RE-ENVISIONING THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

The world and Rutgers University, Newark are very different places than they were in 1987 when the last undergraduate curriculum revisions were implemented. As the world has become smaller and global in nature, Rutgers in Newark has grown into a highly regarded research institution with a faculty of nationally known scholars and researchers. This is reflected by major growth in doctoral and master’s programs offered at Rutgers in Newark.

Those changes not only benefit graduate students, but also can enrich the experience of undergraduates. Against this backdrop, the leadership of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS-N) has developed an innovative revision of the undergraduate curriculum that follows both campus and university-wide committee reports on undergraduate education.

Connect sat down with FAS-N Dean Philip Yeagle to discuss the proposed revision.

What is the major change being discussed by the faculty?

The faculty is proposing that students pursue both a major and a second concentration so they can delve deeper into a second discipline. To accomplish this would require changing our general education requirements in a way that would distinguish Rutgers-Newark from most other universities.

How would a second concentration benefit students and how could they fulfill that concentration?

Students would be required to select both a major and a second concentration outside their major that could be fulfilled in a variety of ways, including as a minor, through the teacher education program, the Honors College, or a combined baccalaureate-master’s program. Not only will our undergraduates gain a comprehensive understanding of their major, they will be exposed through the second concentration to another way of thinking and seeing the world.

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Sharing the Lessons of Lincoln

By Carla Capizzi

The 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth was the impetus for a Nov. 12 “Lincoln Town Hall Meeting” coordinated by the Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience (IECEM) with the federal Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, and civic partners from the Newark public schools and several arts and community development organizations. The City of Newark was selected as the Northeast location for the town hall meetings being held across the country to share the lessons of Lincoln’s life.

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A MODEL MOSAIC
The Newark campus of Rutgers University has something to teach the world.

For 12 years in a row, Rutgers-Newark has been ranked the most diverse in the country by U.S. News and World Report. The survey calculated three out of four people on campus belong to different ethnic groups.

Diversity is a worthy goal, in and of itself. The advantage for students is obvious — they become accustomed to different cultures and traditions, learn from each other and how to get along in an increasingly complex world.

But Rutgers-Newark has taken it a step further. The university has built on its multicultural strengths to better connect with Newark and ensure a healthy dynamic between university and community.

Where once the university might have been a "fortress," in the words of Chancellor Steven Diner, removed from and indifferent to the city's concerns, it's now more accessible and responsive to the city it calls home.

The university has created the post of vice chancellor of community affairs and launched the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship to support Halsey Street's commercial strip, and a Portuguese Studies department. A center for the study of immigration will open this fall.

Now, a group of 39 professors from around the country and South Africa, all part of a fellowship program for academic leaders who will lead universities themselves one day, will study Rutgers-Newark for four months to better understand the effort that goes into creating a modern university that reflects and respects its community.

One visiting fellow, impressed with the make-up of Rutgers-Newark, said "I just kept imagining the kind of political debates you could have with that kind of diversity."

The campus also is the place to be to see the world of the future.

"If you want to see what America will look like in 50 years, come to Rutgers-Newark today," said Diner.

The university is nothing less than a model mosaic, showing us, and the world, how we fit together.

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September 8, 2009

Direct Evidence of the Role of Sleep in Memory Formation is Uncovered

By Kathleen Brunet Eagan

It’s been known for more than a century that sleep somehow is important for learning and memory. And while much recent research has focused on the links between the hippocampus and memory consolidation, what had remained unknown was the specific process that causes long-term memories to form.

Dr. György Buzsáki, Rutgers Board of Governors Professor of Neuroscience, and his co-researchers at the Collége de France now have revealed that process. As posted on the Nature Neuroscience website on Sept. 11, Buzsáki and his research team were able to uncover that short transient brain events, called "sharp wave ripples," are responsible for consolidating memory and transferring the learned information from the hippocampus to the neocortex, where long-term memories are stored.

