A Bold Plan to Fulfill Rutgers University–Newark’s Promise

by Carla Capizzi

On Sept. 22, Chancellor Nancy Cantor unveiled the Rutgers University–Newark (RU–N) Strategic Plan, Rutgers University–Newark: Where Opportunity Meets Excellence (www.newark.rutgers.edu/files/rutgers_strategic_plan.pdf). The plan sets forth priorities to invest resources to build the university’s strengths in merging excellence and opportunity, and in the words of Cantor, to reinvigorate RU–N’s abiding “commitment to pushing forward ambitiously and assertively to be that diverse urban research institution that leaves no stone unturned in its impact — on scholarship, social mobility, urban civic life.” Connect asked several members of the RU–N community for their thoughts on this phase of the university’s future.

Dr. Bonita Veysey, interim vice chancellor for strategic initiatives and the person who will lead initiatives to address strategic plan priorities

The strategic plan represents several things to me. First, it represents a different way of doing things. This plan emerged from an inclusive process that was both bottom up and outside

in. The plan belongs to us, the Rutgers University–Newark community of students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and to the local and global communities in which we are embedded. Second, the plan builds upon our unique identity and history and honors the tremendous cultural heritage, people, and resources of our home city of Newark. Finally, the strategic plan is an imagining of what Rutgers University–Newark can and will become. I heard the Provost (Todd Clear) say something the other day that really resonated with me. He said, “We should not compare ourselves to other universities. We should compare ourselves to our future selves.” The plan, therefore, is not so much a change in direction, but rather the fulfillment of a promise long dormant.

Dr. Jyl Josephson, associate professor, and co-chair of the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee

There are so many challenges facing higher education today, and Rutgers University–Newark really is positioned to show leadership in how to meet the challenges of higher education in the 21st century. The strategic planning process under Chancellor Cantor’s leadership has opened so many possibilities for this university. We are a place of excellence and diversity; we do many things well and can do some things even more effectively. The
The Ability to Persist May Depend on How the News is Delivered

by Robert Forman

Sometimes when people get upsetting news – such as a failing exam grade or a negative job review – they decide instantly to do better the next time.

In other situations that are equally disappointing, the same people may feel inclined to just give up.

How can similar setbacks produce such different reactions? It may come down to how much control we feel we have over what happened, according to new research from Rutgers University-Newark.

The study, published in the journal Neuron, also finds that when these setbacks occur, the level of control we perceive may even determine which of two distinct parts of the brain will handle the crisis.

“Think of the student who failed an exam,” says Jamil Bhanji, postdoctoral fellow and co-author. “They might feel they wouldn’t have failed if they had studied harder, studied differently – something under their control.” That student, Bhanji says, resolves to try new study habits and work hard toward acing the next exam.

Other students may experience a more complicated thought process. In cases like this, fMRI revealed that activity in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC), a part of the brain that regulates emotions in more flexible ways, is necessary to promote persistence.

Dr. Mauricio Delgado, an associate professor of psychology and the study’s other co-author, says people whose jobs include delivering bad news should pay attention to these results, because their actions might influence how the news is received.

“You may deliver the news to the student – no sugar coating, here’s your setback,” Delgado says. “But then you make an offer – would you like to review those study habits with me? I’d be happy to do it.” This puts the student in a situation where they may experience control and be more likely to improve the next time.

This approach, says Delgado, may be far more constructive than curtly delivering a bad grade.

Bhanji says lessons from the study may even guide certain people away from giving up too soon on careers where they could do well. “We wonder why there are fewer women and minorities in the sciences, for example,” he explains. “Maybe in cases like that it’s fair to say there are things we can do to promote reactions to negative feedback that encourage persistence.”

As research continues, adds Bhanji, important areas to explore will also include “figuring out when it’s worth continuing to keep trying and when it’s not.”

