CSUCL’s HELP program will bring health literacy to immigrant families in Camden City

A new CSUCL program will provide immigrant families in Camden with the medical awareness and preparation needed to support their children’s health. The Center’s Health Education Literacy Project (HELP) will improve the functional health literacy of immigrant families and help them better communicate with doctors and navigate the U.S. health system. In doing so, this effort is anticipated to improve health outcomes for both children and parents.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation approved a $250,000 grant for the CSUCL to launch the HELP project, which will work with over 200 immigrant parents in Camden City over a three-year period.

“Education is vital for childhood health. Through HELP, we will be improving the health and quality of life for immigrant families in Camden City.” - Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago

“Education is vital for childhood health,” said Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor and Director of the CSUCL. “When immigrant children who have been raised in impoverished conditions enter school they may be poorly nourished, have unattended dental problems, may not be fully immunized against childhood diseases, and may suffer from other preventable or treatable health conditions.”

Over 12% of Camden’s population is composed of immigrants and an estimated 3,500-4,000 undocumented immigrants live in the city as well, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
In the past few decades--and especially in the political arena--Latinas have experienced striking successes and have created the unprecedented opportunity for themselves to acquire social capital, assume positions of responsibility as role models for others and gain a competitive edge in the work force. As they ascend to positions of power, we have watched them grapple (and in Sonia Sotomayor’s case, quite publicly) with the complex issues of race, class, gender and cultural background that continue to color everyday exchanges in the community and workplace--let alone a nationally televised nomination hearing for the U.S. Supreme Court.

As the Sotomayor hearings illustrate, Latinas bring a complex understanding of race and gender to the table along with a strong conviction in the need for responsive government. Although the GOP has made much of her decision in Ricci v. DeStefano--the now-famous case in which New Haven firefighters alleged racial discrimination in promotion proceedings, and her repeated clarification of the remarks she made in her “wise Latina woman” speech--Sotomayor’s comments demonstrated her complex understanding of race as well as a firm grasp of the law. And the extent to which her opinions in her cases sprang from her perspective as a Latina, versus her penetrating intellect and strict interpretation of the law, remains to be seen.

Indeed, Sotomayor’s public comments suggest that her views are more nuanced and original than her critics or supporters have allowed. It seems likely that her background, her deep understanding of race, gender and identity politics, and her firm belief in social justice will lend greatly to the Supreme Court’s interpretation of these issues over the next few decades in ways that may surprise us all.

Whether the appointment of Sotomayor makes the path easier for Latinas who hope to follow her leadership example is, for now, an open question. The path ahead will depend to some extent on actions unique to her as an individual, let alone as a Latina--actions that are inherently unscripted, dynamic, spontaneous, adversarial, challenging and courageous.

But whether that road is rocky or smooth, the appointment of Sotomayor to the Supreme Court--and the hearings that preceded it--should teach us all something about the fundamental inseparability of one’s fiber as a human being from one’s interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.
University partnerships open college classrooms to LEAP students

As one of the Rutgers Centers of Excellence, the Office of Pre College Programs is creating new opportunities for LEAP Academy students to study in college classrooms. Thanks to the ongoing partnerships between LEAP and Rutgers and Rowan universities, students are benefitting from a real college experience this fall.

Beginning this month, 26 LEAP students in grades 10-12 enrolled in undergraduate courses at Rutgers and Rowan and are earning both high school and college credits. The programs are designed to provide outstanding students with experiential learning opportunities at local colleges and to challenge them with advanced coursework.

“These partnerships are creating a more comprehensive high school experience for LEAP students,” said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera, Senior Administrator for the Pre College Office, which is supervising the programs. “On-site college classes will introduce students to the rigor of college academics and better prepare them for the transition into higher education.”

Six LEAP students are earning college credits at Rutgers–Camden. At a special Rutgers orientation on September 1st, students enrolled in two Urban Studies courses: Approaches to Urban Studies and Power and Decision-making in Urban Communities. Both courses meet twice a week and offer insight into the issues and concerns of urban cities like Camden.

