mandela at the event. “He didn’t want flash pictures, because his eyes were bad from breaking up limestone rocks in a quarry while he was in prison,” Maradonna said. “I said to myself, ‘I have to chalk this up as an incredible experience.’ It was a fascinating day.”

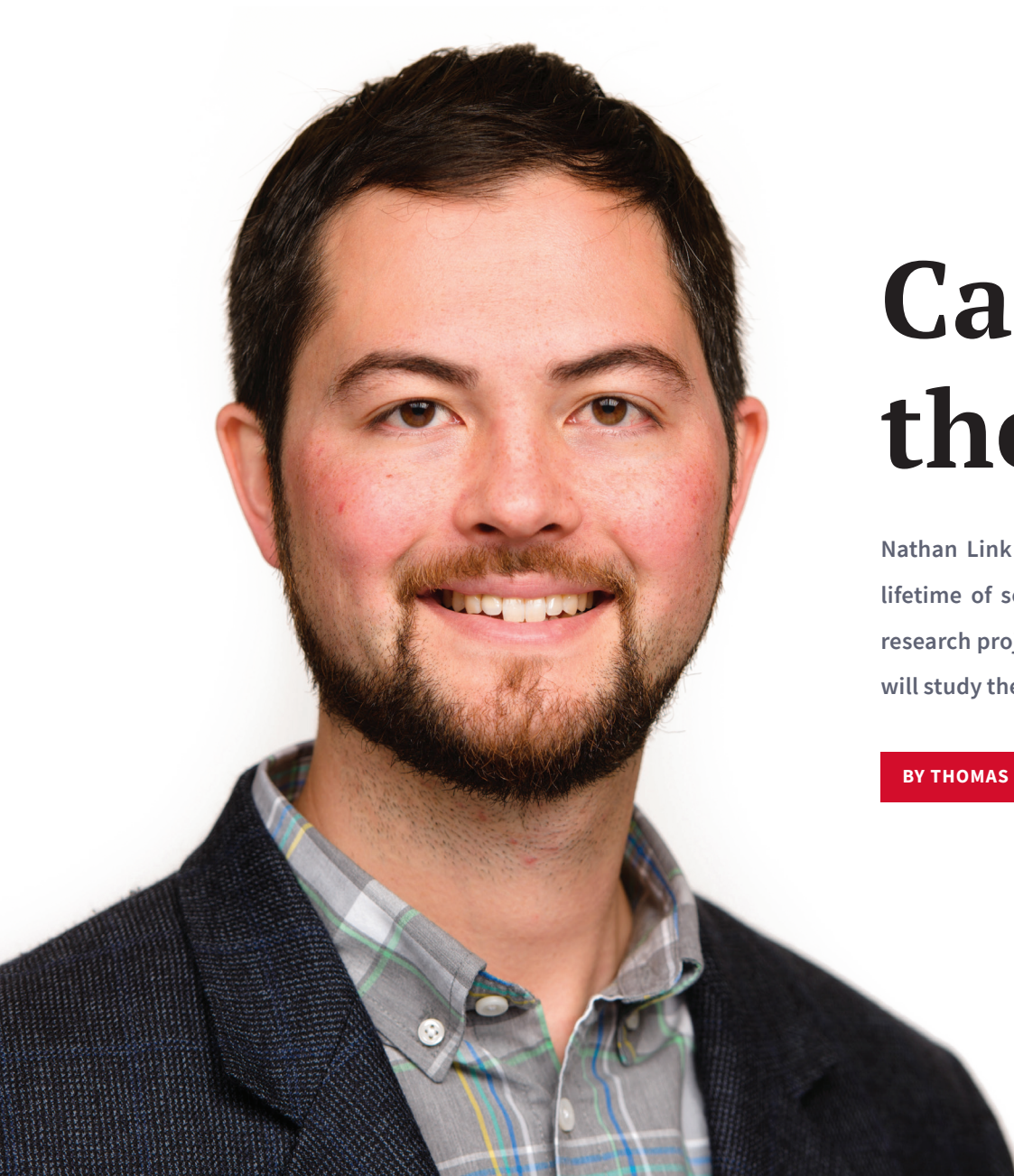
The meeting with Mandela, who died in 2013 at the age of 95, was not Maradonna’s only interaction with an African president in 1997. That same year, Maradonna recruited Sam Nujoma, president of the Republic of Namibia, to speak at Rutgers–Camden’s College of Arts and Sciences commencement. Maradonna had connected with Nujoma in efforts to support a bookstore at the University of Namibia in 1995.

Nujoma, the first president of Namibia after it achieved independence from South Africa in 1990, was a contemporary of Mandela in the fight against apartheid. In his 1997 address, Nujoma credited Rutgers with helping to establish a national Namibian university, closing his address to cheers: “Long live Rutgers University! Long live the University of Namibia! Long live the spirit of international cooperation!”

Twenty-five years later, Maradonna reflected fondly on his encounters with the two African presidents. “It is something I’ll never forget,” he said.

*“Long live Rutgers University!
Long live the University of
Namibia! Long live the spirit of
international cooperation!”*

SAM NUJOMA, the first president of Namibia



Carrying the Costs

Nathan Link turned youthful misdeeds into a lifetime of seeking criminal justice. His latest research project funded by a \$1.5 million grant will study the impact of criminal fees and fines.

BY THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN

“Financial justice goes hand-in-hand with social and racial justice. This is an issue that has long needed to be studied.”

ANTONI D. TILLIS, CHANCELLOR RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN

Like many teenagers, Nathan Link recalled, he and his friends got into their share of trouble.

Growing up in a privileged town, the Rutgers University–Camden researcher said run-ins with the law were more likely to result in referrals for therapists or counselors rather than meetings with judges and jail time. Nonetheless, watching how those situations were handled differently for him and some of his friends of color was just enough “to get the gears turning,” said Link, an assistant professor of criminal justice.

By the time that Link was 18 years old, his misbehaving days were a thing of the past. However, his interest in the criminal justice system was just getting started. He explored these issues further as a criminology major at The College of New Jersey. Upon graduating, Link “fell into social work” working at a Philadelphia-area treatment facility for juveniles from disadvantaged backgrounds. “The experience made me realize that I could focus on social work as a career,” he told Rutgers University President Jonathan Holloway during an episode of “Faces and Voices of Rutgers,” Holloway’s series of conversations with members of the university community. “I saw that it was a way I could think about human behavior and criminal justice from a different angle.”

Link became increasingly focused on research and delved into policy issues in the Eagleton Institute of Politics, while earning a master of social work degree at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. He saw that many nonprofits and social services agencies were underfunded and didn’t have the time to conduct proper evaluations of the programs. The gears kept turning.

“I just had these burning questions, ‘What works? Does this program work? Should we be spending time and resources in this way,’” he said.

In short, Link said that he became motivated to do research that can improve people’s lives. This was especially true of those who come in contact with the juvenile justice system. He thought, “How can we not disfigure their lives more?”

Link and Jordan Hyatt, a criminology professor at Drexel University, put such questions to the test in a groundbreaking new research project, thanks to a \$1.5 million grant from Arnold Ventures and \$45,000 from the City of Philadelphia.

The rigorous study will address how the financial hurdles stemming from criminal fees and debts benefits the lives of individuals being processed through a key criminal diversion program in Philadelphia. The program works by enabling individuals who are able to complete the program successfully, including paying associated fees, to have their charges expunged.

“As a result, the program is intended to reduce the stigma and other ways that a criminal record can disfigure someone’s life,” said Link, the co-principal investigator on the project.

Rutgers University–Camden Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis applauded the project for addressing an issue that has far-reaching societal implications. “Financial justice goes hand-in-hand with social and racial justice,” Chancellor Tillis said. “This is an issue that has long needed to be studied.”

Link explained that court fees pose a significant hurdle for many people; they struggle to complete the program and therefore do not reap the benefits. “They will continue to have their arrests and charges on their criminal record,” he said. “This can affect a range of future outcomes, including job prospects and the ability to support a family.”

The main focus of the study will thus examine how criminal fees impact an individual’s chances of completing the diversion program, gaining employment and reducing recidivism—meaning people are less likely to commit additional crimes—among other measures. Additional analysis will further break down these findings along racial and other demographics. Other elements of the project will examine how court fees influence emerging adult populations and whether they have disparate impacts across neighborhoods.

Link and Hyatt, the principal investigator, are now seeking to work with policymakers and legislators in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Their ultimate goal is to create a strong evidence base for reform efforts in this realm. “Our hope is that this study will inform policy on a state as well as national level,” Link said. “We have the ability to produce very strong findings that push the needle forward on some of these social and racial justice issues.”

Link added that, although the ultimate purpose of “the dream project” is to influence policy, in a very real way, they will already be impacting people’s lives. “This grant will address the financial hurdles for many people in Philadelphia who may not have much money,” he said. “That alone makes this project impactful in a way that my past work hasn’t.”

Link now poignantly plays an integral role in shedding light on such realities of criminal justice just as he once discovered on his own. Sit in on his engaged civic learning course, “Mass Incarceration, Reentry and Injustice,” and you will hear discussions on the causes and consequences of mass incarceration, as well as innovative ideas for reform strategies. As he told President Holloway, some of his students are “shocked” to hear about the realities facing those trying to reintegrate into society, while other students may have personally known someone who experienced these harsh realities. “But they are equally motivated; there is a fire behind some of these students,” he said.

It’s a fire that Link understands full well. And it’s one that his students may, in turn, pass on to others some day.



A Place in the Pantheon

Rutgers University–Camden Historian,
Evan Jewell, Earns Rome Prize

BY THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN

Evan Jewell. Image by Victor Xavier Zarour Zarzar

Rutgers University–
Camden historian Evan
Jewell has earned a
place in the pantheon.

For more than a century, the American Academy in Rome has awarded the Rome Prize and Italian Fellowships to support the work of innovators in the arts and humanities. The assistant professor of history is one of 38 American and four Italian artists and scholars—all in the early or middle stages of their careers—given the 2022-23 “gift of time and space to think and work.” The fellows will each receive a stipend, workspace, room, and board at the academy’s 11-acre campus on the Janiculum Hill in Rome, from September 2022 to July 2023.

Jewell becomes the first Rutgers University–Camden professor—and the first Rutgers University professor while a member of the faculty—to earn the distinguished award. “We applaud the extraordinary work of Dr. Evan Jewell, who has reached the pinnacle in the study of ancient history,” said Rutgers University–Camden Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis. “The international community is now recognizing the amazing scholarship and teaching that Rutgers–Camden students in his Ancient Rome and Western Civilization courses have been privy to.”

ROME PRIZE WINNERS

are selected annually by independent juries of distinguished artists and scholars through a national competition encompassing a range of disciplines. “This year’s Rome Prize winners and Italian Fellows represents the diversity of the United States, and their projects build on the academy’s commitment to the global impact of the arts and humanities,” said American Academy in Rome president and CEO Mark Robbins. “These fellowships are transformative, and we look forward to seeing the ways this experience is translated in the work to come.”

Jewell was selected for the Rome Prize in part due to his one-of-a-kind book project, “Youth and Power: Acting Your Age in the Roman Empire (149 BCE - 68 CE),” a work-in-progress which represents a new way of studying the ancient history of youth, age, and aging in the Roman world. The ambitious project combines the use of many different media, such as coins, sculpture, literary texts, and graffiti. Moreover, it adopts a new framework that views age as “something that is and was performed,” much like gender, Jewell said.

“Basically, I’m asking how did young Roman men ‘act their age’ (or not) at different times in Roman history,” he said. “I’m also extending the project to look at how the fascist regime in Italy under Mussolini attempted to revive and appropriate some of these Roman age prescriptions for their own youth groups. In the process, I hope to join the growing chorus of scholars aiming to interrogate the dark legacy of ancient history in the modern world.”

The Philadelphia resident said that earning the highly competitive fellowship was a “dream come true” and a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” that will allow him to focus on his work unlike any other fellowship. “You live with all of the other fellows in Rome, have meals cooked for you by the academy’s kitchen five days a week, and have 24-hour access to their world-class library,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to see things and gain access to materials that you might not otherwise.”