Research Results in Partnerships for the Public Good

by Carla Capizzi

Rutgers University-Newark has a decades-old tradition of using its academic resources in partnership with the people of the state, especially in its hometown. This public problem solving often takes the form of collaborations between Rutgers-Newark students with city government or the business community.

However, two current projects – involving Rutgers Business School (RBS) Dr. Kevin Lyons and his students – are aimed at benefitting both the public and private sectors, as well as Newark’s citizens.

Lyons and his Supply Chain Environmental Management classes, both undergraduate and graduate, are working with the City of Newark’s various procurement divisions to streamline their purchasing processes and make the awarding of contracts more efficient and less time-consuming. “We’re examining purchasing policies at the state and local level; the layers of bureaucracy can stretch out awarding of a contract to six months,” he says. “Outsiders bring a fresh eye and can see things more objectively,” he explains.

The end goals are to improve city services through more efficient and timely purchasing of goods and services. Other cities, including New Brunswick and Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and Burlington, Vermont have turned to Lyons for similar expertise over the years.

Lyons’ group is examining everything from IT systems to waste management collection to fleet management. Some tweaks to software programs, to eliminate a redundant step in the purchasing process, have already been suggested.

He and the students will make their analysis and prepare their assessments without impeding the city’s work processes, he notes. The first phase of their project, a detailed analysis of their findings, will be delivered in December 2014. Over the first six months of 2015, the city will implement the recommendations, with Lyons and his team of students carefully monitoring the process and measuring results.

PSE&G’s purchasing staff also are helping in the endeavor, bringing a corporate perspective, according to Lyons.

On a second front, Lyons and his students also are working with the city’s manufacturing community to make it more competitive. Unlike the city’s manufacturing base of a couple of generations ago, today’s Newark-based manufacturers are primarily small businesses, and many are struggling to compete in today’s economy. Lyons helped prepare a 2012 Brookings Institution report on Newark’s manufacturing competitiveness, a report that identifies several challenges facing the city’s manufacturers, including the need to invest in new product development, a skills gap among workers, an aging workforce, and infrastructure constraints.

In response to the study, the RBS Center for Supply Chain Management has launched its Newark Industrial Solutions Center (NISC). Funded by RBS, the Garfield Foundation, and the Brick City Development Corporation, NISC’s mission reflects both R–U and the business school’s “demonstrated vision for civic engagement and problem-solving,” according to Lyons. NISC will develop, strengthen, and promote industrial competitiveness and economic development by leveraging the tools and capabilities of RBS’s supply chain resources. Lyons is already working with several Newark-based manufacturers to improve several of their key business functions: supply chain and logistics, workforce development, business development strategies, new decision-making tools for industrial production databases, and new ways to analyze customer demand.

Dr. Kevin Lyons

Dr. Mauricio Delgado

RESEARCH
LaToya Battle-Brown, assistant provost and dean, Office of Admissions

by Ferlanda Fox Nixon

After just a brief encounter with LaToya Battle-Brown, it quickly becomes apparent that her greatest treasures are her family (particularly her 10-year-old son), education (especially providing access to everyone at all levels), and her hometown, Newark, New Jersey (where she and her husband and son were born and raised and currently reside). She proudly wears her love for all three on her sleeve.

A member of Rutgers University–Newark’s staff since 1999, Battle-Brown accepted an appointment as the assistant provost and dean of the RU–N Office of Admissions in September 2014. Immediately prior, she served as associate dean of the Rutgers Business School—Undergraduate Newark Program where she implemented an aggressive academic probation policy as a form of tough love. “All Rutgers University–Newark students have an intense passion to succeed. They’re here because they want to be here. I believe that if we bring them to RU–N, we have an obligation to help them thrive by providing effective resources to address their social, emotional, and academic needs.” The RBS academic probation policy for undergraduates does just that. Students possessing a grade point average below 2.5 are placed on academic probation and required to satisfy certain metrics to improve their academic performance. As a result of the policy’s rigor, of the 276 students listed on the spring 2014 probation list, 66 percent were able to elevate their GPAs satisfactorily.

