"The legislation that integrated New Jersey’s medical schools into Rutgers University provided for a new kind of autonomy for Rutgers University-Newark," explains Provost Todd Clear.

With the appointment of Nancy Cantor as chancellor in January, RU-N "is charting a new vision for excellence as Rutgers’ Urban University," notes Clear. "Consistent with new leadership and an emerging mission, Rutgers University-Newark is holding its first ever multi-school commencement ceremony this year, on May 21, at 9 a.m. We believe this is the start of a new tradition," he states.

At the Prudential Center ceremony, the founder and CEO of Audible, Inc., Donald Katz, will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Katz will also address approximately 2,800 graduates and their guests. The School of Law-Newark will hold a separate ceremony at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center on May 21, at 2 p.m. Approximately 230 law graduates will hear remarks from Rutgers Senior Vice President and General Counsel John J. Farmer Jr. during a combined commencement and graduation recognition program. The school will host a reception for its graduates in the Center for Law and Justice.

On May 22, some 200 students graduate from the College of Nursing (CON), in a ceremony at the Golden Dome Athletic Center. Come July 1, CON is merging with the School of Nursing from Rutgers Health Sciences at Newark.
Exploring the Brain for Keys to Solving Parkinson’s Disease

One of the final frontiers of science is the human brain, the source of our intelligence, feelings and ability to make our bodies move – as well as the locus of terrible diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. It is as complicated as any object that scientists can explore.

For more than three decades, Rutgers neuroscientist James M. Tepper of the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, and his colleagues have added to understanding of the brain and its innermost workings, mapping the myriad electrical impulses that course through the brain.

So intricate is Tepper’s work that he doesn’t even study the entire brain. His territory is the striatum, the largest portion of the basal ganglia, a set of structures below the cerebral cortex involved in voluntary motor behavior as well as cognition, learning and memory, emotion and motivation. Parkinson’s can progressively degrade many of those functions, so experts say that learning more about the basal ganglia is essential to uncovering the mysteries of Parkinson’s disease—a primary reason why last September the National Institutes of Health awarded Tepper a five-year, $3.4 million grant to delve ever more deeply into the circuitry and function of the striatum.

One way to understand Parkinson’s, according to Tepper, is to think of the screeching feedback that reverberates through a room when a microphone is held too closely to a very loud speaker. Until it subsides, the senses of people in the room are overwhelmed. In a brain that functions normally, the billions of electrical impulses that neurons generate each second are generally independent of one another. But in Parkinson’s, for unknown reasons, many of the impulses occur simultaneously, synchronize with one another and then bounce back and forth in unison between brain structures called the subthalamus and the globus pallidus, and elsewhere, generating their own form of pathological “feedback.”

Tepper says this “perfect storm” then overwhelms the brain’s ability to focus on muscle movement, memory, and more. Unfortunately, the brain does not have a simple volume control to tame the howling neurological noise, a problem that probably cannot be solved at least until researchers like Tepper can fill in more gaps in the map of the brain’s circuitry.

Tepper says Parkinson’s comes from a constellation of genes, making it difficult to pinpoint specific genetic defects and produce gene-based therapies to reverse them. So in the quest for a Parkinson’s cure, mapping the circuitry of the brain may be the most promising option, at least for the foreseeable future.

On its own, Tepper says, his research will not uncover cures for Parkinson’s and other maladies that originate in the brain. But, he adds, “To understand what Parkinson’s disease is and how it comes about, one of the things you have to understand is how the striatum works. That is what we work on.”

The Newest Americans Project

One such story follows Mohamed Alsiadi, an American studies doctoral candidate and Arabic instructor at RU-N, who was born and raised in Aleppo, Syria. Alsiadi is a musician who plays Waslah music, an art form that not only preserves the cultural identity of Syrians, but also unifies Syrian Muslims, Jews, and Christians, who recognize Aleppian Waslah as an important part of their traditions.