In addition to researching and penning his book in local libraries, Jewell plans to visit special collections in museums, such as the Vatican, as well as several fascist sites

where youth groups were headquartered. He also looks forward to forging professional collaborations and friendships during his year there. “The opportunity to break bread and share ideas with artists, architects, scholars, musicians, and more will really help me to think in new ways about my book project as well as future projects,” he said.

The history professor hopes that, in turn, the professional connections he makes in Rome will return with him to his Rutgers–Camden classroom—whether that is through guest Zoom appearances or by introducing his students to others’ work. He noted that he is already planning a study abroad opportunity with his Rutgers–Camden colleagues highlighting a Roman site in Spain. He also wants to make connections for students with the summer school at the American Academy in Rome. “I want to open as many doors for Rutgers–Camden students as I can,” he said. “In the long run, I really want our students to see the possibilities that exist for them at a place like the American Academy and in Rome itself.”



St Peter's Basilica, The Vatican, Rome, Lazio, Italy. Getty Images



Experts Explain the War in Ukraine

Rutgers University–Camden professors have been on the forefront of helping make sense of Russia's invasion and its ripples that have resonated around the world

BY THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN

The world has watched in disbelief as Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine with a stunning display of firepower and disregard for human life. Here, six Rutgers University–Camden faculty experts explain the reasons behind the invasion, its political and economic impacts, and whether war crimes have been committed, among other topics.

WOJTEK WOLFE

Associate Professor of Political Science



Professor Wojtek Wolfe Explains

The Forces At Play

Wolfe, a native of Poland who is a prominent writer and speaker on foreign policy and international relations, has been a mainstay of regional news coverage, detailing the historical and geopolitical forces at play in Eastern Europe and their impacts on the U.S. economy and energy security. In one televised interview, Wolfe said the invasion was “like a bad dream” for many Ukrainians, who have been no strangers to tumult and turmoil since declaring independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. He explained that the region, lacking the geographic insulation that exists in North America, has a long history of Russian invasions.

The current Russian invasion, he said, is partly in response to NATO expansion, but the bigger picture is about Russia’s weakening security capabilities. He predicts that Russia will not have a more capable military in the future than it does now, and its current capabilities are much weaker than they were a decade ago. In Wolfe’s estimation, the trend will continue because of Russia’s declining population and weakening economy.

The Rutgers–Camden researcher, who authored the 2008 book *Winning the War of Words: Selling the War on Terror from Afghanistan to Iraq*, sees the invasion of Ukraine as part of a larger pattern of letting Russia invade foreign countries with little to no consequences. He cited Russian invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, as well as Russian intervention in Syria in 2015. “Even with the chemical weapons used in Syria, we’ve had a pattern of weak response,” Wolfe said. “Given the war fatigue, this will likely continue that trend.”

RICHARD MICHELFELDER

Clinical Associate Professor of Finance



Professor Richard Michelfelder Provides

A Financial Perspective

When Russian boots hit the ground in Ukraine, the U.S. and Europe began waging economic warfare on Russia. Michelfelder, who previously served as CEO of the national public utility consulting firm Quantum, said the effect of sanctions on Russia’s economy has been “devastating.” The Moscow stock market closed, as many experts worried that a crash was imminent. Most institutions holding rubles began looking to divest of the currency and investments in Russian business stocks. In addition, Russia’s partial ban from participating in the SWIFT market—an international electronic clearinghouse for transactions—limited the country’s ability to do business with the rest of the world. The Russian government and many corporations risked defaulting on loans, and massive layoffs loomed as businesses feared bankruptcy.

The U.S. and European countries, of course, have not been immune to the economic impacts of the crisis. Russia is one of the world’s largest producers of oil and natural gas; Europe closed much of its gas- and oil-producing capacity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and now imports 40 percent of its natural gas from Russia. By comparison, Michelfelder explained, the U.S. imports only about 3 percent of its oil (as well as small quantities of liquefied natural gas) from Russia. “The amount may be small, but at the margin, small changes can have major impacts on market expectations,” he said.

One of the most visible impacts for Americans has been the jump in gasoline prices. Michelfelder explained that any reduction in oil supply or even the expectation of a reduction will cause gasoline prices to rise. Moreover, potential supply shortages impact a variety of stocks as well, given that many products (including anything made with plastic) use oil as an energy component, are manufactured with electricity produced from natural gas, or are delivered by oil derivatives, such as kerosene and diesel fuel. “Look around you—everything has an oil and electricity component,” Michelfelder said.

MARIE CHEVRIER

Professor of Public Policy



Professor Marie Chevrier Discusses

The Fear of Chemical and Biological Weapons

As the invasion entered the third week, NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg warned that, in its desperation, Russia could resort to using chemical weapons. Chevrier, an expert in weapons and arms control, said that any known chemical stockpiles in Russia were destroyed under international supervision in accordance with the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. Both the United States and Russia, as well as several other countries, have spent millions destroying chemical weapon stockpiles. “So, for Russia to use a military-scale chemical weapon, it would violate a treaty that it has supported for a very long time,” Chevrier said.

In addition to chemical weapons, the former Soviet Union also had stockpiles of biological weapons—as did the U.S., which got rid of them in 1970 following a review by President Nixon. In 1975, a global biological weapons treaty took effect, banning the production and storage of weapons, but lacking verification measures. The Soviet Union egregiously violated that treaty, according to Chevrier, but no stockpile is known to exist in present-day Russia. “Nonetheless, it is a very reasonable fear and concern that Russia could still use biological weapons,” Chevrier said.

MIKE BOYLE

Associate Professor of Political Science



Professor Mike Boyle Explores

The Information Battle Space

As attacks continued against the Ukrainian people, countries sought to control the narrative via the information battlespace. Boyle, author of the 2020 book *The Drone Age: How Drone Technology Will Change War and Peace*, sees “two different worlds” of Russian propaganda: one aimed at its own soldiers and citizens, and one for the world beyond Russia. Internationally, he said, U.S. and European counter-disinformation campaigns have blocked much of Russia’s messaging, even at the risk of exposing their sources.

Inside Russia, however, Putin’s government took a page out of the “authoritarian playbook,” as Boyle calls it, and shut down independent Russian TV and newspapers, as well as blocked social media platforms. The government also kept up a steady stream of propaganda about the purported risks of genocide for Russian speakers and others, as well as fantasies about drug-addicted Nazis in the Ukrainian government. While many Russians know that these are lies, according to Boyle, the propaganda has helped inflate Putin’s support among some segments of the population and kept the masses confused and complacent as the war progresses.

Boyle thinks NATO forces must walk a fine line in order to support the defense of Ukraine but not appear directly engaged in the fight. This delicate balance is shaped by two factors. First, he said, are Russia’s capabilities as a nuclear-armed state. Any military confrontation with Russia, even something accidental, runs a grave risk of escalation. Secondly, according to Article V of the NATO Charter, all NATO members agree to treat an attack on a full NATO member as an attack against themselves. While Ukraine is not a NATO member, its neighbors in Europe are torn between a desire to help and a fear of provoking Russia. “It’s a tough balance and hard to do morally given the suffering in Ukraine, but unfortunately one that is necessary,” Boyle said.

NICK KAPUR

Associate Professor of History



Professor Nick Kapur Examines

The Impact of Chinese-Russian Relations

Kapur, author of the 2018 book *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo*, sees China and Russia as being in a strategic partnership directed against the United States. The leaders of both countries share a sense that the U.S. is opposed to their interests and hopes for regime change in their countries. “To sum up their partnership,” said Kapur, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

This partnership is a departure from the norm, he explained, noting that Russia and China have traditionally viewed each other with distrust. The two nations share long borders and have had numerous border disputes over the centuries. Although Russia came under communist rule in 1917 and China in 1949, suspicion, mistrust, and a sense of competition rapidly led to what is known as the Sino-Soviet Split between the two nations, lasting from 1960 until the end of the Soviet Union in 1990. The United States, said Kapur, benefited from this animosity.

Kapur dismissed notions that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine emboldened China and made them view the United States as a “paper tiger.” On the contrary, China takes the United States and its power seriously. “Putin is the one who underestimated the strength of the United States,” Kapur said. “I expected the incompetence of the Russian invasion might make China rethink Russia’s reliability as a partner.”

HARRY RHEA

Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Law



Professor Harry Rhea Investigates

Alleged War Crimes

Rhea—who trained as a war crimes investigator at the Institute for International Criminal Investigations at the Hague—has been focused on the allegations of Russia committing war crimes. In late February, the International Court of Justice announced that it would open investigations. International criminal law, according to Rhea, deals with crimes that are so egregious in nature that they “shock the conscience” of the international community, which has the responsibility to respond. “The international community understands that war is inhumane by nature, so it makes something inhumane more humane,” Rhea said.

The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 define what is permissible—for instance, the type of weaponry used during armed conflict. The Geneva Conventions, adopted in August 1949, explicitly state that certain individuals—including sick or wounded soldiers in the field or at sea, prisoners of war, and civilians—cannot be targeted under any circumstances. “The idea of international humanitarian law and these conventions is to prevent unnecessary suffering,” Rhea said.

In light of these definitions, Rhea said, the Russian military appears to have committed crimes of aggression by illegally invading the sovereign state of Ukraine. The Russian military also appears to have committed war crimes by not discriminating between civilians and belligerents in its attacks. In addition, if Russia has used cluster bombs as has been reported, that too is a violation of the Hague Conventions. Finally, Russia appears to be committing crimes against humanity, which entail widespread and systematic attacks against civilian populations. Military operations can be considered systematic attacks, Rhea explained, but they cannot target civilians nor be carried out in an area where there is knowledge of a large civilian presence.

He cautions that genocide is a trickier argument, noting that, although thousands of people are being killed, there must be a specific intent to destroy a particular group based on nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion in order for it to be considered genocide. “However, it doesn’t take a legal expert to say that what is happening is wrong, inhumane, and unnecessary, and should be stopped,” Rhea said. “People should be punished.”

Impacting the Scales of Justice

Rutgers Law School students in Camden shape New Jersey legislation
banning invasive medical exams without prior written consent

BY MARGARET MCHUGH





Ruth Anne Robbin, Distinguished Clinical Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School in Camden.

Three years ago, Distinguished Clinical Professor of Law Ruth Anne Robbins asked her law students to research an emerging controversy: the practice of physicians and medical students performing invasive exams on unconscious patients. New Jersey law at the time didn't prohibit such exams. Robbins' assignment paid off in a big way: In January 2022, New Jersey became one of 16 states to make the practice illegal, and the legislation's passage can be credited to more than a few students from Rutgers Law School in Camden.

News articles began surfacing two decades ago about women—often victims of sexual assault—who were traumatized when they learned they had received, without prior consent, pelvic exams while under sedation for unrelated procedures. In many cases, these exams were done by medical school students as part of their training.

Robbins (who herself has a law degree from Rutgers Law School in Camden) wanted students in her “Legislative Policy and Drafting” course to conduct research on the problem and analyze other states’ legislation. “The students really had influence on the final shape of New Jersey’s law,” Robbins said.

The legislation, signed into law by Gov. Phil Murphy, prohibits invasive medical exams on unconscious patients without their prior written consent. New Jersey Sen. Fred Madden, whose district includes parts of Camden and Gloucester counties, was a primary sponsor of the bill. “The Rutgers students played an instrumental role in this process,” he said. “Their research provided a template for fine-tuning the bill we had introduced. I am truly thankful for the active and conscientious input of the Rutgers Law students.”

Paul Prendergast, a 2019 Rutgers Law who was among the first students in Robbins’ course to take up the issue, was pleased the work resulted in the new law. “It has been a long time coming,” he said. Kate Doyle, a third-year law student who helped shepherd the companion bills through the legislature, agreed. “I’m relieved and happy to see this law on the books,” she said.



Kate Doyle, a third-year Rutgers Law in Camden student who was instrumental in shaping the new law, testified before the New Jersey Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee in May 2021. Photos by Brandon Cantarella CCAS'17 for the New Jersey Senate Majority.

PRIOR CONSENT NOW MANDATORY

The new law requires health care providers to get prior written consent for any exam on a patient's reproductive organs, breasts, or rectum to be conducted while the patient is unconscious. The statute includes an exception in cases of a medical emergency when prior consent cannot be obtained. Health care providers who violate the provisions are subject to professional discipline for professional misconduct.

