Rutgers University in Newark Launches First Founders Day Celebration

By Ferlanda Fox Nixon

An enthusiastic group of faculty and staff members who earned their degrees from Rutgers University in Newark join Chancellor Steven J. Diner for a group photo at the campus's first Founders Day celebration.

Among warm streaks of sunrays and a cool intermittent autumn breeze, Rutgers University in Newark celebrated its first Founders Day on Oct. 7. With Norman Samuels Plaza providing a panoramic backdrop, more than 350 faculty, staff and students enjoyed refreshments and camaraderie as they reflected on the impact Rutgers has had in the city of Newark over the past 100 years, commencing with The New Jersey Law School in October 1908. The New Jersey Law School, the oldest of the schools that now constitute Rutgers University in Newark, is also the oldest law school in the state of New Jersey.

Chancellor Steven J. Diner set the stage by offering greetings and a special recognition to the more than 220 alumni at Rutgers in Newark who are currently members of the faculty and staff. Clinical Professor of Nursing Barbara Cannella spoke of Dean Lucille Joel's mentoring influence in encouraging Cannella to go beyond a master's degree to obtain her doctoral degree from the College of Nursing. Brenda Hopper, director of the New Jersey Small Business Development Centers and a graduate of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences and Rutgers Business School, shared her experiences growing up in Newark and taking advantage of the educational services provided by the Newark and New Jersey public schools. Jason Kurdan, a senior enrolled in the Newark College of Arts and Sciences, added supporting comments.

The climax of the program occurred when many of the alumni faculty and staff honorees joined Chancellor Diner for a group photo on the steps

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“An American Family” Strikes a Deep Chord

By Carla Capizzi

If history professor Annette Gordon-Reed were being graded on the reception of her new book, she would get an A++. The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family, has whipped up public interest that few serious history books ever receive, garnering high-level, overwhelmingly favorable reviews in such publications as The New York Review of Books, The Boston Globe, Slate, The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. Gordon-Reed is touring the United States (which included an Oct. 21 stop on campus), speaking about her carefully researched fourth book, recently selected as a nonfiction finalist for the National Book Awards, and signing mountains of hardcover copies. The New York resident has been interviewed on air and in print.

The response is no surprise to Gordon-Reed, considering how

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Professor Annette Gordon-Reed
Body Movement, Perceived Threat and Autism

By Kathleen Brunet Eagan

A hand moves forward, but is it a friendly gesture or one meant to do harm? In an instant, we respond – either extending our arm forward to shake hands or raising it higher to protect our face. But what are the subtle cues that allow us to interpret such movement?

In research aimed at both assisting the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and providing a better understanding of how autistic individuals perceive others, Maggie Shiffrar, professor of psychology, is examining how our visual system helps us to interpret the intent conveyed in subtle body movements.

“It’s the same sort of process basketball players use to tell whether someone is going to throw the ball or fake a pass,” explains Shiffrar. “The question is how to determine which people are best at picking up the cues revealed in body movement and what those cues are.”

Working under a $400,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, Shiffrar and co-investigator Kent Harber, associate professor of psychology, hope to open the way for training people who are best at interpreting body movements to identify possible threats in crowded areas such as airports, subways and city streets. Such research also could pave the way for the development of computer applications to recognize such movements.

Almost all people possess some autistic tendencies, explains Shiffrar, but her research shows that those with the fewest autistic tendencies “are best at detecting the weak signals provided by body movement.”

Previous research has revealed that the part of the brain involved in emotion communicates with that part of the brain involved in the perception of human movement. This connection is impaired in people with autism and could be what makes it difficult for them to perceive other people’s emotional states. Should that be the case, it then may become possible to develop training programs to help people with ASD to perceive the intentions of others from their body movements.

A Milestone and a New Direction

By Carla Capizzi

The Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience (IECME) is hoping to receive a $750,000 grant from the Simons Foundation, Shiffrar has discovered that people with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) tend to view people as objects. People with few autistic tendencies, on the other hand, have visual systems that analyze movement of objects differently.

“What we hope to determine is whether people with ASD have trouble perceiving human movement because they avoid human contact in order to function, or if it is their visual system that is treating people as objects,” explains Shiffrar.

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There was no Hill Hall when I first began working. Administrative offices were at 53 Washington Street: the campus had grown by close to 2,000 students.

The eight schools at Rutgers in Newark enrolled 7,001 undergraduates and 4,031 graduate students this semester.