Students will research the history of Aleppian Waslah, conduct interviews with local Waslah musicians and enthusiasts, write the music’s stories, and document Waslah concerts at clubs, hookah bars, weddings, and other venues in the tri-state region. Waslah is the lens through which students will gain insight into the implications of the Syrian diaspora and civil war.

The Newest Americans is an ongoing collaborative effort involving CMGC, VII, a group consisting of world-renowned videographers and photojournalists; and the Department of Arts, Culture and Media. Raphael hopes that when the pilot phase concludes, the project will receive additional funding and continue to follow these students beyond their time at the university.

Said Admani, an RU-N first-year student who will help oversee the project, is a Pakistani immigrant eager to tell these stories and highlight the contributions of immigrants. “By researching immigrant communities...it will allow us to showcase the great work of immigrants to the rest of the nation and also allow others to realize that we can also benefit from immigrants,” Admani says.
Chief Carmelo “John” Huertas, Director, Department of Public Safety

Chief Carmelo “John” Huertas’ face may be new to some at Rutgers University-Newark, but his leadership, charm and wit have been fixtures of the college town for nearly a decade. Now the director of the Department of Public Safety for RU-N and Rutgers Health Sciences at Newark (formerly UMDNJ), Huertas began his campus safety career as UMDNJ’s chief in 2005.

The son of a United States serviceman, Huertas moved from Puerto Rico to Leesville, Louisiana, when he was about 12 years old and for the next six years lived the life of a typical “military brat,” periodically moving from locality to locality with each transfer his dad received. “When I came to the United States, I couldn’t speak a lick of English,” Huertas reminisces. Time spent reading comic books and watching television, at the behest of his father, quickly ratcheted him up the learning curve. This unconventional yet highly effective language arts pedagogy enabled Huertas to graduate from high school and ultimately earn a bachelor’s degree from Excelsior College and a master’s from Seton Hall University. Like many of RU-N’s students and employees, Huertas was the first in his family to receive a college degree. Despite what his 36-year stint in the policing profession might suggest, Huertas never had childhood aspirations of becoming a law enforcement officer. But when, as a young man, Huertas found himself looking for a job, he again followed the wise counsel of his father and explored employment opportunities with the New Jersey State Police. Huertas successfully completed its training program and served as a state trooper for 25 years. Huertas appreciates the RU-N Department of Public Safety’s smaller stage because he enjoys the collegial interactions among the various stakeholders. Moreover, his role as director affords him the opportunity to change the perception of policing. “Most people don’t realize that policing is as much about providing a variety of services to people in need as it is about enforcing laws,” Huertas notes. “So while we might be unable to repair a disabled vehicle, we certainly can radio for assistance and stay with, transport or circle back to the stranded drivers.”

Huertas believes the extent to which he is able to train and motivate the individuals he leads to improve the level of services they provide to those in need, will determine his success as director. When he’s not working to make RU-N a safer community, Huertas spends time reading, and during warmer months, golfing and boating. Recognizing that “some things that really matter in life often are taken for granted,” Huertas makes sure to share as much time as possible with his family, cat and three dogs.

Sandra King, RU-N Alumna and Producer and Co-Host of Due Process

Nearly 20 years ago, Sandra King launched the critically acclaimed Due Process at NJN, expecting to hand it off after its first year. Instead, her passion for journalism and social justice had found its niche in the weekly public television series that she still produces, writes, reports, and co-hosts.

Now a production of Rutgers School of Law-Newark in collaboration with the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and the Division of Continuing Studies and the Rutgers TV Studio, Due Process is a unique weekly series, dedicated to cutting-edge issues of law and justice and aired four times weekly on NJTV. And her work has not gone unnoticed or unpraised. With two new Emmys won at this year’s ceremonies of the New York Academy of Television Arts and Sciences - one for an investigative report on the broken bail system, the other on the tragedy of unnecessary drug overdoses - Due Process can now claim an unprecedented two dozen regional Emmy® Awards, garnered over 19 seasons.

In 1998, King became the first New Jersey recipient of The Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University (journalism’s highest academic honor), and she can boast a long list of successes as a journalist and an award-winning producer and anchor of news, documentaries, and public affairs programs. She never lets anyone forget she’s also a proud Newarkite, who still makes her home here. “Please make sure you mention that I’m a product of Newark. That’s important.”