When testifying to the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee in May 2021, Doyle said that accounts of unexpected exams frequently have appeared in major outlets, regional and local newspapers, and across social media. She said that one TikTok video addressing the issue has been viewed more than 1.8 million times. "Some

trauma survivors will read these stories about nonconsensual invasive exams, worry this will happen to them, and sacrifice needed health care for fear of being re-traumatized," Doyle told the committee.

Doyle again testified at a January 2020 hearing of the General Assembly's Health Committee, revealing that she was a victim of a 2010 sexual assault. When a doctor recommended in April 2021 that she undergo a colonoscopy, Doyle said she sought assurances that she would not receive a pelvic exam while under anesthesia. "I received at best half-answers, so I canceled the procedure," Doyle testified. "I am living proof that people, especially women, are declining recommended care because they've learned about these exams."

"The law puts an end to an appalling practice that disproportionately affected people who receive their care from teaching hospitals, where these exams are performed."

NEW JERSEY SENATOR FRED MADDEN



HURDLES ALONG THE WAY

The proposed legislation languished for long stretches, in part because statistics on such procedures weren't tracked, Prendergast said. "There were a lot of hurdles along the way," he said. Prendergast spearheaded the early effort alongside Lex Wissner and Arthur Murphy, both 2020 graduates of Rutgers Law in Camden, and continued to work on the legislation as an aide to Assemblyman and Deputy Speaker Paul D. Moriarty, one of the bill's sponsors. Moriarty, who represents parts of Camden and Gloucester County, called the Rutgers Law School students "a valued resource" who proposed amendments that strengthened the bill and addressed important concerns.

In her January testimony, Doyle said that several New Jersey medical school students recently came forward and informed legislators that they had been directed by supervising physicians to perform such exams while patients were sedated. She said she believes that information cinched the legislation's passage. "The medical students really put themselves out there," Doyle said.

Madden, who said a constituent brought the issue to the attention of him and fellow legislators of the 4th District, said the law protects survivors of sexual assault as well as medical students who object to performing the exams without patient consent. "The law puts an end to an appalling practice that disproportionately affected people who receive their care from teaching hospitals, where these exams are performed."

"It really illuminated to me that there are flaws not only in the legal system, but in the legislative process."

KATE DOYLE, a third-year Rutgers Law in Camden student

Doyle and Rutgers Law classmates Esmé Devenney and Jackie Manning submitted proposed amendments based on their research of how other states had handled certain sticking points. One amendment stated that violators face professional misconduct proceedings by the New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners. Another specified that patients must sign a separate form granting consent for examination of anal, breast, and/or pelvic regions. A third amendment dealing with the emergency exception in the law made clear that in those cases, patients must be notified of the procedure afterward. All three amendments were incorporated in the new law.

At its core, the law is intended to "sanctify patient trust," according to Doyle, who intends to pursue a career in reproductive justice. "It's not about pointing fingers at doctors."

Overall, she said the experience was eye-opening. "It really illuminated to me that there are flaws not only in the legal system, but in the legislative process," she said, adding that she wants to "be a part of improving access to receiving justice in both these systems."



Art Graduate Bound for Yale

Doaa Ouf had considered following her parents into a career in engineering, but when she came to Rutgers-Camden from Cairo, Egypt, she decided instead to pursue her love of the arts.

“I am fortunate to have had mentors invested in my growth,” Ouf said.

“I want to provide that experience for others in the future.”

DOAA OUF, 2020 Rutgers-Camden graduate

Her choice turned out well: The 2020 Rutgers-Camden graduate has been accepted into the prestigious School of Drama at Yale University where she will begin studying in the fall for a master of fine arts degree.

Ouf, a resident of Haddon Township, New Jersey, earned a bachelor of art degree with a double major in theater and animation. She also had a hand in every Rutgers-Camden campus theater production—from acting to directing—in her junior and senior years. “I really enjoyed the process of theater and took on every opportunity to be involved in some capacity,” Ouf said.

Ouf, who cultivated a wide range of interests and skills at Rutgers-Camden, will study projection design at Yale. It is a relatively new field of storytelling that combines animation, theater, and film for applications such as projections at museums and theme parks, and staged theater productions.

Ouf attributes much of her success to her Rutgers-Camden mentors, Kenneth Elliott, an associate professor of theater who is chair of the Department of Visual, Media, and Performing Arts, and Robert Emmons, an associate teaching professor of theater who heads the filmmaking concentration. Her primary career interest is in storytelling, but through the influence of Elliott and Emmons, she also envisions a future as an educator. “I am fortunate to have had mentors invested in my growth,” Ouf said. “I want to provide that experience for others in the future.”

The Ride of Her Life

Lisa Hou, the New Jersey National Guard's chief administrative officer who earns an M.B.A. from Rutgers-Camden in June, said a chance experience in medical school led to her groundbreaking military career



Brigadier General Lisa J. Hou, D.O. - Image Courtesy New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

A helicopter ride changed the direction of Lisa Hou's career.

The year was 1993, and Hou was a 22-year-old medical student at what was then the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. She and a classmate were doing a research project on helicopter pilots and their training, and as part of the project, they took a ride in a New Jersey Army National Guard Bell UH-1 Iroquois—better known as a “Huey”—at Ewing, New Jersey. It was Hou's first time in a helicopter.

“It was phenomenal,” she said. “We rode with the doors open and it was an exhilarating experience.”

That helicopter ride prompted Hou to sign up for the National Guard—“the best decision I ever made,” she says now. And today, almost 30 years later, she is the Adjutant General for New Jersey—the chief administrative officer for the 8,400 personnel in the New Jersey National Guard. She is the first woman and first Asian American to serve in the role.

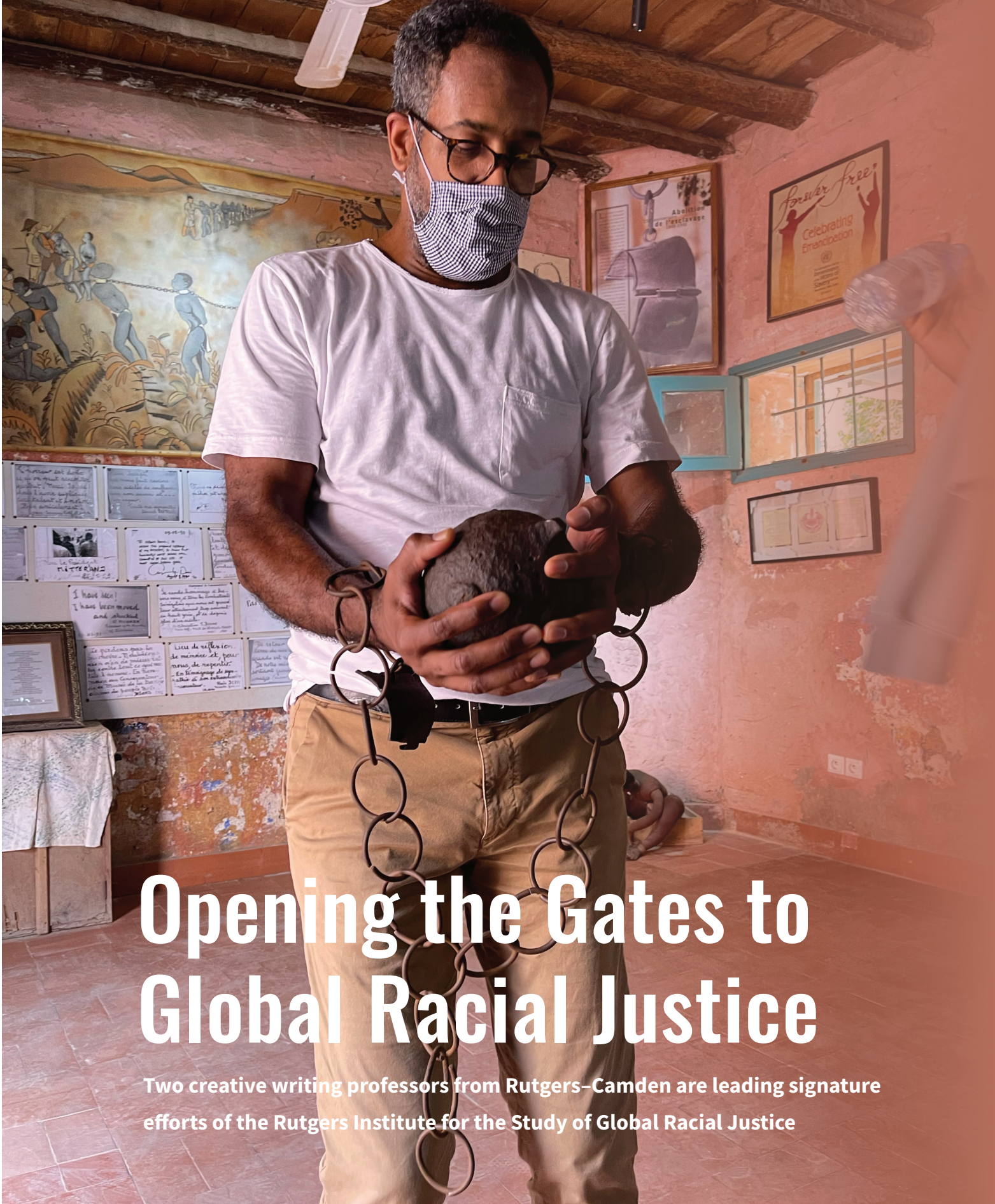
A lot happened in the years between that helicopter ride and Hou's appointment as Adjutant General by Governor Phil Murphy in 2021. After joining the National Guard, Hou (pronounced “how”) went on to finish her medical degree, then served as a field surgeon in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq from 2005 to 2006, she provided emergency medical care for coalition soldiers and Iraqi civilians and maintained medical readiness for mass-casualty trauma. In Afghanistan in 2011, she was the sole medical provider on an Afghanistan National Army base and performed emergency medical care for more than 600 coalition soldiers, contractors, and foreign nationals. She earned the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, and a number of other military honors. In 2021 she was promoted to the rank of brigadier general.

In addition to her appointment as Adjutant General, she's also commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; in that role she manages all state veterans' programs, commissions, and facilities. The transition from active service to administration prompted Hou to pursue an M.B.A. from Rutgers–Camden, which she completed in May.

“What I've learned about the components of business management will help me contribute my utmost to strong financial management and stewardship of my organizations' resources,” Hou said. “I want my organizations to have strong financial foundations for readiness, modernization, development, and reform, well beyond my tenure.”

In many ways, Hou has followed in the footsteps of her grandfather, who was a physician and a two-star Army general. He inspired her, and she hopes that her work will, in turn, inspire others.

“If you reach a little further, if you push yourself a little harder, you can go farther,” Hou said. “You can inspire those around you to do the same, and you can open doors for the next generations.”



Opening the Gates to Global Racial Justice

Two creative writing professors from Rutgers–Camden are leading signature efforts of the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice

BY SAM STARNES

Gregory Pardlo CCAS'99, at the House of Slaves on Gorée Island in Senegal, holding a ball and chain that was shackled to captured Africans who were being sold into slavery. Image courtesy Gregory Pardlo.

In January, when Gregory Pardlo visited Africa for the first time, he made plans to tour a site in Senegal where captured men and women and children were shackled, sold, and forced onto slave ships.



Pardlo at House of Slaves, which for four centuries was the largest slave-trading center on the West Coast of Africa on Gorée Island in Senegal. Image courtesy Gregory Pardlo.

PARDLO, A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING POET

and acclaimed essayist is who is both an alumnus of and an associate professor at Rutgers University–Camden, had hoped to approach it with a professorial detachment to avoid becoming emotional while contemplating the horrors of its history.

He held it together through most of the visit to the House of Slaves, a museum on Gorée Island in Dakar, Senegal’s capital city. His visit included standing in the infamous “door of no return,” the doorway where captured Africans were led along a gangplank and onto slave ships leaving the island, which for four centuries was the largest slave-trading center on the West Coast of Africa. But at the end of the guided tour, when Pardlo held in his hands the dense weight of an iron ball that was chained to the legs of the captured to keep them from escaping, he said, “I crumbled. All of my intellectualization just evaporated. It was a real, visceral bodily experience. I wept uncontrollably.”

