

# LEAP College Access JOURNAL

AN INITIATIVE OF THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR STRATEGIC URBAN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

## LEAP's High School Scholars taking courses at RUTGERS-CAMDEN

**F**or the sixth straight semester, LEAP Academy students are taking college courses at Rutgers University. LEAP's High School Scholars program is a dual-enrollment partnership with Rutgers that has allowed eight seniors to earn both high school and college credits.

LEAP seniors Edward Acuna, Gregoria Lora, Abigael Ortolaza, Richelle Reddick, Omar Samaniego, Ashley Satterfield, Shaquille Sanchez, and Geehem Smith are getting a head start on their college degrees by studying courses like Political Science, Psychology, and Urban Studies at Rutgers.

The seniors are being supervised by the Center for College Access, which believes that preparing LEAP students for college means preparing them for the rigor of college coursework. Studies consistently show that students who are introduced to college-level courses during high school are much more successful with the transition to college and have lower college dropout rates and higher GPAs.

The program has allowed students to get a head start on the college experience: that means registering for courses, purchasing books, sitting in 100-seat



*High School Scholars (from left): LEAP seniors Abigael Ortolaza, Gregoria Lora, Geehem Smith, Richelle Reddick, Omar Samaniego, Ashley Satterfield, and Shaquille Sanchez*

lecture halls, and engaging in college level coursework and dialogue with professors. During the Fall 2010 semester, eight students completed courses at Rutgers and their success enabled many of them to continue in the program this semester.

Abigael Ortolaza is one of the eight LEAP seniors enrolled at Rutgers-Camden and will be able to transfer these credits to her future college in September. She is

interested in studying biology, nursing and pre-medicine and last semester earned a 'B' in an introductory human reproduction course. "I'm really interested in what I'm learning and I'm happy they are giving us a chance to take dual-enrollment classes," said Abigael, who plans to go on to medical school and become a physician. "College takes a lot more effort than high school, but that pushes us and keeps us motivated."

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## GREETINGS FROM THE CENTER FOR COLLEGE ACCESS!

**AS** we begin 2011, there are a lot of exciting things happening at LEAP Academy as our seniors conclude their high school careers and our underclassmen continue to advance towards their goal of college admission. This issue of the College Access Journal is full of student success stories and valuable information for students and parents.

We are proud of our LEAP seniors, who receive admissions letters from colleges every day. These letters not only invite them to attend and study at some of the best colleges in the nation, but also reward their diligence and hard work at LEAP through academic awards and scholarships. Meanwhile, our younger students continue to take advantage of their educational and extracurricular activities and our alumni continue to graduate college and serve as great role models for our current students.

We're also happy to inform you of the progress of S.T.E.M., a new academic program this year that is preparing our LEAP students for college majors and careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. In addition to strengthening the existing academic curriculum, plans are underway for LEAP to build a new school building to house the program and extend LEAP's impact in Camden City.

Our College Access team is committed to seeing every one of our students gain acceptance to college and to succeed once there. That commitment begins in elementary school, with career exploration and character development; it continues in our middle grades, with leadership development and experiential summer programming; and it culminates (but does not conclude) in high school, as our upperclassmen are challenged to develop their full academic potentials and begin the exciting transition into college.

We encourage all students and parents to take advantage of what the Center for College Access has to offer—we are here for *you*. Students: stop in for financial aid information or to learn about opportunities for summer programs and internships. Parents: have your college questions answered by attending a College Access workshop or call us to discuss your students' academic performance and college ambitions. In the mean time, we hope you enjoy reading this journal, which details the achievements of some of our LEAP students and about some of the other College Access programs that we have been working on this year. We look forward to working with you soon.