“I believe that if I see myself in the typical RU–N student, I feel I have a deeper understanding of his or her challenges, many of which I encountered as an EOF [Educational Opportunity Fund] student at Douglass College at Rutgers University—New Brunswick.” Recognizing that the road to academic success begins in a child’s formative years, for the past five years, Battle-Brown has purchased annually at least four age-appropriate books for each of her son’s 28–30 classmates. The donated books, each stamped “a gift from the Brown family,” enable students of limited financial means to start and expand their own personal libraries.

Battle-Brown and her family also actively participate in the annual fundraising, “Characters Walk,” in support of children’s literacy. All the proceeds of the benefit are given to the Newark Public Library to purchase children’s books. “My passion for education began with my love of reading at a young age because of the D.E.A.R. program. During the course of the school day, at a moment’s notice, all students had to ‘drop everything and read’ for a set period of time. It is my goal to instill that same level of adventure and excitement in children as early as possible. And I can’t think of a better place to achieve that objective than Newark, New Jersey.”

Bil Leipold, associate dean, academic programs and student services, School of Criminal Justice

When a person spends nearly 18 years of his career working for the same institution, it is difficult for anyone to doubt his genuine fondness for it. Such is the case with Dr. Bil Leipold, associate dean of academic programs and student services for the School of Criminal Justice (SCJ). Leipold has held various leadership, administrative, and teaching positions at Rutgers University in Newark and New Brunswick since 1997. The majority of his Rutgers tenure, however, has been with RU–N — nearly 14 years.

“I’m drawn to Rutgers University–Newark because of its diversity and connected community. With it comes a close-knit community that respects honesty and openness. Best of all are the people — the students, faculty, and staff.” In his current role, Leipold and an SCJ team of esteemed professionals (Edith Laurencin, LaWanda Thomas, Sandra Wright, Jimmy Camacho, Alexandra Charles, Dennis Ng, and Phyllis Schultz), have the primary responsibility of ensuring each student’s success. Leipold’s office helps with enrollment, academic programs, academic advising, internships, and an array of life-balance issues. Examples of services provided include maintaining extended office hours during four days of the week and offering early morning, late evening, and weekend (both Saturday and Sunday) courses to accommodate students’ busy schedules.

“My favorite day at Rutgers is commencement. It’s so gratifying to see the students we’ve helped and grown to know walk confidently across the stage and shake hands with the dean. I can’t think of a better affirmation of RU–N’s mission to provide a first-rate education to an exceptionally diverse community of undergraduate and graduate students.”

An openly gay man and survivor of a leadership concerns. Using plenty of humor and fun, interactive exercises, their relaxed and nonthreatening style enables people to focus on inherent similarities rather than differences. A native of central Pennsylvania, Leipold received his bachelor’s degree from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania and his master’s degree from Norwich University in Vermont. In May 2014, he received his Ed.D. from St. John Fisher College in New York.

“I look forward to spending another 14 years at RU–N. I find it refreshing — a place where cognitive, emotional, and real information can be shared and appreciated, a place where the cultures, experiences, and narratives of individuals are not only valued but proudly celebrated.”
Recent Appointments