In addition to his associate professorship, Pardlo is Rutgers–Camden’s co-director of the universitywide Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice. The primary purpose of his trip to Senegal was to establish partnerships between Rutgers and two universities to host a symposium on translation, but he said visiting the House of Slaves was essential for him. “It was a necessary trip for me because it seared into my mind where the seeds for so many of the troubles we are experiencing were sown,” Pardlo said. “It was a reminder of why it is important to do global racial justice work.”

“It was a necessary trip for me because it seared into my mind where the seeds for so many of the troubles we are experiencing were sown.”

GREGORY PARDLO CCAS’99

The Statue of Slavery Freedom | Mémorial Gorée-Almadies, Senegal



Global Racial Justice Projects

*The approach of the conference
“allows the writer to really
be heard, and the audience to
understand.”*

CANDIDA RODRIGUEZ

One upcoming example of the work the Rutgers institute has dedicated to global racial justice is The Dakar Translation Symposium: Africa and Her Diasporas, which Pardlo has helped to arrange. It connects Rutgers with two Senegalese universities to bring together speakers and participants invested in the Black Diasporas in hopes of fostering transatlantic dialogue. The symposium, scheduled for June of this year, will culminate with a gathering on Gorée Island to mark Juneteenth, the annual holiday on June 19 commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

Another institute initiative is the Poets and Scholars Summer Writing Retreat, an annual event which began in 2021 and will continue this summer. It features 10 days of sessions addressing global racial justice, as well as a radical reimagining of traditional writing workshops open to those who may or may not consider themselves writers. Participants in the first year included writers and scholars of all disciplines, genres, and backgrounds committed to anti-racist writing practices. “It was a really broad population of folks who came together,” Pardlo said.

One of the writers who attended was Candida Rodriguez, a Camden resident who works in a local preschool. She participated in a poetry workshop, which included not only writing instruction but sessions on social justice and racial inequality. “It was enlightening,” she said, noting that she doesn’t have a graduate degree in writing and had never been part of a formal writing workshop. “It opened up for me a different view of the world.”

The expanded focus of the conference helped Rodriguez to “express myself, especially with poems that have to deal with my identity as a Latino woman,” she said. She added that the approach of the conference “allows the writer to really be heard, and the audience to understand. It’s a shared power.”

Pardlo, a 1999 graduate of Rutgers–Camden who won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in poetry, said this year’s Poets and Scholars retreat will focus on Black bodies and medical justice in connection to another universitywide institute initiative, Black Bodies, Black Health: Imagining a Just Racial Future.

Patrick Rosal, Rutgers–Camden co-director of the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice.



Making Waves with the Quilting Water Project

The Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice was established at Rutgers in fall 2020 with a \$15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the grant supports postdoctoral scholars and a range of research projects in areas such as policy reform, social justice work, public health, and criminal justice. In January 2021, Pardlo and fellow Rutgers–Camden professor and poet Patrick Rosal were named co-directors for the Camden campus.

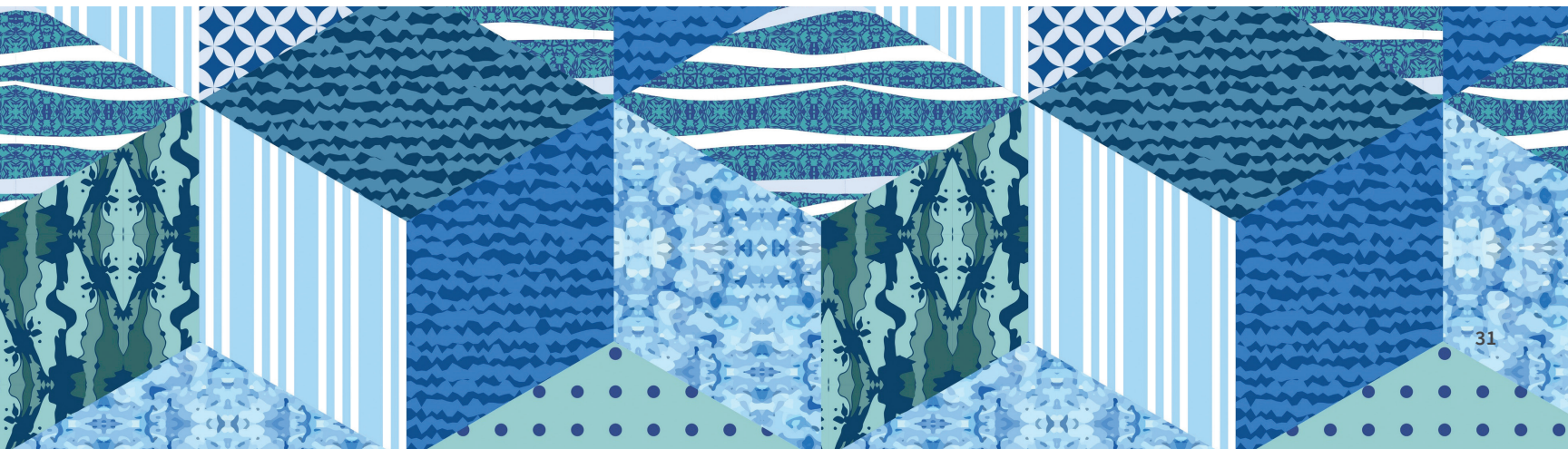
The institute’s mission “all comes back to how we think about ourselves and others,” said Michelle Stephens, a professor of English and former dean of the humanities at Rutgers–New Brunswick who is the founding executive director of the institute. “The need to redefine the concept of being human and move toward racial global justice begins by understanding and addressing the ways we resist recognizing people who live under different circumstances than our own.”

Pardlo said he hopes to cultivate means for productive conversations on difficult and often divisive questions around race, noting how the idea of critical race theory has become so controversial in many places in the United States. He said he’s not interested in pointing fingers at who is right or wrong, but instead that “I’m interested in finding ways to have language facilitate good faith examinations of who we are and what we want to be.”

He also noted that the institute’s perspective is global. “We want to look at structures of oppression around the world, not simply in the U.S.,” he said. “When we are studying racial justice, we are not studying the people who are the victims of racial inequality, we are studying the mechanics of the social forces that produced that inequality.”

Rosal, Pardlo’s co-director, is leading Quilting Water, one of the institute’s signature initiatives that will meld global stories of water with the talents of Camden quilters in a public art project. He said the efforts of the institute will help bring people of all backgrounds together to understand one another. “We could imagine the study of global racial justice as the expansion of the modes of inquiry that we can use to examine literature and art and therefore our own lives,” Rosal said. “I don’t see the central mission of the institute as corrective—I see it as expansive. We can think of the instantiation of justice as simply a revision of the gates, or we can imagine it as flinging the gates wide open and seeing what happens when that mix comes together. It’s the latter that interests me.”

Artwork from Quilting Water Public Arts Project



A Voice in the Crowd:

Rutgers–Camden graduate a “fierce advocate” for immigrant rights

BY THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN



TANIA MARTINEZ

Camden resident wants to be the change the world needs.

GROWING UP, said Tania Martinez, she knew the struggle that many immigrants face while trying to improve their livelihoods.

The Rutgers University–Camden graduate recalled that, as a young girl, she witnessed rallies for immigrant rights. That experience would leave a lasting impression. “I was inspired to try to create change. I saw how much power there is in communities coming together,” said the Camden resident who graduated in May with a perfect 4.0 with a bachelor’s degree, triple majoring in political science, philosophy, and global studies, and a minor in Spanish.

A native of Springdale, Arkansas, Martinez would become a self-professed “fierce advocate” for immigrants’ rights over the course of her time at Rutgers–Camden. Already eyeing a career in law, she initially pursued a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in order to explore discussions on reason and morality. She then added a minor in Spanish, with plans to be better equipped to serve the Spanish-speaking population. As her curiosity grew, Martinez pondered how policies would affect immigrant populations on the national and global scales, and added bachelor’s degrees in political science and global studies.

Martinez further explored “the practice and process of politics” participating in the Eagleton Undergraduate Associates Program, based at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. The program afforded her with many professional development and networking opportunities. She also valued the friendships she built and strengthened with participating students from other Rutgers campuses.

Since arriving at Rutgers–Camden, Martinez worked with fellow students to provide more resources for local students. She also started the Wilfredo Ramirez Jr. Sundance Endowed Scholarship, named in honor of Ramirez, a Rutgers–Camden student who died in February 2021 due to complications from COVID-19.

The Honors College student also helped to uplift the voices and experiences of immigrants in the Rutgers–Camden community by helping create “Voices of Immigration,” an interdisciplinary research podcast that focuses on the student experiences of various generations of immigrants. “The podcast humanizes the issues and brings light to the problems of the dialogue that exist in the conversations about immigrants today,” said Martinez, a Rutgers–Camden Civic Scholar.

Martinez served as president of Rutgers–Camden’s College Democrats, a role that pushed her outside her comfort zone. “I actually felt like I was growing as a person in discovering who I wanted to be and where I wanted to go,” she said.

She also joined Rutgers–Camden’s Institute for Leadership in Action (ILA), where her peers and Michael D’Italia, director of student success initiatives, gave her both support and mentorship. “That experience really stands out to me because I was in a cohort of students committed to creating change on campus,” Martinez said. “I got to grow with them and became a better leader because of the ILA’s guidance.”

In recognition of her efforts to the Rutgers–Camden community, Martinez has been awarded the Honors College Outstanding Senior Award, Howard Morris Stuckert Memorial Award, Jack Marvin Weiner Memorial Endowed Award, Kriste Lindenmeyer Outstanding Digital Studies Research Award.

“I have also gotten to meet and know so many people in the field of public service,” she said. “As a result, I have been able to network, connect, and grow immensely in my leadership and advocacy capabilities.”

Home Schooled:

Rutgers–Camden graduate learned respect for diversity at an early age

BY THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN

*Hamilton, New Jersey, resident
aspires for leadership role in public
service career.*

THE WAY THAT ADAM SOLIMAN sees it, government can impact society in a big way—and that’s a good thing. “For all of its well-known imperfections,” he said, “it still has the potential to play a major role in tackling the numerous issues facing our country. I want to help lead that effort.”

The Hamilton, New Jersey, resident took another step toward the fore of societal change in May when he graduated with a perfect 4.0 with a bachelor’s degree, triple majoring in political science, religion, and global studies, and a minor in Spanish. After a few years in the work force, he intends to work towards law and master of public administration degrees. Ultimately, he aspires to land a leadership role within a state or federal agency. He hopes to focus particular attention on criminal justice reform and expansion of affordable housing.

While Rutgers–Camden helped to prepare him for his future roles, Soliman’s education began much closer to home. Growing up the son of an observant Muslim father and a practicing Roman Catholic mother, he was imbued with a deep respect for diversity. Through his unique upbringing, he recalled, his views were shaped to emphasize inclusivity of all Americans in a multicultural society. “I am a living product of the ability of people from very different cultural and religious backgrounds to build a loving family through compromise and mutual respect,” Soliman said.

Soliman has focused on global studies in order to learn more about global issues and the ways to mitigate them through concerted international action. Fluency in Spanish, he decided, would enhance all of these pursuits.

Soliman was a student in the Honors College, and participated in the Eagleton Undergraduate Associates Program, based at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. That included serving an internship in the program services and training departments at the Mercer County Correctional Center in summer 2021. He also recently published an article in the *Eagleton Political Journal*.


Soliman also served as president for the past year—and formerly vice president and secretary—of the Rutgers–Camden Muslim Students Association, which aims to promote a positive understanding of Islam and Muslims throughout the campus community. In addition, he served as a student policy advocate in the Rutgers Advocacy Corps in the Rutgers Office of Federal Relations. “I had the opportunity to speak with members of Congress and advocate for the federal funds on which many of my peers rely,” he said.

For his exemplary academic efforts, Soliman was awarded Rutgers–Camden’s Global Studies Award, Honors College Outstanding Senior Award, Hugh White Memorial Award, and Jack Marvin Weiner Memorial Endowed Award.

Soliman is already hitting the ground running. He is currently serving an internship at the U.S. Government Accountability Office on the financial markets and community investment mission team. “All of these experiences,” he said, “have taught me to respect differing opinions and to engage with a diverse community.”



ADAM SOLIMAN



PROJECTS, PRISON, PROSPERITY.