## STAFF

**Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago**

Director, Rutgers CSUCL  
gloriab@camden.rutgers.edu

**Dr. Nestor Collazo**, Dean of S.T.E.M.

| necollaz@camden.rutgers.edu

**Khary Golden**, Sr. Program Admin., 9-12

| khary@camden.rutgers.edu

**Randy Miller**, Program Specialist, S.T.E.M.

| rrmiller@camden.rutgers.edu

**Carmen Ubarry**, Sr. Program Admin., K-8

| crivera1@camden.rutgers.edu

**Marie Sandona**, Program Fellow, K-6

| sandona@camden.rutgers.edu

### CCA JOURNAL

**Mike Fratantoro**

CSUCL Media Associate

**Sonia Gonzalez**

CSUCL Graphic Designer

### UPCOMING SAT & ACT DATES

All LEAP juniors should begin planning to take their SAT and ACT exams.

SAT testing is available on-site at LEAP Academy on the following dates. Students may register at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

A list of nearby ACT testing sites is available at [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org). Contact the College Access Center for assistance.

Students may register for one of the following test dates:

**SAT Test Date**

Mar 12  
May 7  
Jun 4

**Reg. Deadline**

Feb 11  
Apr 8  
May 6

**ACT Test Date**

Feb 12  
Apr 9  
Jun 11

**Reg. Deadline**

Jan 7  
Mar 4  
May 6

# STUDENT LEADERSHIP

## CCA hosts recognition ceremony for newly-elected student government

**LEAP** Academy High School's student leaders were honored for their participation in several school leadership and extracurricular activities. At a school-wide assembly in last fall, 56 LEAP Academy students (grades 9-12) were called up and received ceremonial pins from LEAP administrators and program advisors.



Seventeen students from LEAP's Teen P.E.P. program and 14 who participated in National Hispanic Institute summer leadership programs were among the students who were recognized. In addition, several prominent student leaders took the microphone to speak about their experiences in their respective programs and explained how other students can get involved.

The ceremony also featured special guest speaker Sean Brown, a Rutgers-Camden alumni and a public member of the Camden Board of Education. "Never turn down an opportunity," Brown said, urging students to commit to excellence and even leading the entire student body in a pledge to graduate and attend college. "You have been forced to deal with [social issues] that most kids your age never have to face. So take that same motivation and passion you use to get up and come to school every morning and apply it to your education," Brown said.

Following his remarks, Brown called up the newly-elected members of LEAP's student government, including five officers per class (9-12) and the five officers of the school's SGA.

**2011**

### STUDENT GOVERNMENT OFFICERS

President:	Keyandria Jenkins
Vice President:	Jasmine Craig
Treasurer:	Aja Feliciano
Secretary:	Kenia Rodriguez
Board Rep:	Geehem Smith

## LOWER LEAP ELECTS FIRST-EVER STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The College Access Center is expanding the success it has had with student leaders at LEAP high school by bringing the same leadership-building programs to grades 4-6 at Lower LEAP. In November, LEAP Academy held its first ever school-wide election for student council. All students had the opportunity to run for one of four school governance posts: president, vice president, secretary, and public relations officer.

Elections were scheduled for Tuesday November 16th but before that, student candidates had a week to campaign for office and passed out flyers and buttons and decorated the walls of the school with campaign posters. The day before the election, all 12 candidates participated in a campaign speech assembly in front of the entire student body (4-6). The following afternoon, students filed into the school library a class at a time to cast their votes. After 180 votes were tallied, the following students were selected as Lower LEAP's first ever student council:

President:	Destiny Resto
Vice President:	Eddy Santos
Secretary:	Taniyah King-Pulliam
Public Relations Officer:	Bielka Gonzalez

Each grade also elected two class representatives, who will speak on behalf of their class at all student council meetings. These four officers and three class reps will now meet regularly with the College Access Center to discuss school issues, develop fundraisers, and organize community service projects. But regardless of the outcome of the elections, the CCA is proud of all the students who ran for office for displaying the determination and enthusiasm that LEAP needs in its student leaders as you all prepare to make the move to the upper school in the next few years.



The elections were developed and coordinated by Marie Sandona, a CSUCL graduate fellow and graduate student in the MPA Educational Policy & Leadership Concentration at Rutgers-Camden.