The Chancellors Office has announced the appointment of Dr. Nabil Adam, long time faculty member of Rutgers Business School-Newark and New Brunswick (RBS), to serve as the vice provost of research. In his new position, Adam oversees the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. He is currently heading the launch of the Institute for Data Science, Learning, and Applications (I-DLSA). Adam received his Ph.D. in engineering from Columbia University. John Cotton Dana Library welcomed new Library Director LaToya Battle-Brown. Battle-Brown is a past summer. Askew comes to RU–N from the University of Memphis, where she served as the director of the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change and the School of Law. Recently, she has been appointed director of the Institute for Social Change and the School of Law. She is currently leading a statewide program to increase minority representation in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The first grant, a $3.5 million award from the National Science Foundation (NSF), funds the Garden State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Phase II (GS-LSAMP II) from July 2014 through June 2019. GS-LSAMP II is expanding the success of its precursor, GS-LSAMP, which exceeded its goal of doubling the number of minority students who earn their bachelor’s degrees in STEM. Approximately 2,000 students have completed the program since its inception in 2009. Since its inception the GS-LSAMP project has been led by Dr. Alexander Gates, associate professor, School of Arts and Sciences–Newark, and New Brunswick (RBS), Dr. Nabil Adam, associate dean for public services and where she earned her Ed. D. Her expertise covers a range of topics, including reference services, information literacy, and data analysis. LaToya Battle-Brown has been appointed assistant provost and dean for advancement (see profile on page 3). Kevin Dowlin has been appointed assistant provost for technology and learning spaces at RU–N. Previously, Dowlin worked for RBS as the director of technology and instructional services, where he promoted increased IT access and engagement through advanced, user-friendly tools.

Law School Collaborates on Comprehensive Resource Guide for Citizens

The mother of an eight-year-old boy with autism does not understand her child’s education rights. A social worker searches tirelessly for vocational training for a client who lost his job and is facing eviction. A nurse struggles to find a food pantry for an elderly patient who has not eaten in days. Helping professionals and their clients experience difficulties every day when attempting to locate resources and navigate social and legal service systems. Scattered information on outdated lists can send clients in circles to find appropriate resources that actually service their local area.

Rutgers Helps NJ Resource Guide (www.rutgershelpsnj.org) remedies these challenges by offering an online, comprehensive, social service, legal, and health database. While the database focuses on services for City of Newark residents, many of the listed programs are available to residents throughout Essex and neighboring counties and across the state.

With funding from the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, Rutgers School of Law–Newark and Rutgers School of Social Work collaborated on the development of the website with Pro Bono Net, a national nonprofit that partners with nonprofit legal organizations to increase access to justice for poor individuals. Rutgers Helps NJ Resource Guide includes more than 350 agencies and programs categorized by more than 30 specific areas of service, including child care, mental health, homeless shelters, law, and advocacy, making it easy for both clients and professionals to find needed contact information for local, state, and federal programs and agencies.
In January 2015, Rutgers University–Newark will welcome one of the nation’s esteemed thought leaders in leveraging and coalescing the social and intellectual value of diversity and collaboration in higher education. Dr. Shirley M. Collado will join the RU–N administration as executive vice chancellor for strategic initiatives and executive vice provost. In those capacities, Collado will spearhead the implementation of key elements of the university’s strategic plan, oversee and align academic and student affairs functions and operations, and stimulate academic innovation and engagement. These responsibilities will be rooted in the goal of maximizing inclusiveness and full participation. Specifically in the Provost’s Office, Collado will lead and manage core areas that include academic services, enrollment, student life, human resources, facilities, information technology, and budget and finance. Collado currently is the vice president for student affairs and dean of the College at Middlebury College where she oversees and supports a dynamic student body and academic community. She also is an associate professor of psychology. Collado will bring a depth and breadth of experience from the numerous departments, initiatives, and offices under her leadership at Middlebury to the ones she will oversee at RU–N.

Prior to joining Middlebury, Collado served as the executive vice president of The Posse Foundation, where she oversaw and managed operations nationally. The Posse Foundation is a nonprofit comprehensive college access and retention organization that identifies, recruits, and trains youth leaders from urban public high schools and sends them in diverse teams, called “posses,” to top colleges and universities across the country. A member of The Posse Foundation’s inaugural class of students and a Brooklyn-born daughter of Dominican immigrants, Collado is the first person in her family to undergo the transformative experience of college matriculation and graduation. Moreover, Collado is the first Posse Scholar to receive a doctoral degree and become a trustee at an institution of higher education, her alma mater Vanderbilt University.