In the inaugural episode of Stories of Triumph, Alumna Lauren Bianco finds restoration at Rutgers–Camden

BY RONDALD DOWNES JR.



'No Place Like Home'

REFUGEES FIND SOLACE AT RUTGERS-CAMDEN



From Exile To Excellence

A South African Rutgers-Camden alumnus reflects on his experience and long-lasting relationship to the university

BY EDWIN T. SMITH CCAS'95

Edwin T. Smith,

a native of South Africa who was exiled during the fight against apartheid in the 1980s, earned a psychology degree from Rutgers University-Camden in 1995. He returned to his home country in 1999, five years after apartheid ended, and is now the manager of campus operations at the Mamelodi campus of the University of Pretoria in Pretoria, South Africa. He is currently working on his Ph.D. in history in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria.



*Morogoro, Tanzania, home of the
Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College*

As a high school student in South Africa in the 1980s, I was active politically in the struggle against apartheid. That activism led to my exile and my being denied the chance to attend university in my country. It was Rutgers University–Camden that offered me an opportunity to pursue a university education.

Just a few years earlier—on June 16, 1976, to be exact—student uprisings had started in Soweto in Johannesburg and soon engulfed the entire country. Hundreds of school-aged youths left the country as a result, and the African National Congress (ANC) established the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) in Morogoro, Tanzania, in exile in 1978. I attended SOMAFCO and completed the necessary university entry requirements in 1990 before coming to Rutgers–Camden.

At SOMAFCO, the library was a central part of my educational experience in exile. Therefore, when I arrived at Rutgers–Camden and saw its massive library, which was in the heart of the campus, I fell in love all over again. Because I only had a tuition-waiver scholarship, I had to raise the rest of the money I needed for my studies at Rutgers. I also had promised to bring two of my fellow comrades I had left behind in Zimbabwe over to the U.S. for further study. When the Rutgers scholarship offer arrived while we were in Harare, Zimbabwe, my comrades decided it would be prudent for me to take the opportunity. They were of the opinion that, of all in our small group, I was the one most likely to succeed in ensuring that the rest of them would make it to the U.S. as well.

'No Place Like Home'

REFUGEES FIND SOLACE AT RUTGERS-CAMDEN

"My first job at Rutgers-Camden was in the technical services division of the library, to which I quickly grew attached."

EDWIN T. SMITH CCAS'95

As a result of this "covenant," I worked the entire time I studied at Rutgers-Camden to earn the money for my obligations to the university and traversed New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania on speaking engagements to raise money for my compatriots. I changed my major from premed to psychology because I could not keep up with the demands of my academics while also raising money to bring my comrades to the U.S. Several of my professors at Rutgers-Camden organized for me to speak to their networks in their communities and to "pass the hat" to collect funds for my endeavors. In this way, many of my professors became close friends and associates in our common effort to support the education of South African exiles.

My first job at Rutgers-Camden was in the technical services division of the library, to which I quickly grew attached. Through the Campus Center, then headed by Cal

Maradonna, I also worked in other areas, such as the cafeteria in the basement of the Law School. Both my comrades and two other South Africans eventually gained undergraduate degrees from Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania, through the support we were able to raise.

Being a civic-oriented citizen, I also got involved with student life and ended up working with the Black Student Union to rename the library in honor of Paul Robeson, the great American intellectual, political leader, and cultural pathbreaker. Robeson was a remarkable Rutgers alum whose life and struggles impressed me greatly. I was very pleased to be part of the process that culminated in acclaimed actor Avery Brooks (Commander Benjamin Sisko of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* fame), who also was a Rutgers-New Brunswick alumnus and faculty member, presenting a one-man performance of Paul Robeson to a capacity crowd in the theater on campus, with Paul Robeson's son in attendance, on the occasion of the renaming of the library in 1991.

Edwin Smith, a sophomore at Rutgers-Camden, is in exile from South Africa for his political activities. Forced to live in Tanzania, away from his family, he continued to attend school. One day his teacher asked Mr. Smith and his classmates to write, in any form, their views of apartheid. This is what Edwin Smith wrote.

DIRT STREET

When mama marches up the dirt street away from home
flashes of dirt stick on me
infecting my mind, provoking my desire
to take us away from the dirt street,
the only one I know.

My dirt street is malignant,
its gutters vomit filth and disease.
Today it's a mother's tears,
tomorrow, a father's sweat and blood,
the day thereafter, a baby's sorrow,
the stench of waste a daily friend.

When night comes and she's not back
I stand in the gutter like filth.
Did she say she'll be late?
Was she dressed for a long journey,
leaving shacks and dug-outs
for paved salubrious roads?
Leaving me with filthy rags,
she washes another's underwear,
Leaving me, stomach empty,
to fill another's.
Would she be back —
Back to the dirt street she knows?

Tears soak my face as I wonder
of mama marching down the dirt street again.

Mama please come —
alone I will not see the sun in the dirt street we know.

A 1992 excerpt for *The Gleaner*
featuring Edwin Smith

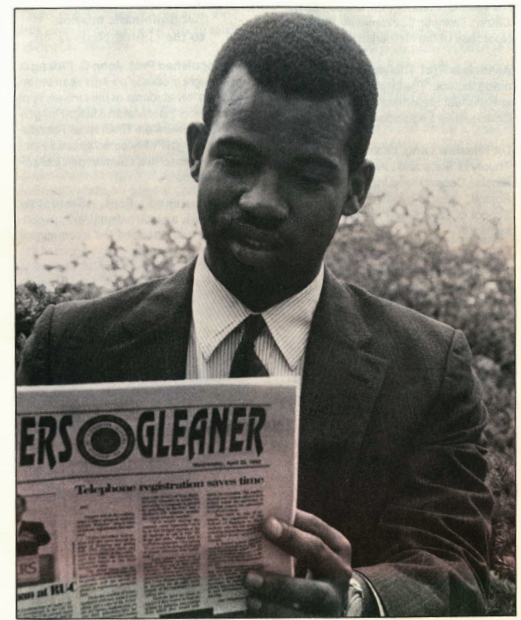


Photo by Barbara Leap

Edwin Smith, in exile from South Africa, is a Campbell Scholar. He is managing editor of the *Rutgers Gleaner* and a member of the Carr Society and the Black Student Union.

Edwin Smith (left) meets with Rutgers–Camden Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis (right) on a recent trip to South Africa



While I was totally smitten

with the library on campus, I was startled to discover they did not have the Heinemann African Writers Series collection, which I learned about and read while at SOMAFCO. I promptly visited Gary Golden, the director of the library, to ask about this anomaly. Without batting an eye, Dr. Golden asked that I get working on putting together such a collection and provided me with the necessary budget to purchase the books.

One of the more enduring habits I cultivated while at Rutgers–Camden was that of collecting books, particularly South African, African, and African American history and literature. It was among the stacks at the Robeson Library that I first discovered Leonard Thompson’s *A History of South Africa* and Allister Sparks’ *The Mind of South Africa*. Having read Bloke Modisane’s work in SOMAFCO, I had been searching for his autobiography, *Blame Me on History*, for almost seven years. I finally found a copy of it in a one-dollar-sales bin in a bookshop in Mount Laurel, New Jersey.

Apart from collecting and reading books, I also wrote and published while at Rutgers–Camden. I was editor-in-chief of *The Gleaner*, the student newspaper, as well as serving on the editorial board of the *Quintessence*, the student literary magazine. I also published an opinion piece and an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*, respectively.

Gerald Massenburg and Tom DiValerio, working under Cal Maradonna in the Campus Center, saw it fit to formally rope me into student activities, and so evolved a lifelong friendship and camaraderie between us that continues until this very day, 30 years later. This working relationship also led to our involvement with the establishment and running of the Council for Southern Africa, which was officially launched by Rutgers President Francis Lawrence and Eastern Cape Premier Raymond Mhlaba in 1996. Under the leadership of then-Associate Provost David Wilson, now president of Morgan State University, I served as inaugural director of the Council for Southern Africa until my final return to South Africa in 1999.

In conclusion, I met remarkable students, faculty and staff at Rutgers–Camden, many of whom have become family across the physical divide and distance between South Africa and the U.S. over the 30-year span of my connection to the university. Rutgers University–Camden sank its claws so deep into my life that, even though I now work at a university in South Africa with a campus bookshop much like the one in Camden where I used to buy clothes when I was a student, I continue to wear Rutgers-branded clothes, even to University of Pretoria events in South Africa and around the world.

“One of the more enduring habits I cultivated while at Rutgers–Camden was that of collecting books, particularly South African, African, and African American history and literature.”

EDWIN T. SMITH CCAS'95

'No Place Like Home'

REFUGEES FIND SOLACE AT RUTGERS-CAMDEN

Safe Haven

How an Afghani couple escaped the Taliban
and found refuge at Rutgers University-Camden



W

hen the Taliban took control of Afghanistan last summer, Mustafa Saqib and his wife, Sanaa Talwasa, feared for their lives. The Taliban had terrorized the nation with a wave of targeted killings of religious leaders, government employees, activists, and intellectuals. The couple fit the description: Saqib was a grad student in philosophy who was studying democracy, and Talwasa was a women's rights advocate who had worked for the National Security Council.

Mustafa Saqib is a visiting scholar who will teach a “Global Cities” course at Rutgers–Camden. His wife, Sanaa Talwasa, who holds two law degrees, will study at Rutgers Law School in Camden. Image courtesy Mustafa Saqib.

The two had little choice

but to leave their homeland. “It is not safe when there is no system and no government,” Saqib said.

They applied for a seat on a U.S. evacuation flight, one that would take them to a country like Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, where they could find safe haven.

Then they waited and worried.

At the time, Saqib was in his hometown of Herat—more than 500 miles west of Kabul—caring for his parents, who were recovering from COVID-19. Talwasa was in Kabul, living alone in their apartment. “All of the government buildings were occupied by the Taliban,” Saqib said. “They had access to information about government staff. We were concerned about Sanaa’s safety because they could possibly find her.”



Kabul, Afghanistan

With commercial flights canceled throughout the country, Saqib traveled 24 hours by bus from Herat to join Talwasa in Kabul. The bus navigated treacherous roads that had been bombed in battles just days earlier and detoured around many bridges that had been destroyed. At several Taliban checkpoints, officers interrogated and harassed passengers.

In Kabul, the couple packed their bags and prepared to leave at a moment’s notice. “We lived several weeks hiding with this distress, fearing for our lives,” Saqib said.

Desperate to flee, they searched for alternate ways to get out. And that’s when a retired Rutgers–Camden professor stepped in to help.

“They had access to information about government staff. We were concerned about Sanaa’s safety because they could possibly find her.”

MUSTAFA SAQIB

‘No Place Like Home’

REFUGEES FIND SOLACE AT RUTGERS–CAMDEN



Mustafa Saqib with Jon Van Til at Marmara University in Turkey. Image courtesy Mustafa Saqib.

RUTGERS–CAMDEN REACHES OUT

Jon Van Til, a professor emeritus of urban studies and community planning at Rutgers–Camden who now lives in Hungary, had met Saqib several years before when he visited Marmara University in Turkey, where Saqib is a doctoral student. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, he emailed Saqib to check on him. “I didn’t want him to get into any more trouble than I feared he was already in from the political fanatics who were rapidly assuming control of his country,” Van Til said.

Van Til reached out to his contacts in the Rutgers–Camden Department of Public Policy and Administration, asking them to consider bringing Saqib and Talwasa to the university. Department chair Lori Minnite welcomed the idea. “Any opportunity on our campus to expose our students to international issues and international scholars is a great benefit to them,” she said. Minnite agreed to fund half of a visiting-scholar appointment for Saqib, and Ric Garfunkel of Rutgers Global helped secure a matching \$25,000 grant from the Institute of International Education’s Scholar Rescue Fund.

But first, Saqib and Talwasa had to get out of Afghanistan.

Van Til assembled a team to help that included his niece Desi Van Til—a filmmaker and activist in Maine—along with Rutgers faculty and staff. The plan was to help Saqib and Talwasa escape from Afghanistan and head to neighboring Pakistan, which has a U.S. embassy where they could apply for visiting scholar visas. Desi Van Til called and texted the couple every day, worked to raise funds for private flights, called and emailed people who could assist in any way, and spoke with pro-bono immigration lawyers.