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Three LEAP students on the fast-track to college

# ASK

any kindergartener at LEAP Academy to count to twelve and each one will recite the same dozen sequential digits, like clockwork. But this year, three LEAP seniors have discovered a new, quicker way to get to number twelve: *skip eleven*. At the end of their sophomore year in June 2010, Abigael Ortolaza, Richelle Reddick, and Ashley Satterfield elected to skip their junior year of high school in order to enter 12th grade at LEAP in September. Now, not only are they excelling as seniors, they are only a few months away from graduation and college.

Like all schools, LEAP has always encouraged exceptional students to challenge themselves with advanced placement courses, extracurricular activities, and summer programs. And on rare occasions, when students show superior academic performance for their grade level, LEAP encourages them to advance a grade. For Abigael, Richelle, and Ashley, they did so with confidence: they currently rank 1-2-3 in GPA for the Class of 2011.

"I did it because I knew it would challenge me and would help me in the future," said Ashley, LEAP's current valedictorian with a 4.4 GPA. Ashley is treasurer of the National Honor Society and is interested in studying pre-medicine at Stockton College, followed by medical school and a career as a physician. She has also applied to Rutgers, Villanova, and Rider universities and is excited about having the opportunity. "I get to have the college experience a year earlier," she said. "I'm prepared—I know I'm a lot stronger and more mature now."

"I think good students can always adapt to the things around them," said Richelle Reddick, who is ranked number two in the class. Richelle is applying to over 10 colleges, including St. Joseph's University and Stockton College to study forensic science and criminology.

Her interest in forensics has been influenced by television programs, but also by personal tragedy—a shooting death of a member of her family that has never been solved. "I want to be there to help other people, to give them an explanation and

some kind of comfort," said Richelle. "I can help fill in those empty spaces." Richelle, who participates in National Honor Society, peer mentoring, cheerleading, and National Hispanic Institute, said the event has always motivated her to stay on the right path.

In skipping their junior year, the trio may have sacrificed some things but all are excited to be one year closer to college. One benefit this year has been the opportunity for the seniors to participate in LEAP's High School Scholars program, which is a dual-enrollment partnership with Rutgers-Camden that allows

them to take college courses at Rutgers. Abigael Ortolaza, who is ranked third in the class with a 4.1 GPA, said she was grateful for the chance to take college courses. "I'm really interested in what I'm learning and I'm happy they are giving us a chance to take dual-enrollment classes."

"College takes a lot more effort than high school, but that pushes us and keeps us motivated," said Abigael. She is president of the National Honor Society and plans to study biology, nursing and pre-medicine, followed by medical school and a career as a physician.

Last fall, the three students shared a course at Rutgers called Intro to Human Reproduction and Development. The course was held in a lecture hall with over 100 other students, but they handled the change well: all three earned at least a 'B' and three credits towards their future Bachelor's degrees. "It was a lot of

students, but being around other college students sets a good example and shows us this is what we need to do to go to college," said Richelle. "The course gave me a good perspective on what to expect next year. I've always had good study skills but they've definitely improved." Ashley agreed: "It was challenging, but I like a challenge; it was a lot of fun," she said. "I enjoyed the independence and added responsibility. No one's going to do it for you."

At the moment, all three are awaiting word from their college applications and even with the last few months of their high school careers coming to a close, they all say they're not looking back, only forward. "It's exciting," said Abigael. "We're ready. LEAP has prepared me well—I won't let anyone down."



ASHLEY



ABIGAEAL



RICHELLE

## LEAP ALUMNI RETURN FOR 11TH ANNUAL RUTGERS/LEAP GALA



LEAP alumnae Julianna Perez presents a gift of student artwork to Rutgers University President Richard L. McCormick.



LEAP graduate and Rutgers senior Julio Atenco speaks at the gala and thanks the honorees and guests for supporting the scholarship.



Alumni Shanice Anderson and Gabriel Molina with the CSUCL's Khary Golden during the gala ceremony.

**The** 11th annual Rutgers/LEAP gala became a school reunion on December 3rd as over 25 alumni from LEAP Academy returned to Camden to show their support for the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship.

A number of students representing each of LEAP's six graduating class were present at the gala this year, including 11 recipients of the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship. Two of LEAP's most distinguished alumni that have benefitted from the scholarship delivered special remarks at the gala: Julianna Perez and Julio Atenco.