“The Rutgers partnership with LEAP Academy provides access to higher education for high school students who want to explore advanced coursework and attain college credit prior to graduation,” said Dr. Deborah Bowles, Associate Chancellor for Enrollment Management at Rutgers–Camden.

“It’s exciting. It’s going to be a big help because not a lot of students get this opportunity. It’s an incentive to pursue my education.”
— José Napoleon, LEAP Senior in Rowan University program

See LEAP TO COLLEGE on page 14
Rutgers / Respond partnership expands Jumpstart Outreach

Building on its successful first year, Rutgers Jumpstart has partnered with Respond Inc. to expand its early childhood literacy services to more preschoolers in Camden City.

The partnership builds on the CSUCL’s Early Childhood Education agenda and makes it possible for Jumpstart to place 21 of its corps members into Respond’s preschool classrooms. There they will work one-on-one with three- and four-year old students to increase their literacy, writing, and social and emotional skills.

In 2008, Rutgers–Camden became the first university in New Jersey to partner with Jumpstart and recruited 40 Rutgers students to work with preschoolers in the Rutgers Early Childhood Literacy Initiative at LEAP Academy. This year, the Respond partnership is expanding Jumpstart’s ranks to 55 Rutgers students.

“This partnership extends a child’s educational experience each day, bridges communication between parent and child and helps them relate through shared experiences, and supports our teachers as a connecting factor for their work.”

— Dr. Gloria Mitchell, Respond, Inc.

NEW JUMPSTART MANAGER WILL HELP READ FOR THE RECORD

On October, 8, 2009, Jumpstart at Rutgers–Camden will join teachers, parents, college students, and community leaders across the world to read one million books in a single day to preschool children as part of Jumpstart’s Read for the Record.

Katie Mills—the new Site Manager for Rutgers Jumpstart—and over 50 other volunteers will read Eric Carl’s The Very Hungry Caterpillar to preschoolers at LEAP Academy and childcare centers throughout Camden. This year’s event will break Jumpstart’s own world record set in 2008, when it read to 700,000 preschoolers.

Mills, who joined the CSUCL in May and is currently in her first year in the Rutgers–Camden MPA program, said the international event will draw awareness to America’s growing school readiness crisis, which has a direct relationship to the educational achievement gap in urban school districts.

“This partnership enhances our existing program and provide quality care, which is important for the development of a child,” said Dr. Gloria Mitchell, Respond Inc.

“Jumpstart’s Read for the Record will bring the community together and emphasize the importance of early childhood literacy,” said Mills, who earned her BA from Rutgers–Camden in 2004 and has taught in preschool classrooms for five years.

“Simply reading a book to a child can have a tremendous impact; together we are helping our preschoolers prepare for kindergarten and future success.”

To volunteer to read at the event, contact Katie Mills at (856) 225-6906 or km@camden.rutgers.edu.

See JUMPSTART on page 14
With funding from the Kresge Foundation, the CSUCL is enhancing its fundraising efforts to raise the remaining $6.5 million dollars needed to build the Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA).

The Early Learning Research Academy is a state-of-the-art education and research center that will provide early childhood learning and health services to Camden children from birth through age five. The CSUCL has already secured $3.5M, including a $2M grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, $1M from the Camden Economic Recovery Board, and $500K from the Department of Urban Development.

In April, the Center received a $100,000 grant from Kresge to expand the feasibility and fundraising effort to raise the remaining funds. The Center hired J.C. Geever, Inc., a New York City consulting firm with more than 30 years of experience in development consultation, to conduct the feasibility portion of the capital campaign. Currently the study is reaching out to several national foundations as potential funders, as well as businesses and key individual stakeholders, even local residents.

During the summer, the Center hosted focus groups with local parents to explore a potential “grassroots” effort to raise funds. “Parents are ready and willing to contribute to this important effort. They offered us many interesting and valuable ideas to help raise money and awareness for the ELRA project,” said Rutgers–Camden Law professor Jill Friedman, who is the Director of Pro Bono Projects at The Law School and a member of the LEAP Academy Board of Trustees.