"The challenge that impels my own approach and commitment to institutional leadership is striving to enable all members of a faculty, staff, and student body to participate equitably and collaboratively in a vision of excellence for the entire community," said Collado. "I strongly identify with the mission and student body of Rutgers University–Newark. I hope we will build on this model to continue creating the most promising conditions for students from all walks of life to learn, persist, and thrive in the great city of Newark.”

Collado is a clinical psychologist with a specialty in trauma among multicultural populations. She holds masters and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from Duke University and a bachelor’s degree in human and organizational development and psychology from Vanderbilt University. She has taught at a number of colleges and universities, including Middlebury College, Lafayette College, New York University, Georgetown University, George Mason University, and The New School. Collado will continue her research and teaching pursuits at RU–N as a faculty member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology with an affiliation in the Department of Psychology. 

A Bold Plan …from cover page

democratic engagement in the planning process by faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community has brought new energy to our historic mission. The kinds of conversations that we have had across traditional divisions within the university were very gratifying for those who participated, and commitment to maintaining and deepening that engagement as the strategic plan is carried into action has made me very optimistic about the future of our university.

Eslam Abdelbasset, Class of 2015, president, Rutgers University–Newark–Student Governing Association

Being the student government president in such a transitional time is a surreal feeling. The significance that this moment will play in the legacy of Rutgers University–Newark is monumental.

The Strategic Plan encompasses not only the immense issues on campus such as financial aid and public safety, but many of the small day-to-day issues that face the Rutgers community such as dining and technology infrastructure. The body has been eager to improve the college experience here at Rutgers University–Newark. By giving the students seats on study groups as part of the implementation process of the Strategic Plan, the University’s administration has shown that it is taking the student’s voice into serious consideration. The student body is looking forward to seeing the immediate changes that will take effect. We hope to see the changes that will further improve the quality of the undergraduate experience at Rutgers University–Newark not only now, but for generations to come.

Shelby David, food service director, Rutgers University–Newark Dining

One of the most relevant takeaways for Dining Services from the new Strategic Plan was hearing about the evolution of and truly understanding that Rutgers University–Newark has long been a front runner in diversity with its leaders being valued pillars in the community. This university is so instrumental in the community and it’s easy to see why students choose to make Rutgers University–Newark their college choice. As the food service director on campus, I’m excited by the opportunity to partner with the university in creating a dining master plan this semester that will align with the university’s strategic plan and provide a new vision for the dining program. My dining team will work with the university to create the ultimate dining experience on campus by linking campus lifestyle needs to customized food solutions.

Bryne DiMenichi, Class of 2018, president, Graduate Student Government Association

I am thrilled that a major direction of the new Strategic Plan is invested in improving the experience of graduate students here at Rutgers University–Newark. As the president of the Graduate Student Governing Association, I can speak confidently for all graduate students when I say that the new Strategic Plan will have a vast impact on our academic endeavors, social encounters, and perhaps most vitally, the development of our future careers. The greatest and most crucial outcome of the Strategic Plan will be in the form of new and exciting opportunities, opportunities crucial to professional development, academic collaboration, and investment in what the Newark community has to offer.
What led to the creation of NJ-STEP?

The New Jersey prison system was already offering classes in an ad hoc fashion, but the colleges offering courses were doing that separately. About two years ago, the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice hosted a meeting of the various schools that were involved in this, and we formed a consortium in which we combined our courses together into a single operating entity. We called that entity NJ-STEP.

Similar programs have been criticized by some politicians and taxpayers who think inmates shouldn’t receive a college education at a significantly reduced cost. How has this program generally been received in New Jersey?

Well the governor loves it. He had a press conference in which he fully endorsed the work we were doing. I understand why people might feel funny about this. people who are incarcerated have committed crimes—so why should they receive this benefit? That said, an investment in college courses for people who are incarcerated is a net positive, indeed a moneymaker, for the state of New Jersey.

Is there continued assistance for inmates who attend two-year or four-year colleges after NJ-STEP?