In addition to students in greater numbers than ever, there is a marked increase in the geographic diversity of Rutgers students in Newark. Director of Admissions Jason Hand noted that first-year students come from 350 high schools throughout the country, a significant change over past years when the campus drew primarily from communities close by in North Jersey.

What’s more, the academic profile of Rutgers students in Newark continues to be strong – more than 22 percent graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes.

Decades of Service, Decades of Memories
By Carla Capizzi

Last June Rutgers University recognized Newark staff members for long service to the university. One started working 40 years ago, before Hill Hall was constructed; four others have logged 30 years, arriving before there were any residence halls on campus. Sixteen started 20 years ago, and 18 came aboard 10 years ago. Connections asked Sallie Kasper, assistant dean for faculty affairs, to share her memories of Rutgers back when she began 40 years ago.

“There was no Hill Hall when I first began working. Administrative offices were at 53 Washington Street: Admissions, Registrar, Vice President (no Chancellor back then), Public Relations, Alumni, Dean of Students, Dean’s Office and the Mail Room, to name a few. The Mail Room was in the basement, next to a little swimming pool. The manager wore very colorful shirts and plaid pants. He was an artist and had his artwork all over the place. The English and Economics departments were housed in a brownstone on James Street (the floors were slanted and the stairs squeaked), the Art Department resided on Fulton Street and the Music Department was in an old carriage house on University Avenue.

“The ‘main’ campus consisted of Conklin and Boyden halls, a small version of what is now Robeson and the library. Hahne’s Department Store was a convenient place to have lunch since they had two dining facilities, a fancy one on the main floor and a lunch counter in the basement.

“You weren’t allowed to wear slacks to work and there was no such thing as a pantsuit. We had to appear each day properly dressed; one lovely lady came to work each day sporting white gloves and a hat. And there were no computers or Xerox machines. Although most people had electric typewriters, we still had to use carbon paper to produce copies. Multiple copies were run off on mimeograph machines. What a mess!”


Young Lawyer Honors for Alycia Guichard
To find New Jersey’s “Young Lawyer of the Year,” look no farther than the Rutgers School of Law-Newark. Alycia M. Guichard, supervising attorney and New Jersey Bar fellow for the Rutgers Street Law Program, was awarded that honor in May by the Young Lawyers Division of the New Jersey State Bar Association. The award recognizes a young lawyer “whose personal and professional achievements merit special recognition and who has made significant community and public service contributions.” The Street Law program trains law students to teach lessons about the law and civic responsibility to area teenagers.

2008 Honors Fellow in a Select Group
Only 50 undergraduates get the opportunity each year to participate in the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) as an Honors Fellow. This year a Newark College of Arts and Sciences student was one of those 50. Kaitlyn Bensell was named a 2008 Honors Fellow, and will take part in a "yearlong program of educational enrichment," according to program administrators. The Montville, N.J., resident already completed a weekend, all-expense-paid ISI summer conference, “Civilization and Civilizations: The West in Context.” Kaitlyn, who will graduate in spring 2009, is triple-majoring in English, ancient and medieval civilizations, and music.

Decades of Memories

• Adriana Alonso, Graduate School-Newark
• Louella Bembry, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience
• Ronald K. Chen, School of Law-Newark, Dean’s Office
• Carolyn Foote, Dana Library
• Roberta E. Geddis, School of Law-Newark, Dean’s Office
• Patricia Glover, School of Law-Newark, Dean’s Office
• Dorothy Grauer, Dana Library
• Diane Hill, Office of Campus & Community Relations
• Patricia Kettenring, Rutgers Business School-Newark and New Brunswick
• Maria Logan, Grounds & Custodial
• Warren D. Mayer, DIT-Newark Computing Services
• Marisa Piersson, Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience
• Richard Quinde, Operations & Maintenance
• Ildefonso S. Santos, Housing & Residence Life
• Eladio Soto, Operations & Maintenance
• Lyn A. Waldman, Purchasing

Newark Employees Honored in 2008 for 20 and 30 Years of Service

30 YEARS
• Francis Patrick Cotter, Operations & Maintenance
• Marsha Dickson, FAS-N Academic Foundations Center
• Shawn Rogers, Dana Library
• Daniel Marvin Sanders, Newark Law Library

20 YEARS
• Adriana Alonso, Graduate School-Newark
• Louella Bembry, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience
• Ronald K. Chen, School of Law-Newark, Dean’s Office
• Carolyn Foote, Dana Library
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ON THE PLAZA

Law Professor Mark Weiner teaches a class in the Center for Law and Justice.

