CLC’s main focus is educational leadership. The Center provides ongoing training and professional development of teachers and school administrators at local school districts, such as LEAP Academy.

Support the Center’s Vision
Every measure of support advances our mission and the mission of Rutgers University and brings us all closer to the day when every urban school, community, professional and family has the capacity to succeed.

Thank you for your support!
For more than 20 years, the Community Leadership Center (CLC) at Rutgers University–Camden has been a force for partnership and change in Camden City and the region.

Since Rutgers professor Gloria Bonilla-Santiago founded CLC in 1990, it has evolved into the largest center on the University’s Camden campus. Its extensive portfolio of programs covers education, research, leadership, community development and civic engagement.

The Center led the effort to create New Jersey’s first kindergarten through 12th-grade (K–12) public charter school, known as LEAP Academy (Leadership, Education, and Partnership). Its ongoing partnership with LEAP continues to flourish by delivering the health services and college access that support the school’s mission and success.

Although the CLC has attracted more than $30 million to support capital building projects in the city, its main focus continues to be investment in people. CLC provides leadership development for parents and teachers, scholarships and financial aid for college students, and personal and professional opportunities for Camden residents.

The Center continues the commitment of Rutgers University to revitalize the city and region and ultimately to improve the lives of children and families.

As a grant-funded service and research center of Rutgers University, CLC creates opportunities for thousands of children and families each year. CLC is literally changing the landscape of Camden City for the better.
Even though they may not realize it yet, preschoolers like A’Janae Peoples (left) and Ishanjah Medina are already on the path to a college degree because at ELRA, “College Begins at Birth.”

The John S. and James L. Knight Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) is a state-of-the-art education and research center at Rutgers University–Camden designed to improve early childhood learning in Camden City.

ELRA goes beyond a traditional preschool program by providing education and health services to 122 students—from infants through age five. The program emphasizes literacy and writing and offers comprehensive health services to students and parents.

Infant and Toddler Development Program
ELRA’s Infant and Toddler Development Program creates a language-rich environment in which urban, minority babies can develop socially and cognitively and develop into successful preschoolers and adolescents.

Preschool Program
The two-year preschool program continues the work from the Infant and Toddler Development Program. It prepares students for success in kindergarten emphasizing writing, language, science and math education.

Dual-Language Curriculum
What makes ELRA unique is its emphasis on dual-language instruction. ELRA designates three full days as Spanish-only instruction and uses visual aids and creative activities to strengthen students’ vocabulary.

Research and Support
As part of a public research institution, Rutgers University researchers observe and study childhood learning and behavior. In addition, ELRA provides a living laboratory for future educators to acquire classroom experience through innovative civic engagement programs like Rutgers Jumpstart.

ELRA gives urban, minority children the strong foundations that they need to excel and to begin their path to college and academic success.
In urban school districts, students often enter school unprepared to learn due to limited access to healthcare, nutrition deficiencies, poor study habits and behavioral problems.

LEAP Academy, in partnership with CLC, recognizes these obstacles and develops programs to address them proactively. The Rutgers Centers of Excellence are school-based health and educational services designed to provide holistic support for LEAP students, families and staff.

On-site medical care and counseling, parent training and intensive college awareness programming supplement LEAP’s curriculum and services. These programs make LEAP Academy more than just a school—they transform it into a community hub of learning, health, partnership and development.

Health Center
The Rutgers/LEAP Health Center is a school-based service hub that provides access to quality, on-site medical care for children and families at LEAP. It is staffed by physicians from the department of family medicine of Cooper University Hospital.

Family Support Center
The Family Support Center supports student academics by promoting health and positive family engagement in children’s educations. Services include professional counseling, age-appropriate teen education and nutrition programs.

Rutgers Parents Academy for School Reform
Parental involvement plays an integral role at LEAP and CLC. The Rutgers Parents Academy for School Reform offers weekly activities at the school, builds leadership and strengthens the home-school relationship.

Teacher Professional Development Institute
The Teacher Development and Performance Institute improves overall school performance and student achievement at LEAP Academy by helping teachers learn more effective techniques to increase instructional capacity and school success.

Annette Perez
“A necessity for a successful school is healthy students.”
CLC Health Center registered nurse Annette Perez works at LEAP Academy and provides on-site medical support for students like Aliesha Velez. Annette is a graduate of Rutgers University’s School of Nursing and manages CLC’s Teen Clinic, which offers age-appropriate health services and education programs to high school students.

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Aim High Academy is a three-week, college readiness summer program that allows 40 high school seniors to live and study at Rutgers. The program includes college courses, campus visits and SAT support to prepare students for success in college.

COLLEGE ACCESS & ACADEMIC SUPPORT

A Framework for Future Success

As a center of Rutgers University, CLC is committed to increasing the number of Camden City youths who attend college and achieve career success. Since 1990, the Center has worked to provide students with the academic rigor and on-campus experiences needed to gain admissions to colleges across the country.

Center for College Access
CLC’s Center for College Access offers LEAP students academic advising and opportunities for internships and financial aid. In addition, LEAP high school scholars earn college credits at Rutgers-Camden through an innovative dual-enrollment program with the University.

ASPIRE Mentoring
Through ASPIRE, Rutgers-Camden students mentor LEAP Academy ninth-grade students in order to provide them with the academic and socio-emotional support to excel in high school and graduate.

YES Institute (a New Jersey SES provider)
The Young Educated Scholars (YES) Institute is a Supplemental Education Services provider that offers instructional support in math and language arts for local students in grades 4 to 12.