Born and raised in New Jersey’s largest city, King attended Newark’s public schools. She graduated from Weequahic High School in 1965 at age 16, and more than 30 years later was inducted into the first class of the Weequahic Hall of Fame, along with novelist Philip Roth. King also attended Bard College, but graduated from the Newark College of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University-Newark, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology in 1969. A child of the ‘60s, with a strong commitment to public service, it is no surprise that King serves as a member of the boards of trustees of the Newark Public Library, the Branch Brook Park Alliance and the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, all Newark-based organizations dedicated to the advancement of the lives of Newark’s residents. Also in the spirit of giving back, King shared her journalistic talents and experiences with RU-N students as an adjunct faculty member for nearly 15 years. Of King’s many impressive accomplishments, her greatest source of pride undoubtedly is her family. The white mother of an African-American son, King doesn’t hesitate to scroll through her smartphone, searching for and enlarging photos of her grandson and granddaughter.

“They are my heart,” she sighs. “Wait until you have grandchildren of your own; then you’ll know what I mean.” No need to wait - her beaming smile explains it all.
Debate Team Soars

For the first time in Rutgers University-Newark history, its debate team competed at its first National Debate Tournament (NDT). Hosted by Indiana University, March 27-30, the NDT is considered to be the most competitive and prestigious policy debate contest in the country. Only the top 78 teams in the United States out of a field of hundreds are afforded the opportunity to participate. Under the coaching leadership of Christopher Kazak, the veteran duo of Elijah Smith and Christopher Randall and the first-year pair of Kevon Haughton and Hannah Stafford represented RU-N. Smith was the champion of both the 2013 NDT and the 2013 Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) national championship.

Student Scholars Say ‘Thanks for the Opportunities’

Meet some of Rutgers University-Newark’s talented students, the everyday super heroes who are each doing remarkable work inside and outside the classroom. They come from the broad spectrum of disciplines at RU-N: arts and sciences, public affairs, business and law. They have one thing in common: scholarship support from RU-N alumni and friends that make it possible to pursue their dreams. Several of these students came together to offer videotaped thanks to donors and reflect on the impact of the scholarships.

Go to Rutgers Scholars 2014 at www.newark.rutgers.edu/videos to learn these students’ stories:

• Rutgers Business School students
  Michelle Gromashchuk (Class of 2014, marketing and supply chain management major) and Paolo Seabra (Class of 2016, finance major, economics minor)
• Rutgers School of Law-Newark student
  Gwyneth O’Neill (Class of 2014)
• Newark College of Arts and Sciences students
  Ahmed Bendary (Class of 2015, biology major, mathematics minor) and Miranda Randelli (Class of 2015, biology major, minors in mathematics and chemistry)
• School of Public Affairs and Administration student
  Christopher Randall (Class of 2015, public service major, African American and African Studies minor)

Chorus Singing to Fund Overseas Tour

Some have never set foot outside the U.S.; others have never sung in an organized chorus; most are undergraduate or graduate students while a few are alumni and faculty. But come May 22, some 40 members of the Rutgers University Chorus, based at RU-N, will fly to Germany for the chorus’s ninth international concert tour, under the direction of Dr. John E. Floreen. But before they leave, the singers will give benefit shows to help raise the final funds for their 10-day trip, where they will perform six concerts in Munich, Frankfurt, Regensburg, Rothenburg-ob der Tauber, Kolbermoor, and Bacharach. The tour is supported in part by generous gifts from RU-N alumni, many of them chorus alumni.

Members of the group will act as unofficial representatives of Rutgers, meeting with local families through the churches where they will perform, and possibly joining in performances with local choirs.

The spring concerts in New Jersey will feature the works of Bilsing, Faunt, Beach, Britten, Foster, and Manz. Reflecting the rich cultural diversity of RU-N, the chorus also will sing special arrangements of folkongs and African-American spirituals. Floreen has led the chorus since 1979; assistant conductor is Dr. Susan McAdoo, and the accompanist is Dr. Brian Harlow.