Sharp wave ripples are intense, compressed oscillations that occur in the hippocampus when the hippocampus is working "off-line," most often during stage four sleep, which, along with stage three, is the deepest level of sleep.

During stage four sleep, Buzsáki explains, "it's as if many instruments and members of the orchestra come together to generate a loud sound, a sound so loud that it is heard by wide areas of the neocortex. These sharp, 'loud' transient events occur hundreds to thousands of times during sleep and 'teach' the neocortex to establish a long-term form of the memory."

Identification of the brain pattern responsible for strengthening learned information could facilitate applied research for more effective treatment of memory disorders. The research also represents a move toward a new direction in neuroscience research. While previous research largely has focused on correlating behavior with specific brain events, researchers increasingly are challenging those correlations as they seek to identify the specific processes that cause certain events and behaviors to take place.

Tour the Institute of Jazz Studies

Sharing the Lessons... from page 1

"The Humane City: Race, Ethnicity, and Freedom in Urban America" was a "civic conversation on building compassionate cities, where the challenges of social justice are confronted daily on the streets, in the schools and along the walls of power," according to Mark Krasovic, Geraldine R. Dodge Postdoctoral Fellow at IECME.

IECME Director Professor Clement Price called the Town Hall Meeting a way to "acknowledge Lincoln's long shadow over American history and culture" as well as an "opportunity for the university to reclaim the high ground for what a town hall meeting is supposed to look like, and how citizens are supposed to behave at such an assemblage."

Historian James O. Horton of George Washington University moderated a panel discussion that examined whether urban America is "poised to continue building on Lincoln's legacy of freedom and equality of opportunity," or has become "one of the least likely places to find Lincoln's legacy alive." Horton is a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and a Newark native. Panelists included Eric Foner, Columbia University; Nancy Foner, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York; Jeff Johnson, award-winning journalist, social activist and political commentator; Pedro A. Noguera, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University; and Maria Vazcarrondo, who heads Newark's Department of Child and Family Well-Being.
Neuroscientist Eva Pastalkova Receives Prestigious Award

Neuroscientist Eva Pastalkova, a post-doctoral researcher in the lab of György Buzsáki, Rutgers Board of Governors Professor of Neuroscience, recently was selected as one of only two nationwide recipients of the 2009 Peter and Patricia Gruber International Research Award from the Society of Neuroscience. Along with that award, she received a $25,000 grant to support her research. Pastalkova also has been selected as one of 12 finalists for the prestigious 2009 New York Academy of Sciences Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists. Pastalkova is among a notable class of scholars, including those from Columbia, Cornell, Princeton and Yale, nominated for the award. The 2009 winners will be announced in mid-November.

Pastalkova received her master’s and doctoral degrees in neuroscience from Charles University in Prague in 1999 and 2003, respectively. She currently is studying the mechanisms of internally generated cell activity in the hippocampus, a major component of the brain that plays an important role in long-term memory and spatial navigation.

Rutgers-Newark Recognized as ‘Savior’ of the City

Rutgers University, Newark recently was named one of the 25 “best neighbor schools” in the “Saviors of Our Cities: A Survey of Best College and University Civic Partnerships.” The survey recognizes colleges and universities that work to spur economic expansion, cultural renewal and other improvements in their host cities.

An overview of the survey praised Rutgers for supporting small businesses, contributing to the arts, providing greater access for residents, conducting legal clinics and creating programs at the Center for Information Management, Integration, and Connectivity. It also made note of the Newark Metro, an online publication reporting on life in the region. The efforts to revitalize historic Washington Park into a “contemporary Greenwich Village” were also cited.

The survey was conducted by Evan S. Dobelle, president of Westfield State College in Massachusetts. A comprehensive questionnaire was widely distributed to colleges and universities with assistance from the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities and the American Council on Education.

GlassBooks Project Goes Hollywood

A Department of Arts, Culture and Media class assignment, aimed at making a serious mental health issue transparent, has evolved beyond anything that Instructor Nick Kline might have imagined. Not only has it led to the GlassBook Project, an initiative to develop a nationwide collaboration between universities, mental health organizations and trauma survivors, but the student projects became the centerpiece exhibition in Hollywood’s Paramount Theater during the annual Voice Awards.