Rutgers University has a nationally renowned program called Mountainview that provides a community of support for Rutgers students who come from the New Jersey prison system. So, yes, we provide support. We don’t just drop them cold into the community; we bring them in the support system, just like we would other students. If we accept you to this college, Rutgers University–Newark, we will provide the kind of support that you need in order to succeed here.

What are your goals for NJ-STEP?

We want to do two things. We want to make college courses available to every person who’s incarcerated in New Jersey, who is eligible to take courses and wants to take them.

The second thing we want to do is to serve as a model for the nation. The arrangement we’ve done here which involves a consortium of eight colleges, private and public, four-year and county colleges, that model is transportable to any other state in the union.

To read the Q&A in its entirety, please visit www.newark.rutgers.edu/news/nj-step-changing-lives-behind-bars-q-a-provost-todd-clear

NJ-STEP Changing Lives Behind Bars: Q&A with Provost Todd Clear by Jade McClain

George Washington Carver said, “Education is the key to unlock the golden door to freedom.” For hundreds of people incarcerated in New Jersey’s prisons, Carver’s words ring true, as inmates take college courses as part of the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prison Consortium (NJ-STEP).

Dr. Todd Clear, provost of Rutgers University–Newark, sat down to give greater insight into NJ-STEP and discuss how it is transforming New Jersey’s prison system.

Rutgers University–Newark to Spark Arts Collaboration in Former Hahne & Company Department Store by Peter Englot

RU–N has unveiled “Express Newark: A University-Community Collaboratory,” a bold plan to facilitate public scholarship and community engagement among faculty, staff, and students with community partners and residents of Greater Newark.

“Express Newark” aims to cultivate artistic expression locally that resonates globally through collaborative programming for a wide array of art- and humanities-based uses. Housed in part of the historic former Hahne & Company department store in the heart of downtown Newark, Express Newark will bring RU–N studio artists, printmakers, photographers, theater director-producers, journalists, authors, and humanists together with community arts and culture organizations and local schools to cultivate new talent. Among the community collaborators beyond The Newark Museum will be the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Gallery Aferro, Newark Print Shop, Aljira Gallery, Hyride Magazine, Newark First, GlassRoots, the Edison National Historical Park, WQNO, and VII visual documentary collective. The building, bordered by Broad, New and Halsey streets, will become a vital link between the commercial Broad Street corridor and the developing arts district along the axis of Halsey Street.

Programs will include an arts incubator; communication media center; design consortium, print shop, portrait studio, and lecture hall/maker space, as well as new exhibition and performance spaces for programming by the RU–N Institute of Jazz Studies—the world’s foremost jazz archive—and The Newark Museum. Equally important as the components within is the effort to engage the community through all of Express Newark’s programs and spaces, with each component featuring a community-based aspect and a direct and open link to Greater Newark and its citizens. “Express Newark leverages the talent, creativity, and commitment of RU–N’s superlative studio, performing, and literary artists, humanists, and journalists, with the phenomenal assets of Newark as a cultural capital and the power of the arts to transform cities through intergroup dialogue, exploring identities, and spurring entrepreneurship,” says RU–N Chancellor Nancy Cantor. “We aspire for Express Newark to play a pivotal role as a ‘third space’, where the university and community come together to advance scholarship, strengthen our community and build the momentum behind Newark’s renaissance.”

With a focus on fostering collaborative academic and research programs, supporting public scholarship, investing in spaces and places to engage the world, and cultivating civic dialogue—as it will, for example, through the Newark Writers Series—Express Newark directly addresses priorities identified in the RU–N Strategic Plan released in September, helping fulfill RU–N’s role as an anchor institution in Greater Newark. (Read the plan at www.newark.rutgers.edu/news/chancellor-cantor-unveils-strategic-plan).

The Rutgers Board of Governors authorized Rutgers to spend up to $25 million, contingent upon securing approximately $8 million from various incentive programs and cost projections that would enable the university to complete and operate the project.