New Appointments

Dr. Clement A. Price.

Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor of History, has been appointed the City of Newark’s official historian by Mayor Luis Quintana. Price was sworn in during a City Hall ceremony where he also received the key to the city, adding to his many honors and accolades. Mayor Quintana also named Price to chair the committee that will organize observances of the 350th anniversary of Newark’s founding in May 2016.

As a longtime Newark resident, Price’s love of the city spurred him to promote Newark through civic engagement and education. For decades he has led popular city tours, identifying areas of historical, social, and cultural significance. In the award-winning public television documentary, The Once and Future Newark, he highlights numerous sites in the city, putting them in the context of Newark’s extensive history, including its struggles and assets. His reputation as an authority on Newark’s history is evidenced by his frequent commentary in national and international media outlets about Newark’s history, current events, and politics.

In early April, Arcello Aponte joined Rutgers University-Newark and the Office of the Chancellor as vice provost for finance and administration. Aponte is responsible for budget planning, resource allocation, and facilities planning. Prior to joining RU-N, Aponte most recently served as director of operations and management at the Department of Housing and Economic Development of the City of Newark. He is an M.B.A. alumnus of Rutgers Business School, and an alumnus of the College of New Jersey, where he served as assistant director for facilities before becoming associate vice president at New Jersey City University.
Rhoda Scott Sampognaro
Graduate School-Newark

Rhoda Scott Sampognaro is completing a master of arts in jazz history and research. The East Orange resident is an accomplished musician who has performed and recorded internationally (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhoda_Scott), as well as an active grandmother.

Aspirations: I hope to spend quality time with my grandchildren and continue to play my music as long as possible.

Activities & interests: I enjoy working with my church choir and trying to walk 10,000 steps per day.

Favorite class or professor at RU-N: My favorite professor is Dr. Lewis Purter, who created this unique program of Jazz History and Research.

Biggest challenge at RU-N: adapting to the computer age. When I got my first master’s degree, there was no question of computers, and now computer savvy is essential.

Reflections on RU-N experience: RU-N is exceptional because of its location and also because of the diversity in its students. One feels like a part of a vast community of many nationalities come together for a common cause: education.

Expressions of gratitude: I am grateful to everyone for the support I have received: my family, my church, my professors, my fellow students, my medical advisors, thank you to all.

Rhoda: Make the most of it: study hard and plan to succeed.

Christopher Kozak is a master’s student studying non-profit management. After completing his MPA, the Newark resident, who helped establish the RU-N debate team, plans a career centered around debating.

Aspirations: I plan on working to develop trench and debate education programs in the City of Newark. It is my hope one day to make Newark the premier city for debate competition and help develop a $10 million endowment to sustain debate operations here.

Activities & interests: My interests are studying philosophy and volunteering in Newark to help run after-school programs for public school students. Any time I have after that I spend helping develop debate programs in the tri-state area.

Favorite class or professor at RU-N: My favorite class was Unions and Labor Relations taught by Dr. Norma Ricucci. She is not only a brilliant scholar but also an excellent teacher. I hope one day to get my Ph.D. in public administration and study under her.

Reflections on RU-N experience: Overall Rutgers University was excellent. I was able to professionalize something that had only been a hobby of mine for the past decade. Creating and developing the RU-N debate team was the hardest and most significant thing I have done in my life. I learned so much from my students and teaching them has been a pleasure.

Expressions of gratitude: My professors and advisors have really made the difference in my time as a student at RU-N. In particular I have to thank Dean (Peter) Hoontis for his guidance. The support of everyone from the chancellor’s office down to adjunct professors has been excellent. Without their support I would not be able to realize my full potential.

Katz graduated from New York University in 1974, where he studied with novelist Ralph Ellison. He attributes his fascination with audio to Ellison, who emphasized the role of oral and vernacular culture as a fundamental underpinning of American literature. Katz also attended the University of Chicago as well as the London School of Economics, from which he holds a master of science in economics. He lives in Montclair, New Jersey, where he served as a member of the public library board for nine years. He has served on the board of Uncommon Schools, a nonprofit organization that manages several of the most outstanding urban college preparatory charter schools in the Northeast, since the organization was founded in 1997. In February 2014, he was named chair of Newark’s Brick City Development Corporation.