Last January, Kline asked students in his book arts class to learn about the impacts of trauma, how survivors respond and, specifically, why some survivors deliberately injure themselves, and then create glass books reflecting the experiences of the victims. The students met with survivors and mental health experts, and learned how to work with glass to create their books.

Kate Dowd, associate glass instructor at GlassRoots in Newark, worked with the students on creating the glass books. Their glass books have now been exhibited across the country and were the central exhibit at October’s Voice Awards, which honor television and movie writers and producers for presenting realistic, dignified portrayals of people with mental health problems.

One of Kline’s students, junior Samantha Grovin, is creating a documentary film on the project. Another, Eleonora Luongo, a graduate student, created the initial project website (www.glassbookproject.org/ kline.html). The project is a program of Witness Justice and the Department of Arts, Culture and Media.

Neuroscientist Eva Pastalkova

Jayne Anne Phillips sees her work as a unique study of language and culture, as reflected in her novel, Lark.

Lark, termite and nonie struggle to communicate. Lark, at 17, is a young Newark girl with a history of abuse. Termite, 9, is her brother. Nonie, 17, is termite’s mother, and caretaker of Lark and Termite. Lola, the children’s mother, and Corporal Robert Leavitt, Termite’s father, who finds himself caught up in the early chaotic months of the Korean War.

This 2009 Heartland Prize-winning story takes place on six July days in 1950, as Leavitt directs an evacuation of Korean refugees, and in 1959, as Lark, Termite and Nonie struggle to balance hope and despair.

Phillips joined the Rutgers faculty in 2005 to design the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing. During its inaugural year, the Atlantic magazine named the program in its list of “Five Up-and-Coming” creative writing programs in the United States. To learn more about Phillips, visit www.jayneannephillips.com.

The Hemingways of Monticello

Garners More Honors

Rutgers Board of Governors History Professor Annette Gordon-Reed is going to need a larger mantle. In September, she was awarded two more honors for her meticulously researched book, The Hemingways of Monticello: An American Family. Gordon-Reed traveled to Cleveland to accept the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for the second time – she previously earned it for Vornado Can Read.

Within days of that honor, Gordon-Reed learned that she had also won the 2009 Frederick Douglass Book Prize for The Hemingways of Monticello. The prize is awarded by the Yale University Glider Lehman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, sponsored by the Glider Lehman Institute of American History.

Gordon-Reed’s landmark work has also been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, George Washington Book Prize, 2009 Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Best Book Award, 2009 New Jersey Council for the Humanities Book Award, and the Library of Virginia Literary Award. Nonfiction, among others. The Hemingways is also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, Biography.

An Honorary Degree for Rutgers Business School Professor Glenn Shafter

New York University, New Jersey Council for the Humanities Book Award, and the Library of Virginia Literary Award. Nonfiction, among others. The Hemingways is also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, Biography.

Rutgers Board of Governors Professor Glenn Shafter had a longer-than-usual walk down the aisle to get his latest degree last month. Shafter, a member of the Rutgers Business School faculty, has been awarded an honorary doctoral degree in economics from the University of Economics in Prague, in recognition of his contributions to finance, management and auditing.

Shafter received the Doctor Economist Honoris Causa during an Oct. 8 ceremony at the university. The ceremony, dedicated solely to awarding honorary degrees to Shafter and his Harvard colleague A. P. Dempster, was attended by Jan Fischer, the prime minister of the Czech Republic.

In awarding the degree to Shafter, the university’s scientific Board praised his joint work with Dempster on the mathematical theory of evidence now known as the Dempster-Shafer theory and his more recent work with Vladimir Vovk on game-theoretic probability.
The fall and winter seasons are when Newark’s arts, cultural and entertainment scene kicks into high gear. The offerings include traditional and festive seasonal programs at The Newark Museum’s Ballantine House, New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), and hockey at the Prudential Center. The city has plenty else, too, to keep spirits warm and bright during the winter months.