Saqib and Talwasa’s overnight trip to Pakistan was complicated by hazardous road conditions from a pounding snowstorm and stops at Taliban checkpoints where gun-toting officers interrogated them about their travel plans before allowing them to continue. “I felt relief when we crossed the border into Pakistan,” Saqib said. “But there are mixed feelings when you leave your country, because I may not have a way to get back there.” The couple still has many family members and friends in Afghanistan and are worried for their safety.

In early January, Saqib and Talwasa were granted J-1 visiting scholar visas at the U.S. embassy in Pakistan. “Now, the whole world opened up to us,” Saqib said.

They headed first to Maine, where Desi Van Til had invited them to spend two weeks with her family. “They were family to me, and the focal point of my days and nights,” Desi Van Til said. “We had been through an immensely stressful, intense, and meaningful five months, working together. We needed to see each other and celebrate their arrival and squeeze each other in real life.”

Mustafa Saqib with Sanaa Talwasa (middle) and Desi Van Til (left). Photo by Winky Lewis. Image courtesy Mustafa Saqib.



Mustafa Saqib holding his Rutgers ID card outside the Paul Robeson Library. Image courtesy Mustafa Saqib.



SETTLING IN CAMDEN

Next the couple made their way to Camden, where, with support from the public policy department, they found housing, connected with Afghan networks in the area, and became acclimated to life on campus. “We all remain mindful and sensitive towards Mustafa’s and Sanaa’s situation, what they have just been through, the trauma they have undoubtedly experienced,” said Natasha Fletcher, the associate director of the Rutgers–Camden Center for Urban Research and Education. “It’s important to give them space and not overwhelm them.”

During Saqib’s one-year appointment as a visiting scholar in the Department of Public Policy and Administration, he is studying local government and complete his dissertation for a Ph.D. in at Marmara University in Istanbul. In the fall, he will teach the “Global Cities” course at Rutgers–Camden.

Minnite said his presence will benefit the campus. “We want to internationalize our curriculum and broaden perspectives, so any opportunity to host an accomplished international scholar benefits students and faculty,” she said. “Rutgers Camden’s large veteran and military-affiliated student population will have plenty to learn from Saqib. I look forward to seeing how his position can foster the exchange of ideas and inspire collaborative teaching and research efforts.”

Talwasa, a Fulbright scholar who holds a law degree from a university in Afghanistan and a master of laws degree from Emory University in Atlanta, is looking forward to enrolling at Rutgers Law School in Camden in the fall to pursue a law degree in the United States. “I am coming from a place where women are not to be seen in public,” Talwasa said. “Now I have a chance to go to law school and conduct research without fear and write about Afghan women. What I am doing is not just for myself but also for future generations. I hope it will be easier for them.”

In March, the Center for Urban Research and Education hosted an hour-long in-person and virtual talk by Saqib, to introduce him to the campus community by sharing the couple’s journey from Afghanistan to Camden. “I am so grateful and overjoyed for the precious opportunity to be at Rutgers University–Camden,” Saqib said. “It wouldn’t be possible for us to be laughing, talking, and thinking of becoming safe without the contributions of Professor Van Til and Rutgers.”

“Rutgers Camden’s large veteran and military-affiliated student population will have plenty to learn from Saqib.”

DEPARTMENT CHAIR LORI MINNITE



Nyeema Watson, vice chancellor of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civic Engagement.

Thinking Outside the Box

Nyeema Watson sets a new vision for Diversity, Inclusion, and Civic Engagement

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Camden residents remember 2012–13 as a decidedly low point for the city. There were 67 homicides in 2012—the most in the city’s history—and the police department was disbanded and restructured. The following spring, then-Governor Chris Christie took over the city’s schools, which had the second-lowest graduation rate in the state.

“So much has changed since then,” said Nyeema Watson, Rutgers University–Camden’s vice chancellor of diversity, inclusion, and civic engagement. “The police department has gotten national and international accolades for its work. Crime is down considerably. Economic investment is back. We have a school system that has changed dramatically, including a host of charter schools, and we’ve seen academic gains.”

Soon, Rutgers-Camden students

will be interviewing current and former local residents as part of an oral history project to capture their reflections on the upheaval the city experienced a decade ago. The project is expected to lead to an archive of residents' recollections, as well as a symposium on campus in the fall.

The oral history project, focused on racial equity, is one of a number of initiatives at Rutgers-Camden under a newly restructured diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) effort. The campus recently combined its DEI programs and community partnerships into a new Division of Diversity and Civic Engagement. The move aligns with the goals of Rutgers-Camden Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis as well as one of Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway's overarching priorities: to build an equitable, inclusive, and diverse community across all university locations.

"We're committed to making diversity a way of life on our campus, where all members of the university community feel welcome, valued, and respected," said Chancellor Tillis.

In the oral history project, students in Rutgers-Camden's Bonner Civic Scholars program spent part of the spring 2022 semester learning about the events of 2012-13 in Camden, as well as about the techniques and cultural aspects of oral histories. This summer they'll begin interviewing current and former Camden residents. About 25 students are expected to be involved before the project is completed.

"Oral histories lift up and find value in everyday experiences," said Simanti Lahiri, the campus' program coordinator for student civic engagement. "They give us a new way to understand history."

Also this spring, Rutgers-Camden established a DEI Council, composed of faculty, students, and staff, to advise the chancellor on diversity efforts and to provide a vehicle for the campus community to deal with DEI issues. "If there's an issue that pops up or a conversation that needs to be held, this would be the forum for it," said Vice-Chancellor Watson. In the

fall, Watson hopes to finalize a community advisory committee focused on similar topics in the town-gown space.

Another new effort on campus is the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Center, part of a nationwide initiative to enable colleges and universities to examine the historical impact of racism on their campuses. As part of the program, members of the Rutgers-Camden community will have opportunities to participate in racial healing circles—constructive conversations around difficult topics such as race and injustice.

"A lot of cultures use healing circles to create a shared experience, to understand the common humanity in one another," Watson said. "Once you understand and respect each other, then you can have more critical conversations." Faculty, students, and staff are currently undergoing training in participating in and hosting healing circles; the plan is to first conduct the circles on campus, then offer the approach to the local community, and, ultimately, to "have campus and community come together and see where we overlap," said Watson.

Naima Hall, named in January 2022 to be the campus' director of diversity, equity, and inclusion, is leading the healing-circles project. "These are conversations that trigger emotions," said Hall. "We want to have the emotional intelligence to help us to navigate these dialogues, where we can start to see experiences that may not be our own lived experiences, yet see them through a lens of empathy and compassion."

Meanwhile, Rutgers-Camden is continuing a number of its existing DEI and community engagement efforts—notably its programs to introduce Camden-area schoolchildren to the opportunities that a college education can provide. The campus has offered after-school programs for K-12 students for 10 years and also offers college access programs (including Rutgers Future Scholars and the Hill Family Center for College Access) for 8th through 12th graders.

"The core of this work is to provide access to groups of individuals who have been underrepresented, have been marginalized, bilingual populations, people who do not see college as an option," said Michele Garcon, the Rutgers-Camden director of education partnerships. "They interact with college students, and they can see themselves attending college."

Some of the programs take place in the community, while others involve bringing the young students to campus—and that's by design, according to Vice Chancellor Watson.

"They're in our classrooms, they're in our gym, they're eating in our dining halls, they stay in our dorms," she said. The idea is for the youths to see the possibility of coming to college. "We want them to see that Rutgers isn't a place that a kid in the community walks around—this campus is for them."

"We're committed to making diversity a way of life on our campus, where all members of the university community feel welcome, valued, and respected."

CHANCELLOR ANTONIO D. TILLIS

The DEI work is ongoing, and so is the community engagement—both are central in a campus strategic plan completed this spring, and both are intertwined. "We want to ensure that we're putting diversity, equity, and inclusion at the foundation of our work on campus," says Watson, "and that it also sits at the core of how we engage with the city of Camden and beyond.

"Our goal as an institution is that, for any individual that we come in contact with—regardless of their identity or positionality—they feel seen, heard, and valued, and that they have the ability to thrive and reach their full potential."



BY ALINA O'DONNELL

Educating Nurses to 'Serve ALL of Society'

In the Year of the Nurse Educator, the dean of the Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden reflects on its mission to advance health equity, expand research, and educate nurses to become agents of change



Donna Nickitas PhD, RN, NEA-BC,
CNE, FNAP, FAAN, Dean, School of
Nursing-Camden

W

When Donna Nickitas accepted the role of dean at the Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden, she had one main goal: to be a good neighbor. “What attracted me to Camden was the community and the university’s role as an anchor institution,” said Nickitas, who became dean in 2018. “The School of Nursing was here to grow as an active community partner, and I accepted that challenge.”

Growing up in Brooklyn, NY, Nickitas started volunteering for the American Red Cross at St. Vincent’s Medical Center when she was 14 years old. The first in her family to attend college, she earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree in nursing at SUNY Stony Brook and New York University and went to work as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps. Nickitas spent three years of active duty in Rapid City, South Dakota, and worked as a flight nurse in New Jersey before earning her doctorate and rising to the rank of major in the Air Force Nurse Reserve Corps. The experience set the tone for her career in public service, centered on her steadfast belief that nurses should serve society and do public good.

Under four years of Nickitas’ leadership, the School of Nursing has flourished into a hub of social change that is improving health outcomes in Camden, South Jersey, and beyond. In light of a number of recognitions awarded to the School of Nursing and the National League for Nursing’s declaration of 2022 as the Year of the Nurse Educator, Nickitas reflected on nursing leadership in the 21st century, her vision for advancing health equity, and how she’s building a school designed to educate a more compassionate, culturally competent workforce.

[LEADING THE WAY]



Junior year Nursing students Nicole Rogers (left) and Keegan Brady (right).

Serving Citizens

One of Nickitas' first priorities was to connect the School of Nursing's resources with the communities most in need of support. Less than two miles from Rutgers-Camden's campus, residents at the Branches at Centerville—an affordable housing complex run by the City of Camden—struggled to obtain basic health care, due to factors such as lack of transportation and childcare. Nickitas invited housing authority employees to campus to discuss how they might work together. "They took up the whole conference room," she said with a laugh. "They just kept saying 'We're so glad you're here. We're so excited to work with the nursing program.'"

services—routine physical exams; hearing and blood pressure screenings; and classes on first aid, nutrition, and chronic condition management—without having to leave their building. Since the health center's doors opened in late summer 2019, students have delivered more than 15,000 hours in support of the Branches community. The partnership has since expanded into a second health center in Ablett Village, another Camden Housing Authority community. "We want to do population health work that is embedded in the places where people live, work, play, and worship," Nickitas said. "We bring health care to them."

That initial conversation set in motion plans for what would later become a student-run health center, located on-site at the Branches. Today, residents can access free health care

*"They just kept saying
'We're so glad you're here.
We're so excited to work
with the nursing program.'"*

DONNA NICKITAS, dean of the
Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden



Preparing a culturally competent workforce

As the COVID-19 pandemic magnified systemic and longstanding inequities in health care, Nickitas said there is a heightened need for nurses and health care providers who can provide skilled and sensitive care in underserved communities. She believes community-based education is a critical step toward preparing the next generation of health care professionals to “serve all of society.”

Over the past four years, School of Nursing students have continued to offer place-based care through the school’s health centers, pop-up clinics, and more than 125 clinical partners. From providing medical care and screenings for homeless guests at a local church to administering more than 100,000 COVID-19 vaccinations to at-risk populations throughout South Jersey, as well as assisting overburdened school nurses with COVID contact tracing, students fill critical gaps in health care services while gaining valuable experience and connections.

In the school’s simulation lab, students exercise compassion and therapeutic communication skills with advanced mannequins controlled by clinical instructors. Riana Hicks, a junior who is vice president of the Student Nursing Association, said instructors often use the mannequins, as well as case studies, to present complex social needs that students might encounter in a real-world setting. “In each case study, we’re having to clinically think about social situations,” Hicks said. “Let’s say we have a patient coming in for a prenatal visit and we prescribe her something, but she doesn’t have health insurance. How would we go about educating her if she may not be able to obtain a prescription? We do a lot of work on social factors and adjusting our thinking beyond a simple cut-and-dried patient with health insurance.”



Rutgers School of Nursing–Camden graduate 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.