Christopher R. Kozak
School of Public Affairs and Administration

Christopher Kozak is a master’s student studying non-profit management. After completing his MPA, the Newark resident, who helped establish the RU-N debate team, plans a career centered around debating.

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Shadd Maruna Appointed New Criminal Justice Dean by Carla Capizzi

Dr. Shadd Maruna, currently director of the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland, and a professor in the law school there, has been appointed dean of Rutgers School of Criminal Justice, effective September 1, 2014. Maruna is an internationally known criminologist whose first book, Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives (2001), is considered a definitive statement and enduring contribution to the field. “Shadd Maruna is a superb match to lead our distinguished School of Criminal Justice,” states Rutgers University-Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor. “He is a world-class scholar, teacher, and academic leader whose abilities and interests span disciplines and are perfectly aligned with our strengths and our trajectory.”

Maruna has received many awards and honors, including being named an H.F. Guggenheim Fellow, a Soros Justice Fellow, and a Fulbright Scholar. Maruna serves as editor of the American Psychological Association’s book series, Psychology, Crime and Justice, and has held offices in professional organizations such as the British Society for Criminology, the Correctional Services Advisory and Accreditation Panel for the United Kingdom (UK), the Scottish Advisory Panel for Offender Rehabilitation, and Oxford University’s Centre for Criminology.

In addition to Making Good, Maruna is the co-author of several other books, including After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Ex-Offender Reintegration (2004); The Effects of Imprisonment (2005); Rehabilitation: Beyond the Risk Paradigm (2007); and Fifty Key Thinkers in Criminology (2010).

Prior to his years in Belfast, Maruna taught at the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, in England, and at the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany, State University of New York. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in human development and social policy from Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

Rutgers Law Launches Associates Fellowship Program

In January of 2014, Rutgers School of Law-Newark launched the nation’s first post-doctoral fellowship program of its kind, designed to train recent law graduates as practitioners, while providing legal services to low to moderate-income New Jersey residents at fees substantially below market rates.

Fellows devote one year to closely supervised practice and associated courses in professional responsibility, small firm management, and relevant practice areas. Upon completing the program, these lawyers will be fully prepared to join established law practices in either the public or private sector or to launch viable quality practices of their own.

Managing the new program is Associate Dean Andrew J. Rothman, an attorney/educator and alumnus of the school who is committed to legal education and professional practice, and who has extensive courtroom and classroom experience. Unlike the established pattern for medical students, Rothman noted, “Law schools have never developed the residency model, and that has left for an alarming deficiency in practical skills when beginning their practices soon after graduation.”

The first class of six law school fellows began working in the program this semester: They work on client matters about two-thirds of their time, and participate in seminars modeled after medical residency “rounds,” covering various specialized practice areas, courtroom procedure, business development and management, and problems in professional responsibility. As they progress through the program, Fellows devote some of their time to client development as well. The fellows receive a modest stipend, and Rutgers Law School covers all the tuition costs associated with their coursework.

What distinguishes the Rutgers Law Associates Fellowship Program is the concentrated skills training gained while serving clients of modest means, with the daily vetting and support of that service during rounds. Fellows work collaboratively, brainstorming and critiquing one another with the managing attorney, to develop best practices for their client work. Unlike other post-graduation training programs, the Rutgers Law Associates Fellowship is an educational enterprise of the Law School and is not an independent non-profit law firm.

In keeping with a longstanding tradition at Rutgers School of Law-Newark, this program has benefits not just for the students but also serves the school’s public service mission. Recent economic stresses have put tremendous pressure on a growing segment of the population that falls in between those eligible for legal assistance (public defenders, legal aid organizations and law school clinics) and those wealthy enough to afford private attorneys. The new program offers affordable legal services to help meet this burgeoning need.