Jumpstart at Rutgers-Camden
Through Jumpstart, Rutgers students mentor preschool children to improve their literacy and social skills while gaining firsthand professional experience in education.
Patrice Pierce
Patrice Pierce is a 2011 graduate of Rutgers University’s School of Social Work and is now studying for her master’s degree. Patrice served as a corps member in the CLC’s Jumpstart program, where she mentored ELRA preschool students and helped build their literacy skills.

CLC’s Civic Engagement agenda is modeled around the idea of engaged scholarship: taking university learning and theory out of the classroom and putting it into practice in the community. These experiential courses place students at local community organizations and schools like LEAP Academy. This arrangement allows students to not only gain practical work experience, but to connect with the city and participate in projects that directly improve the lives of Camden children and families.

As a service and research center at Rutgers, CLC also uses these programs to collect data, conduct studies and ultimately create a shared knowledge base. The Center’s work also creates scholarship and research opportunities for other institutions in the city. CLC’s Health Center works with healthcare organizations such as Cooper Hospital, UMDNJ, and Robert Wood Johnson, allowing those health providers the opportunity to treat patients and develop more effective health programs in Camden.

Advancing scholarship at Rutgers is equally important. As a unit of the University, CLC frequently organizes important campus events and academic forums that address some of the Center’s most passionate issues, such as early childhood learning, the national charter school movement and civic engagement. These events advance the academic scholarship and research efforts of the University and market CLC regionally and nationally.

Each year the Center creates over 100 service learning placements for college students from Rutgers and other area schools.
Creating greater access to higher education is of critical importance to CLC’s mission. The Center helps create opportunities for high school and college students to earn scholarships and fellowships to afford the rising costs of college. In addition to college access, these initiatives also foster the Center’s commitment to engaged scholarship by providing work and professional opportunities for students.

Alfredo Santiago Endowment Scholarship
Created in 1999, the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship provides financial assistance to undergraduate students who graduate from LEAP Academy University Charter School. Two scholarship funds (one for LEAP alumni at Rutgers and a second for LEAP alumni at other colleges) allow LEAP students to fulfill their dreams to attend college and pursue successful careers.

LEAP Education Fellowship
The LEAP Education Fellowship is part of the Rutgers–Camden Master’s Program in Public Administration for students in the Educational Policy and Leadership Concentration. Selected candidates receive a tuition fellowship as they work in an internship at LEAP Academy.

Sila Calderon Research Fellowship
The Sila Calderon Research Fellowship is offered to talented graduate and doctoral level students in the Department of Public Policy and Administration, as well as prominent faculty scholars at Rutgers. The fellowship supports their education and scholarship as they engage in applied research in the core areas of community building, ethics and social justice.

Peace Corps Fellows/USA
CLC proudly participates in the Peace Corps Fellows/USA program. As part of the program, former Peace Corps Fellows are offered financial aid in exchange for serving in supervised, professional internships in Camden City at LEAP Academy.
LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Creating Tomorrow’s Leaders

CLC’s focus on strategic, urban, community leadership is the flagship of its research and service programs, benefiting many of the city’s leading professionals in the education, public, private and non-profit sectors.

The Center offers a variety of customized leadership and professional development programs and also works closely with The Graduate School at Rutgers-Camden to train the next generation of school leadership.

School Leaders Academy
CLC’s School Leaders Academy offers principals and assistant principals in New Jersey the chance to engage in an intensive professional development program that targets their growth as school leaders and equips them to face the challenges of leading urban schools.

MPA Cohort for Aspiring School Principals
Through partnerships between Rutgers University and local public school districts, the CLC’s MPA Cohort for Aspiring School Leaders offers educators the opportunity to pursue a master of public administration at Rutgers.

South Jersey Regional Leadership Institute
The South Jersey Regional Leadership Institute (SJLL) trains business leaders to identify common regional issues and to implement solutions to address the socioeconomic needs and challenges facing the larger Delaware Valley region.

John J. Heldrich Institute for Leadership Development
The John J. Heldrich Institute for Leadership Development is a collaborative effort by CLC and New Brunswick Tomorrow to train civic-minded New Brunswick leaders and to establish stronger communities and neighborhoods in central New Jersey.

Latino Fellows Leadership Institute
Each semester, the Latino Fellows Leadership Institute provides New Jersey’s most promising Latino college students with valuable experience in public policy through competitive internship placements and leadership training.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Empowering Families and Neighborhoods

Community development is essential to the CLC’s mission. The Center serves as a community resource and works tirelessly to create partnership and collaboration between the university, city officials and residents.

After more than 20 years, CLC has grown and prospered by working with local stakeholders to invest in education, health and leadership for Camden City residents and has helped them establish their voice in the future of their city.

Project HELP
The Health Education Literacy Program (HELP) is a dual-language health education project that empowers parents and youth to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

Parent Development
Parents and families play a tremendous role in shaping their communities. CLC empowers parents through trainings that emphasize increased knowledge and competency and create a leadership pipeline for motivated parents.

Neighborhood Revitalization
CLC has spearheaded over $30 million in capital investment for education building projects in Camden City. These educational investments have provided the safe, high-quality environments for children and families to learn and grow.

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CLC continues to bring the community together for the benefit of parents, families and residents in Camden City.

John J. Heldrich Institute for Leadership Development
Nonprofit and business leaders from New Brunswick develop their leadership skills like collaborative decision-making, team-building and conflict resolution in order to assume new roles and responsibilities in their communities.

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