Enrollment Climbs to 11,000
Rutgers University in Newark is more popular than ever, with fall 2008 enrollment climbing to more than 11,030 for the first time in the university’s 100-year history in the city. In the last decade, the campus has grown by close to 2,000 students.

This year’s Homecoming, held in September, again brought together alumni, family and friends to take part in four days of activities and celebrations, including interactive games, a talent showcase and basketball featuring Rutgers’ Alumni Hall of Famers vs. The Harlem Wizards.

Connections
Young Lawyer Honors for Alycia Guichard

Law Program, was awarded that honor in May

Newark and New Brunswick
Rutgers Joins the Blogosphere

By Kathleen Brunet Eagan

There’s a new feature on Rutgers University’s Newark website; it’s colorful, fun and something any faculty or staff member or student can take part in. It’s “Images of Rutgers-Newark, by you, for everyone,” a photo blog where faculty, staff and students can display their best photos and videos of the campus, along with other digital contributions, and offer their comments.

Nora Luongo, campus web designer, explains that the Office of Communications was looking for a way to begin incorporating “social networking” into the campus website. “When the idea of a photo blog percolated,” she said, “I jumped at the chance to write it as a fun thing to do.”

Helping to guide development of the site is Nick Kline, photography instructor in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts. Since being launched in September, the blog has garnered an impressive selection of submissions. An abstract view of the Golden Dome, red and white flowers drenched in sunlight, the athletic field taken from the top of Parking Deck I, and photos from the Founders Day celebration are just a few of the images posted on the blog.

Pictured to the left are two photos submitted by students Amir Mahmoud and Sidrah Sheikh. Submissions to date largely have come from students, but Luongo is hoping others will jump into action either by submitting an image or posting a comment.

Along with photos of the campus, the blog occasionally also runs special themes, such as a call for fall foliage shots during the autumn. Photos and videos can be submitted on Blackboard, by checking the box “My Organization Plus” and searching for “Photo Blog,” or emailed to occ@andromeda.rutgers.edu. The blog can be accessed from www.newark.rutgers.edu. The blog can be accessed from www.newark.rutgers.edu/arts.

The Year of the Piano

By Kathleen Brunet Eagan

For anyone who enjoys the clear, bright tones of the piano, Rutgers University in Newark is the place to be.

In what could be called the year of the piano, the John Cotton Dana Library is hosting a series of piano concerts featuring the music of top musicians performing on the Steinway grand in the 4th floor Dana Room.

The Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS) scheduled three generations of leading performers to convey the diversity of jazz piano. Earlier this semester, Ray Bryant, representing the Silent Generation born between the two World Wars, and Eric Reed, of Generation X, thrilled listeners with their performances.

Upcoming are: Geri Allen, a Baby Boomer, who The New York Times hails as “a jazz pianist who dares to follow an unmarked road;” and Brandon McCune, of Generation X, a Rutgers University graduate and resident of Newark, who The Washington Post has praised for his “subtle, assertive touch” and “velvety sound.”

“We wanted to pay tribute to the time-honored tradition of solo jazz piano,” explains April Grier, reference coordinator at the IJS. “Part of our mission also is to involve the larger community in the history of jazz, and one of the best ways to do that is through free live performances.”

Rounding out the season, jazz pianist and Music Professor Lewis Porter will give three performances, one with some special guests, another with David Rothenberg, professor, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and then with Marc Rossi, professor, Berklee College. In March, Hilary Demske will perform a recital of piano music by the nationally renowned composer-pianist Professor Henry Martin.

DANA LIBRARY PIANO CONCERTS

Lewis Porter and Special Guests
Nov. 12, 2:30–4 p.m.
Geri Allen
Feb. 4, 2:30–4 p.m.
Lewis Porter and David Rothenberg
Feb. 11, 2:30–4 p.m.
Brandon McCune
March 11, 2:30–4 p.m.
Hilary Demske
March 25, 12:30–1:30 p.m.
Lewis Porter and Marc Rossi
April 9, 2:30–4 p.m.

All performances are free and open to the public. For a full listing of arts programs at Rutgers University in Newark, visit www.newark.rutgers.edu/arts.

Keep Connected

Connections is published by the Office of Communications. Your comments are welcome.

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