Julianna, a 2007 graduate and junior at Brown University, expressed her gratitude to guests for providing her with an opportunity to attend an Ivy League university. At the gala she was officially presented with \$10,000 in financial aid by Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago from the scholarship in order for Julianna to continue her studies at Brown. In her remarks she gave a firsthand account of the social and cultural difficulties she and other minority students face when immersed in a population of wealthy, suburban students, like Brown. She asked the audience to continue supporting LEAP's work and to help Camden City students make the transition into college.

Julio, a 2005 LEAP graduate and senior at Rutgers-Camden, took the opportunity to thank the scholarship supporters and impressed everyone with news of his advanced research on biology at Rutgers. Julio will graduate in May 2011 and hopes to pursue graduate school. In closing his remarks he made an impassioned plea for everyone there to support the DREAM Act, a federal bill that would provide access to federal financial aid for undocumented students graduating in the United States. He said that the DREAM Act would help undocumented students (who wish nothing more than to earn a college degree and gain successful employment, he said) afford the extraordinary costs of college.

Since 2005, the scholarship has provided over \$130,000 in financial aid to 30 LEAP Academy alumni, and that number continues to grow every year. The alumni's participation at the gala is part of the College Access Center's ongoing engagement of alumni throughout their college careers in order to provide the support they need to continue their studies and transition into the workforce.

The CCA also hosted an alumni breakfast on December 23rd at LEAP. Nearly 40 LEAP alumni returned for the event, where they reconnected with old friends and spoke to current seniors and answered questions about their college experiences.

### ATTN: LEAP SENIORS

#### APPLY FOR THE RUTGERS/LEAP ALFREDO SANTIAGO SCHOLARSHIP

All LEAP students are eligible to apply for one of two scholarships provided by the Rutgers CSUCL and LEAP Academy:

##### **For students attending Rutgers:**

If you are a LEAP student planning to enroll at Rutgers in Fall 2011, apply for the Rutgers University Alfredo Santiago Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded based on academic merit and financial need, and places emphasis on nontraditional college majors such as business, pre-medicine, pre-law, and S.T.E.M disciplines.

##### **For students not attending Rutgers:**

All LEAP seniors planning to enroll in a 4-year college or university are encouraged to apply for the LEAP Academy Alfredo Santiago Scholarship, which is awarded to exceptional LEAP students attending colleges outside Rutgers.

*\*All students must have a minimum 3.0 GPA to apply. Contact the College Access Center for more info. The application periods begin in March.*

# S.T.E.M.

## program off to a strong start



**R**eflecting LEAP Academy’s focus on increasing the number of Camden City students who pursue math and science careers, the inaugural year of LEAP’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.) program has already begun fueling the intellectual curiosity of 60 freshmen students. Created earlier this year, the LEAP STEM program kicked off in September as one of the state’s first high school curricula dedicated entirely to S.T.E.M.

Since then, S.T.E.M. has injected a new enthusiasm into the student body and has given them a forum to explore academic interests that are largely absent in low-income, urban school districts. One student in particular, Juan Ibarra, a freshman in the STEM program, says he is excelling with the program’s focus on technology and science.

“It’s very advanced but that’s why I applied. I wanted to do advanced work and thought I was capable,” said Juan, who is already interested in applying to engineering programs at Rutgers, Villanova, Temple, and Duke universities. “The work is harder and more challenging but I know it’s worth it and will be useful later when I go to college.”



Juan’s courses in technology and physics are allowing him engage in more hands-on projects, such as designing and building airplane models and trebuchets (catapults). He’s also involved with an afterschool technology club at LEAP where students collaborate on designing websites and comic books. “I’m a real hands-on kind of person so I’m really enjoying these projects,” said Juan, who added that the program is giving him options for his future. “It’s expanding my knowledge on what I can be—I never knew there could be so many careers out there. There’s really no limit to what you can do—nothing can hold you back.”