Serving the Public Good through Research

Nickitas is excited about plans to build a rigorous portfolio of research into the social, economic, and environmental issues that impede access to quality care. Working with Mei Rosemary Fu, senior associate dean of nursing research, she's executing a plan to grow the School of Nursing's research practice into a collaborative, prolific enterprise.

When Fu arrived on campus in June 2021 and met with faculty to assess their research strength and interests, she was inspired by the commitment to social justice she heard echoed among colleagues. Based on her conversations with faculty and community stakeholders, Fu and Nickitas established four key pillars that form the backbone of the enterprise:

- Enhancing health quality and equity in diverse communities;
- Advancing symptom science and management of chronic illnesses;
- Improving health quality and equity for children and women; and
- Advancing excellence in nursing education and clinical practice.

Part of Fu's role is empowering faculty to see themselves not only as teachers, but as passionate researchers and thought leaders. Guided by the core pillars, she began working with faculty to help them conceptualize new projects and secure the infrastructure they need to bring them to life. Since June 2021, Fu and her team have applied for more than \$1.3 million in grant funding to support these ventures. "Our faculty understands that research is everyone's responsibility," Fu said. "Research is the foundation for the whole health of the institution."

Faculty examine health topics through an intersectional lens that recognizes factors such as race, income, education, ability, and immigration status. This includes research on disparities in breast cancer incidence and mortality among Black women and a study on mindfulness strategies in reducing medical and mental health issues. This year, Fu hopes to expand their research on environmental justice communities, using Camden as a case study to understand how vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. "In order to solve problems, you have to understand them first," Fu said. "The initial step is building pillars consistent with the nation's priorities, and helping our faculty develop the critical research skills to be successful."



Junior year Nursing students Keegan Brady (left) and Nicole Rogers (right).

Dr. Mei Rosemary Fu, senior associate dean of nursing research



Success amid challenges

Nickitas has overcome massive hurdles in her four years of deanship—a pandemic and overnight shift to online learning, virtual clinicals, student burnout, staffing shortages, and more. Despite these challenges, 2021 brought a wave of new accomplishments, including new accreditations by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, fellowships with the American Academy of Nursing and the American College of Nurse-Midwives, and a proclamation from Camden Mayor Victor Carstarphen praising the school for its multifaceted contributions to the city. In November 2021, the National League for Nursing named the Rutgers–Camden school a National Center for Nursing Excellence for its efforts to enhance student learning and professional development—a designation awarded to only 23 nursing programs in the country.

Nickitas credits her colleagues' commitment and unwavering support in helping her fulfill her vision. Whatever the next four years bring, she is confident they'll continue to face challenges head-on and prepare future nurses to do the same. As the first class of students who began their studies under her watch graduates this May, she looks forward to seeing them embrace their roles as innovators and agents of change. "We have a lot to be proud of," she said.

"In order to solve problems, you have to understand them first. The initial step is building pillars consistent with the nation's priorities, and helping our faculty develop the critical research skills to be successful."

DR. MEI ROSEMARY FU, senior associate dean of nursing research



From left: Marie O'Toole, senior associate dean; students Yaazmyn Rosa SNC'20, Karina DeCasablanca SNC'22, and Keana Aquino SNC'20; Donna Nickitas, dean; and Kathie Prihoda, clinical assistant professor.

Positioned for Growth

Rutgers School of Business-Camden's mission to offer new advanced educational programs and to promote local economic development



When Rutgers School of Business-Camden Dean Monica Adya arrived on campus in 2020, she envisioned new educational opportunities for students and faculty, with a goal of making a positive impact on campus and in the surrounding community.

Through faculty expertise and research, along with engaged student learning, Adya plans to support the surrounding community by stimulating economic development. “I would love to see that we make a positive impact in the community,” said Adya. “There is very deliberate understanding that Rutgers–Camden and the School of Business–Camden are an important part of the community, and that the Business School can be that catalyst.”

Adya's interest in increasing societal impact through faculty expertise and research began more than a dozen years ago. Before arriving at Rutgers-Camden, Adya incorporated a civic engaged learning component to her classes as an information technology professor at Marquette University. Her capstone course, “Systems Analysis and Design,” provided a service-learning platform that enabled students to deliver software solutions to assist more than 40 organizations in the Milwaukee area.



A five-year vision for change

Under Dean Adya's leadership, RSBC is preparing a five-year strategic plan which includes partnering with Camden leaders in government, business and the community to promote the growth and success of the City of Camden.

Created with input from an array of stakeholders, the strategic planning team – including Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis, faculty, staff, students, alumni, the Dean's Leadership Council, and community and corporate partners – met over the course of a year to formulate the plan.

“We solicit comments from everybody as they all have a stake in our success,” says Richard Michelfelder, a Rutgers School of Business-Camden clinical associate professor of finance, and the co-chair of the strategic planning committee, along with Murad Mithani, an associate professor of management. “A part of a plan is to inspire people. To inspire people, you have to say you are all stakeholders. ‘Where would you like us to go?’”

In partnership with The Small Business Development Center at Rutgers University-Camden, the school will assist small business owners in establishing their enterprise, from creating a business plan to running the operations of the establishment.

RSBC has a long history of community engagement in southern New Jersey. Students in an Organizational Behavior course worked in small teams to develop charitable projects for nonprofit organizations to collect and donate winter clothing and toys to Camden residents. Students in the Business Leadership Development Program (BLDP) created a community service project to raise funds for the “Hoagies for Heroes” initiative by hosting a virtual 5K run to purchase meals for health care workers caring for COVID-19 patients at Cooper University Medical Center.

“There is very deliberate understanding that Rutgers-Camden and the School of Business-Camden are an important part of the community, and that the Business School can be that catalyst.”

MONICA ADYA, *Rutgers School of Business-Camden Dean*

Innovative corporate partnerships

One of Adya's priorities is connecting expert faculty with Camden-area corporations to collaborate on research on key topics such as technology innovation, leadership in the workplace, the environment and sustainability.

Adya hopes the collaborations could lead to opportunities for corporate internships, mentors for students and possible externships for faculty. "It's a win-win for Rutgers-Camden and for the corporations," said Adya.

By fostering relationships with corporate partners, Adya hopes to arrange roundtable discussions and research conferences about important issues based on faculty expertise and research. "We want to be the place that convenes the practitioner and the academic community around themes that are relevant to the region and ideally get to the point where we are serving as a convener even at a national level," Adya said. "We'll start making small steps in that direction."

Rutgers-Camden and corporate partners benefit from the relationship. "In this post-pandemic world, it's imperative that we leverage partnerships to be better than we were before," says Shy Yi, a Rutgers School of Business-Camden assistant dean, and a participant in the strategic planning process.

New educational programs

RSBC has thrived during the pandemic with the addition of master's programs.

"We know that in times of economic downturn, graduate enrollments go up because people go back to school to learn new skills for what lies ahead," said Adya. "We had to move pretty quickly to benefit from that trend."

SBC launched a successful Master of Science in Business Analytics program in the fall of 2021 and has started laying the foundation for a Master in Finance degree program scheduled to launch in the fall of 2022 that will expand job opportunities for students to enter new and developing fields. Recently, SBC introduced novel certificate programs in financial technologies and business analytics covering blockchain, cryptocurrency, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

Within the next year, the undergraduate program will be revised to offer new majors and minors to prepare students for emerging specialties in new technology and analytics.

Adya believes her vision of greater societal impact through faculty expertise and research and corporate partnerships could be transformative for the region with a vibrant business district, and stronger community and corporate partnerships with the university.

"If the School of Business and Rutgers-Camden is seen to be having an impact as an important educational component of Camden and South Jersey, then it does great things for Camden, as well," she said. "We are so entrenched with each other, that it makes sense that we become an important part of Camden's transformation in the next few years."

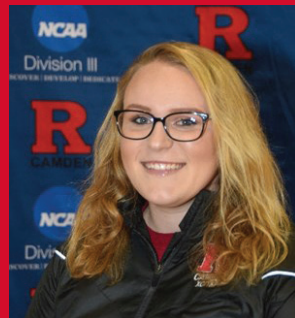


Scarlet Raptor Sports



FIELD OF DREAMS: Camden Athletic Complex Officially Opened

On Monday, May 2, 2002, Rutgers University–Camden Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis, City of Camden Mayor Victor Carstarphen and New Jersey Assemblyman Bill Spearman (D-5) were among those who celebrated the official opening of the Camden Athletic Complex.



Nationally Ranked Athletes

Jude Misko is currently ranked #1 in the nation in the men's hammer throw. Emily Hilt is ranked #19 in the nation in the women's hammer throw and #39 in the nation in women's shot put.

Climbing the Ranks

#1

**Best Public College
in New Jersey**

Source: Academic Influence

#1

**Most Affordable College
in New Jersey**

Source: Academic Influence

#72

**Top Public College
in the Country**

Source: Academic Influence

On A Mission to Promote Democracy

Rutgers University–Camden professor Lorraine Minnite works to expand and protect voting rights

BY LESLIE GARISTO PFAFF

Twenty years ago, a newly formed advocacy organization called Demos asked political scientist Lorraine Minnite what she could conclude about the existence of voter fraud in the U.S. based on current scholarship. The answer was simple: She could conclude nothing. That scholarship didn't exist. "It's hard to remember," she says now, "how obscure the question would have been back then."

In response to that question, Minnite embarked on what she thought would be a three-month study of voter fraud, at the time considered a relatively esoteric subject. That subject, however, became a central focus of her research and one of the most pressing, and divisive, issues of contemporary American politics.

Minnite, a professor of political science and an associate professor of public policy at Rutgers University–Camden, is widely known for her research on inequality, social and racial justice, political conflict, institutional change, and voting behavior and rights. In 2009, The New Press published her first book, *Keeping Down the Black Vote: Race and the Demobilization of American Voters*, coauthored with Frances Fox Piven and Margaret Groarke. Her second book, *The Myth of Voter Fraud*, was published by Cornell University Press in 2010.

Minnite's goal—as an author, teacher, social scientist, and one of the country's most prominent scholarly voices on the subject of voting rights—is, in her words, "to create a more just and equal society." She distills that ambition into a deceptively simple statement: "I'm on a mission to promote democracy."



She has worked to fulfill that mission in a variety of ways. In the early 2010s she served as research director for Project Vote, a nonprofit formed to support the 1993 National Voter Registration Act, which charged government agencies with encouraging voter registration but was often ignored by those agencies.

Teaching is another avenue toward the fulfillment of her goals, and she works to inspire in her students a passion for, and commitment to, democracy. She also serves as an expert witness, testifying in legal cases involving potential voter suppression. Over the past decade, she's participated in a dozen such cases across the country—a process that hasn't always been pleasant. In a 2005 case that challenged Connecticut's voter registration deadline, for instance, the state's assistant attorney general asked her, "Isn't it true that your work is so inconsequential nobody cites you?"

Today, 17 years after that comment, neither her work nor her conclusions can be considered inconsequential. In her research, she has found little evidence of voter fraud, and she has outspokenly supported the idea that those who declare it widespread or an imminent threat often do so as part of a larger effort to suppress the turnout of large blocs of voters, including people of color, recent immigrants, and young people. "The populations targeted," she says, "are always more vulnerable and less incorporated into American society."



For instance, she notes that laws

requiring photo IDs to vote are aimed at recently naturalized citizens and lower-income populations—including people of color—who may find the requirements confusing (in the case of non-English speakers), expensive (in terms of time taken off work, for example), or daunting. As proof that expanding access to the vote doesn't, in fact, encourage fraud, she cites the 2020 presidential election, in which voting by mail was made significantly easier because of the pandemic. In spite of numerous challenges to the outcome of that election, she says, multiple assessments have proved it to be "one of the safest elections in anybody's memory or knowledge."

For Minnite, the fight to expand voting rights goes beyond elections. She equates it with "the larger struggle in the United States for the right to be treated fairly and equally, with dignity and respect." Like all the great social protest movements in U.S. history—including the labor movement, the women's movement, and the movement to promote Black freedom—the fight for voting rights has experienced forward surges followed by periods of retrenchment. The fact that we're currently living through the latter, Minnite believes, shouldn't be cause for despair but should, instead, motivate supporters to persevere. Specifically, she says, "we need to continue to pressure state legislatures to simplify the rules to expand access. And on a larger level, we have to reform the Constitution," which doesn't explicitly enshrine voting as an essential right.