Performances
In addition to the major performances and events presented by NJPAC, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Hall, and the Prudential Center, Newark is home to numerous other venues offering up a selection of theater, dance and musical performances. Here are a few taking place this winter:

The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon by Don Zolidis, directed by Chuckipiny Productions. Rutgers-Newark’s Bradley Hall Theater, 110 Warren Street.

Big Ideas for the Holidays with award-winning singer and songwriter Patricia Shih, with selections to mark the winter celebrations of Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa.

The Thirty-Ninth Annual Candlelight Carol Sing at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. Experience one of New Jersey’s most beautiful holiday concerts in the spectacular setting of this world-renowned cathedral. Dec. 16 and 17, 8 p.m.

The Newark Arts Scene
Newark is without a question a major arts community. Along with the famous Newark Museum and several established galleries – City Without Walls, Aljira, and Gallery Afiero – more than 50 other galleries and arts organizations abound throughout the city.

Restaurants
Great art and great performances are just a part of what Newark has to offer. The city also presents the opportunity to explore and enjoy outstanding cuisine from around the world. Here are a few restaurants that come highly recommended:

27 Mix, New American 27 Halsey St.
José, Soul Food 34 William St.
MiSávi, Multi-Ethnic 92 Van Buren St.
Mompou Tapas Bar and Lounge, Spanish 77 Ferry St.
Santa Barbara, Peruvian 871 Mount Prospect Ave.
Sol-Mar, Portuguese 267, Ferry St.

For a comprehensive listing of restaurants in the city, visit www.ci.newark.nj.us/visitors/places_to_eat.php and www.newarkarts.org.

An Urban High-Rise Experience By Kathleen Brunet Eagan
During the course of his career, Mark Winston, assistant chancellor and director of the Dana Library, had always lived in a suburb. So when he joined Rutgers University, Newark last year, he thought it would be “a good time to try an urban high-rise experience.”

What he wanted was something in the middle of things, close to campus and with great views. What he chose was Eleven 80 Raymond Boulevard, the 35-story art deco office building recently converted into luxury apartments, with spectacular views of New York and Newark.

And while campus life tends to keep him very busy, he has developed some favorite things to do and see in Newark. Among his top picks are the restaurant 27 Mix on Halsey Street, The Newark Museum, and the Rutgers-Newark campus and University Heights with friends who come to visit.

A Life of Diversity with a Backyard
By Kathleen Brunet Eagan
Glenn Shafer, Board of Governors Professor at Rutgers Business School, and his wife, Neil Irvin Painter, a leading U.S. historian, made the unusual move from Princeton to Newark a few years ago because they wanted to live in an integrated community of successful professionals.

“I had been commuting to teach at Newark for years and for my part it was very convenient to relocate here,” says Shafer. “My wife, who was one of a few African-Americans on the Princeton (University) faculty, wanted to live in an integrated area that included a large mix of middle-class black people.” And, as it turned out, living in Newark also put them in the midst of an active arts community, which especially appealed to Painter, who recently retired from Princeton and is now pursuing an MFA in painting at the Rhode Island School of Design.

For Shafer and Painter, their home in the historic Forest Hill neighborhood allows them to enjoy both the natural settings typically associated with the suburbs – a good-sized backyard for relaxing and entertaining, trees and flowers – and the more urban pleasure of exploring different cultures and cuisines. Through a recent exhibit at the Newark Public Library, Shafer says, he recently discovered that there are more than 300,000 Peruvians in New Jersey. Not only that, he knows a restaurant, Santa Barbara on Mount Prospect Avenue, where you can order a traditional Peruvian drink – chicha morada – made from purple corn.

Two of his other favorite restaurants are Mompou Tapeas Wine & Bar Lounge on Ferry Street and Seabara Marisqueira on Madison Street. Painter’s favorite is Sol-Mar on Ferry Street.