The success of the program is already attracting future applicants. At an all-day open house in December, over 100 Camden City parents arrived at the school eager to learn more about LEAP’s STEM program. With the S.T.E.M. staff members on hand, parents asked questions and received critical information on how they can prepare their students to apply for upcoming round of admissions for the 2011-2012 program.

## LEAP TO PURCHASE NEW PROPERTY TO BUILD S.T.E.M. HIGH SCHOOL

**LEAP Academy Charter School** has successfully acquired a property on Cooper Street in Camden that will soon be the site of a new LEAP Academy STEM High school. At its November meeting, the LEAP Board of Trustees authorized the school to enter into a contract of sale to acquire the site.

The new school will be located at 528-532 Cooper Street, directly across the street from LEAP’s current High school building at 549 Cooper. LEAP hopes to have the facility renovated and opened in time for the 2012-13 school year. Eventually the facility will house LEAP’s S.T.E.M. program’s full enrollment of 240 students (9-12). The building will feature lecture halls, state-of-the-art classrooms, and science labs.

LEAP is developing additional plans to house a magnet school at the site which will double its K-3 enrollment.

### Attention LEAP 8th graders: Apply for S.T.E.M. 2011-2012

All LEAP Academy students currently in 8th grade are eligible to apply to LEAP’s S.T.E.M. program for 2011-2012 school year. The program will give you the opportunity to learn and pursue your interests in math, engineering, technology, and the sciences and prepare you to succeed in science and technology programs at colleges across the country.

Successful applicants will remain in the S.T.E.M. program from 9th grade through senior graduation. Only 60 enrollment spaces are available for 2011 and admissions are highly competitive. Requirements include: a GPA of 3.0 or higher, math and science proficiency (based on NJASK standards), an admissions exam, a personal statement, and an interview.

More information, including applications forms, can be picked up from Randy Miller (Education Specialist for STEM) at the Center for College Access.

## “COLLEGE ACCESS WEEK”

## Welcomes 25 universities to LEAP for College Fair



With the college application season in full swing, the Rutgers/LEAP Center for College Access is already working to continue LEAP's impressive history of six years of 100% graduation and 100% college acceptance. Each year the CCA hosts numerous college readiness activities and workshops at the high school, including its Citywide College Fair, but this year chose to schedule a full-week of college readiness events.

The CCA's inaugural "College Access Week" was held during the fall semester and featured seven days of visits from several area colleges, Q&A sessions with university representatives, and even on-the-spot admissions interviews for LEAP students.

The CCA also hosted the week's marquee event: the annual LEAP Citywide College Fair. This year, 25 colleges and universities sent admission representatives to LEAP, where they met with 240 students (grades 9-12).

During the fair's two-hour session students hurried from table to table, meeting admission representatives and learning everything they need to know about the application process, campus life, and potential academic programs at each university. Colleges in attendance at the College Fair included Rutgers University, Rowan, Brown, Temple, Duke, University of Delaware, Richard Stockton College, and 18 others.

"We're looking for students who are college-ready," said Heather Medina, Assistant Director of Admissions at Stockton. Medina is a former LEAP employee and said her familiarity with the school's success is what continues to bring Stockton back to the college fair every year. "I know LEAP has a college preparatory focus and its students are challenged more," she said. "It's a good match between LEAP and Stockton."

Abigael Ortolaza, a senior at LEAP who is interested in studying biology, nursing and pre-medicine, said she was interested in the campus size of each college. "I'm interested in schools where the student-teacher ratios are small...where you'll be close with your professor," said Abigael. She spoke to representatives from Rutgers and Stockton and also learned that her GPA and SAT scores make her eligible for a full tuition scholarship at Felician College.

"It's important for students to see that these colleges want them," Stockton's Medina added. "It's extremely valuable for them to see [so many] colleges because the more information they each have the better decisions they can make."

## CCA introduces K-6 students to health & science careers



As part of its mission to improve career awareness for elementary students, the Center for College Access hosted a Health Science "Career Carousel" at LEAP Academy last fall. The event was coordinated with Hispanic Heritage Month and invited 12 local health and science professionals from the Hispanic community to visit LEAP classrooms.