For Minnite, the goals of the right to vote and of democracy itself are one and the same: "more equality in the society we live in, so that everybody can develop into the person they could be." She admits that efforts to achieve those goals are likely to be ongoing for some time—which makes it all the more important that proponents remain engaged. "The fight," she says, "is all there is"—a statement that could also stand as a summary of her life's work.

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PROFESSOR LORRAINE MINNITE



The Power of Podcasts

Students gain hands-on experience in a fast-growing medium

BY JONATHAN KROBERGER

When Rutgers University–Camden students Sandra Benjamin and Tania Martinez wanted their voices to be heard on issues of immigration, they turned to podcasting.

Martinez, whose parents immigrated from Mexico and Guatemala, and Benjamin, whose parents came from Egypt, launched a podcast that explores immigrant stories and touches on issues such as the Muslim ban, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and stereotyping of immigrants. The pair have produced six episodes, including a recent discussion with Samuel Tuero, a recent Rutgers–Camden alumnus whose parents immigrated from the Dominican Republic. “Our goal is to talk about these different immigrant experiences and put these stories into context,” Martinez said.

The two students are among many worldwide who are tapping into the power of podcasting to tell stories. An estimated 116 million Americans—41 percent of the population—have listened to a podcast in the past month; 80 million listen weekly.

What makes podcasts so powerful? The answer is that they are exceptionally good at one simple but increasingly difficult thing: establishing an active and direct connection between creator and listener. “No other medium is as evocative as sound,” said Robert Emmons, a Rutgers–Camden associate teaching professor who has taught podcasting. “We’re primarily a visual culture, but the power of audio lies in its limitation. When you only have sound, it requires the imagination of the listener. It requires active participation in a way that watching movies doesn’t.”

Because of that active participation, listening to a podcast can become a powerful moment of transportation. It can take you anywhere you want to go—drop into a comedy show, sit in on a political conversation among friends, or travel around the world with the click of a button.

Rutgers Joins the Conversation

This explosion of interest has led universities across the country to experiment with the podcast form, using it to give voice to a range of experts and stories. Rutgers is no exception. In 2021, Rutgers launched *On the Pandemic*, a podcast that kept the university community aware of an evolving response to the pandemic, while speaking to university faculty who brought their expertise to bear on an exceptional situation.

The Rutgers–Camden Digital Studies Center, where Benjamin and Martinez produce their podcast, has been incorporating podcast production into its curriculum since 2012. The possibilities that a podcast offers were what originally drew Emmons to bring it to his students. “Audio content was democratized by podcasting,” Emmons said. “Before podcasts, listening to the radio used to be primarily music, news, and sports. Now there’s an unlimited amount of audio content available to everyone. It literally gave a voice to the voiceless.”

It’s an example of the kind of hands-on education and creative thinking that defines the work of the Rutgers–Camden Digital Studies Center and is infused across campus. “We value the hard skills of practice,” Emmons said. “Incorporating real production practice into our courses means students get skills that allow them to engage in tech in ways that make them more appealing to employers. People are increasingly expected to be able to do it all, and that’s why we teach them a variety of practical skills.”

The Next Episode

Rutgers–Camden plans to continue experimenting with podcasts, using the format to amplify an increasing range of voices across the community. Later this year will see the launch of *What Changed?*, a new podcast focusing on the impact of higher education. It will feature stories about how a college education changed the trajectory of the lives of students, faculty, and members of the wider community.

Stories of change, adversity, and transformation are powerfully resonant when told through the medium of podcasts. The proliferation of podcasts over the past decade proves that there is no shortage of curiosity in the world. “Podcasts are now a permanent part of the media landscape,” Emmons said. “Anything that literature or film can do, podcasts can do too. And if they haven’t yet, they will.”

“Before podcasts, listening to the radio used to be primarily music, news, and sports. Now there’s an unlimited amount of audio content available to everyone. It literally gave a voice to the voiceless.”

ROBERT EMMONS, Rutgers-Camden
associate teaching professor



Starla Blatcher, student (left) with Professor Robert Emmons (right).

Cooking *with Soul*

Rutgers University–Camden alumna
Corinne Bradley-Powers’ iconic soul food
restaurant won a James Beard Award, one
of the culinary world’s highest honors

BY SAM STARNES



Corinne Bradley-Powers strolled from table to table on a recent weekday, chatting with lunchtime customers at Corinne’s Place, the restaurant she founded that has been serving up fried chicken, Cajun turkey wings, and other delectable soul food specialties for more than three decades.

She greeted repeat customers she knew by name, often with a hug. “There are not too many people in Camden who I have not fed,” she said. If she didn’t know a diner, she asked, “What’s your name?” and made a point to remember it. Their next time in, she’ll know them by name.

That personal touch, combined with a mouthwatering menu, is the secret to why Corinne’s Place is one of six restaurants to win a 2022 James Beard Foundation America’s Classics Award, a recognition given to “locally owned restaurants that have timeless appeal and are beloved regionally for quality food that reflects the character of its community.”

The James Beard Foundation citation raved about Corinne’s Place. “Over the past three decades, it has become a pillar of community,” it read, noting that “Bradley-Powers’ longevity as a business owner remains a beacon of hope that continues to inspire.” The foundation also lauded the restaurant’s resilience and creativity over the past two years. “During the pandemic, she transformed a vacant lot beside her storefront into a tented gathering space for tranquil outdoor dining. Known as ‘the oasis,’ complete with a trickling fountain and warm hospitality to go along with Corinne’s irresistible soul food platters, it lives up to its name.”

The award created quite a buzz for Corinne’s Place. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy Tweeted about it, and went a step further: “The first day,” Bradley-Powers said, “he called down and congratulated us.”



“Bradley-Powers’ longevity as a business owner remains a beacon of hope that continues to inspire.”

THE JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION

A Camden Native

Although many of the offerings at Corinne’s Place are cornerstones of southern cooking, Bradley-Powers was born and raised in Camden. “Often times when people come in, they ask me ‘What part of the South are you from?’ I say, ‘South Jersey.’ They say, ‘Where is your mother from?’ I say, ‘South Jersey.’”

But her family tree is rooted in the Deep South. Her grandparents are from Waycross, in the southernmost part of Georgia near the Okefenokee Swamp. “I’ve never been there,” she said.

After graduating from Camden High School, Bradley-Powers worked for several years as a bookkeeper for the Camden County probation office. She enrolled at Rutgers–Camden in 1975, one year after her daughter was born.

While studying, she worked on campus in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) office as a counselor, and later as a peer counselor on campus. “I had a very pleasant experience at Rutgers,” she said, although she noted it wasn’t all smoothing sailing. “There weren’t a lot of minorities at that time,” she said. “I did experience some racism.” In one class, for example, she felt that the papers she wrote were graded unfairly. To prove it, a fellow EOF counselor who was white and who had very good grades wrote a paper and Bradley-Powers submitted it as hers. That paper earned another bad grade. Bradley-Powers took her case to dean, who supported her and was very helpful. “It almost broke my spirit for a second,” she said, “but I wasn’t going to quit.”

With the exception of that class, Bradley-Powers enjoyed most of her courses and professors, particularly one English teacher who told her, “You are the kind of student who makes my job worthwhile.”

When she completed her bachelor’s degree in sociology in 1979, it was a memorable day. “Graduation was wonderful,” she said. “My mom was there. My daughter was there. It was almost like winning this James Beard Award.”

Her connection to Rutgers extends to another generation in her family. She is proud that her grandsons Kiandre and KaRon Davis have followed her in her footsteps: Kiandre is a junior art major at Rutgers University–Camden; KaRon recently earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting from Rutgers University–Newark.

Bradley-Powers' grandson, Kiandre Davis, is a junior art major at Rutgers-Camden.



'Children Are My Ministry'

After earning her degree, she went back to the probation office, working as a counselor for the Juvenile Resource Center, where she considered the young people she helped as “my kids.” She explained to each one her plans for them. “I sat my kids down and said, ‘Let me tell you this. When you leave this office, you can’t say nobody cared.’ Cause a lot of kids, they grow up and nobody cared. You won’t be able to say that here. If you are my baby, I care.”

She often went above the call of duty, pulling young people out of rough situations, including once going into a motorcycle gang’s clubhouse to the aid of a young woman. She often showed support at court hearings to help them get back on their feet, and often would take young people out to dinner and teach them about food and table manners.

Although she left the probation office after seven years, she continued her efforts with youth, hiring and mentoring hundreds who have worked at Corinne’s Place over the years. Many young people she hired came to her after dropping out of school, and she guided them back to earn high school diplomas. “Children are my ministry,” she said. “I draw from their energy.”

“I sat my kids down and said, ‘Let me tell you this. When you leave this office, you can’t say nobody cared.’”

CORINNE BRADLEY-POWERS

A Lifetime of Cooking

Bradley-Powers always loved to cook and learned much from her mother, whom she said was an excellent cook. “Cooking was my hobby,” she said, adding she enjoyed it while working for the probation office. “I could go and work with my kids and then I would come home and unwind cooking.”

In the '70s, while studying at Rutgers-Camden and later working for the probation office she began a catering business on the side. After her catering business grew and she left the probation office, she bought the building at 1254 Haddon Avenue and opened the restaurant in 1989.

In the early going, earning a prestigious award seemed unlikely for Corinne’s Place. When she told her husband, mother, and daughter after the first week in business that they had taken in only \$150, they suggested she close down. She rolled her eyes at them. The next week they took in \$175, enough to buy more food. With each week earnings grew until the

restaurant was a success. “They say when you open a business you should have backup money,” she said. “I didn’t have any backup money. I had crazy faith. I never even thought about failing.”

Even though she sold the business in 2019 and now serves as a consultant, she remains the primary driver of the franchise that bears her name. Her food has long earned rave reviews, particularly her fried chicken, which customers often ask about. “People ask me, ‘What is your seasoning? What do you do?’” she said. “A lot of people dip it in egg. I don’t do anything like that. I wash it really good and put on seasoning, salt, and black pepper. And I rub it in and put love in it. I put love and a prayer in it.”

Another favorite is Cajun turkey wings, which with fried chicken are the foundation of a menu that also includes fried catfish and pig feet. Are all the recipes hers? “Every last one,” she said.

But there’s more to Corinne’s Place than her recipes. The conversations she has had from table to table for three decades have resulted in deep relationships that have sustained her and the restaurant she founded. “It’s not just a food thing,” Bradley-Powers said. “Customers talk. They share with me about their families or about their problems, and we embrace them.”

Her longevity as a caterer and restaurant owner has connected her to thousands in the city of Camden and beyond, including the famous (Danny Glover has been there several times, as well as many well-known athletes) and not-so-famous.

At its heart, Corinne’s Place is a hometown treasure. Her customers form an enormous extended family of those she has fed, those who have worked for her, and those she has mentored. She has touched more people in Camden than she can ever count. “I believe that’s one of the reasons why God favored me with this award,” she said.

New Degrees Awarded



Camden College of Arts and Sciences

- Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) in Visual Arts

The Graduate School–Camden

- Master of Professional Studies (M.P.S.) in Emerging Media
- Master of Arts (M.A.) in Emerging Media
- Master of Science (M.S.) in Data Science
- Master of Science (M.S.) in Prevention Science
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Prevention Science

School of Business–Camden

- Master of Science in Finance (M.S.F.) – Wealth Management Track

A Message From the Publisher



The Office of Marketing and Communications has been working to develop exciting new projects and innovative content to celebrate the joy of learning and boundless creative energy across campus. Whether it's launching the Spring/Summer 2022 inaugural digital magazine, a new video series spotlighting the industrious, passionate individuals who strive every day to lift themselves higher, or a new podcast series that explores the life-changing impact of a Rutgers–Camden education, we bring you the news.

We are always seeking new ways to tell the amazing stories of our students, faculty, staff, and community. In the coming weeks, we will launch the new Rutgers–Camden website, rebuilt from the ground up to incorporate cutting-edge design and usability features. Our new digital platforms will be the most dynamic and user-friendly innovations we've ever used.

Stay tuned for more exciting news in the months ahead!

TONI MOONEY SMITH, MSC

Vice Chancellor of Marketing and Communications



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