The professions in attendance included physicians and nurses from Cooper Hospital, a veterinarian from Danfield Animal Hospital, and even LEAP Board member Dr. Luis Garcia, an Associate Dean and Psychology Professor at Rutgers-Camden. For over two hours, these professionals rotated from classroom to classroom (i.e. "Carousel") and provide 3rd-6th grade students with a firsthand look at careers in the world's fastest growing fields.

"Students need to have role models," said the CCA's Marie Sandona. She added that students are always encouraged to pursue these health science careers but, "Most students don't know anyone with these jobs. So getting to meet someone from Camden City with that job is really inspiring," Marie said.

In the weeks leading up to the event, K-6 students studied health and science careers in class, learning the academic and technical skills required to pursue these careers. The CCA is planning a second K-6 Career Carousel in February in coordination with Black History Month. The event will invite African-American professionals in business and S.T.E.M. careers to the school.

## 6 students enroll in NJ Academy of Aquatic Sciences program



*CAUSE Explorers (from left): Ambir-Sillouette Stephens, Kieren Mattis, Lizomary Borrero, Daniel Echevarria, and Kimberly Casiano*

Six LEAP Academy students have been chosen to participate in a science enrichment program at the Adventure Aquarium. The CAUSE Explorer program (Community And Urban Science Enrichment), is being sponsored by the New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences and will train LEAP students to improve local science awareness by educating fellow youth in Camden City.

LEAP 8th grade students Lizomary Borrero, Kimberly Casiano, Daniel Echevarria,

Kieren Mattis, Veronica Roman, and Ambir-Sillouette Stephens have begun a CAUSE training program that equips them with the knowledge to help run community science activities. The program meets weekly and focuses on character development, team building, and communications skills.

Students also participate in regular workshops and field trips to improve their knowledge of science. After the training, all eight students will work at the CAUSE Explorers annual five-week summer camp for children in grades K-3. They will assist CAUSE staff in working with children at the camp. Later, students will have the opportunity to transition into the CAUSE Intern program, a paid high school internship that prepares students to work as "exhibit interpreters" at the Adventure Aquarium and as educators and mentors for elementary students in its afterschool ecology clubs.

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

### **FEB 18** – Black History Month Business Career Carousel (4-6)

As part of Black History Month, the College Access Center will invite African American businessmen and women from Camden City to raise career awareness for elementary students.

### FOR PARENTS

### **MAR 5** – ELRA Charity Event, 6:00 pm

A charity "Beef & Beer" fundraiser to benefit the Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy hosted by the Haddonfield Rotaract Club. It will be held at the American Legion Post #371 in Gibbsboro, NJ. Tickets: \$25.00 (advanced)

### **APR 20** – "529 College Savings Plan"

(Parents K-7) A representative from the 529 College Saving Plan Group will speak to parents about the importance of saving early for their child's education.

### **APR 21** – Take Daughters & Sons to Work Day (Parents K-7)

A fun experience designed to expose our children to daily life in the workplace and to demonstrate the relationship between school and career success.

## ATTENTION

### LEAP 7th Graders: Become a Rutgers Future Scholar

**T**he annual application period for Rutgers University's Future Scholars program is underway and all LEAP Academy students in 7th grade are eligible to apply. Each year the program selects 10 LEAP students to enter the program, which begins in the summer before 8th grade and continues through high school graduation. The program holds regular meetings and activities on campus to prepare students for the transition from high school to college.

All Future Scholars who successfully complete the five-year program and who are admitted to one of Rutgers' three campuses receive full tuition coverage for their four-year undergraduate study at Rutgers. So far, 27 LEAP students are members of the program.

Students, this is your chance to receive a free college education, courtesy of Rutgers University. In addition, you will receive academic advising and SAT preparation from Rutgers faculty and staff, and attend frequent on-campus activities throughout the school year and each summer.



*LEAP Students in the Rutgers Future Scholars Program from grades 8, 9, and 10*

Contact the College Access Center now for eligibility guidelines and application forms. Don't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity! **Deadline February 28**