Beginning in September, the Law School will be operating the Rutgers/LEAP Legal Referral and Immigration Pro Bono Project which provides families at LEAP and across the city with free and confidential legal information and referrals, with a focus on immigration issues.

“The project provides a safe, confidential place for families to ask immigration questions and get accurate information and reliable referrals.”

–Jill Friedman, Professor, Rutgers School of Law–Camden

Frequent legal issues discussed during information sessions include immigration, credit problems, housing, custody and divorce proceedings, domestic violence, and employment law.

KRESGE GRANT SUPPORTS
ELRA FUNDRAISING
CAMPAIGN

Rutgers Law School works
with LEAP families

The Rutgers School of Law–Camden is working with the CSUCL and LEAP Academy to provide several legal education programs to students and parents at LEAP.

The initiatives are part of the Law School’s Pro Bono and Public Interest Program and are designed to inform high school students, parents, and staff on legal issues such as immigration and financial literacy, and even offer free service referrals. Projects use second- and third-year law students and law professors from Rutgers, with specialist attorneys (all of whom volunteer), to deliver information through sessions, workshops, and presentations.

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See LAW SCHOOL on page 7
Latinos comprise the second largest ethnic population in New Jersey, some 15.7% or 1.35 million residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2005-07 American Community Survey. Despite their large population, however, many Latinos face distinct language and cultural barriers throughout their lives that preclude involvement and success in the economic and academic arenas.

In response to this reality, the Rutgers CSUCL is continuing its focus on urban and educational reform by creating college and career opportunities for Latino youth. In an ongoing partnership with the New Jersey Center for Hispanic Policy Research and Development (CHPRD), the CSUCL’s Latino Fellows Public Policy Leadership Institute is training and promoting the professional and academic achievement of Latino college students in New Jersey.

“The Latino Fellowship Institute prepares the best and brightest Latino students for the challenging world that awaits them,” said CSUCL Program Associate Randy Miller. “It teaches leadership, communication skills, and other important competencies necessary for Latinos to succeed in corporate, non-profit, and public sectors.”

Through unique internship opportunities and professional training, the Latino Fellows Institute encourages Latino students to pursue policy-level positions in the state. At the same time, the Institute provides NJ business leaders, educators, and lawmakers with a better understanding of the Latino population and the potential resources they are able to provide.

Each year a cohort of Latino college students from New Jersey universities are selected by the CHPRD to participate in the program. For 10 weeks each summer these fellows spend four days a week at their arranged internship and the remaining one day per week at intensive leadership training seminars designed and delivered by the Rutgers CSUCL.

Isaac, who interned for NJ Governor Jon Corzine’s Deputy Chief-of-Staff, received a $5,000 scholarship for his paper, “Driving While Latino: The End Racial Profiling Bill and its Implications on New Jersey Hispanic Communities.” He called the Latino Fellows Institute “one of the best programs I have participated in because of the extensive level of access it granted to me.”

Another student, Mirelle Mariano, a sophomore at Farleigh Dickinson University, interned at the New Jersey Hispanic Research Institute Center in the Newark Public Library. The Latino Fellows Institute “helped me determine my real career path,” she said.
Rutgers CSUCL continues collaboration with Camden Board of Education to strengthen school leadership

The CSUCL and the Rutgers Department of Public Policy and Administration (DPPA) continue their partnership with the Camden City Board of Education to strengthen school leadership in the district. The 2009 MPA Cohort for Aspiring School Leaders began their master’s level work this month. A new cohort of 15 teachers from Camden City will have the opportunity to earn their Master’s in Public Administration from Rutgers–Camden with a concentration in Educational Policy and Leadership.

The current group marks the third cohort of aspiring school leaders to participate in the program, after a successful cohort of 17 Camden teachers graduated in 2005 and a second cohort of 15 entered the program in 2008. The 2009 cohort will complete the MPA program’s two-year, 42-credit coursework and fulfill requirements for school supervisory endorsements from the State of New Jersey, including School Administrator, Principal, and Supervisor endorsements.

A successful 2005 cohort has already seen 16 MPA graduates enter school leadership positions in the district, and with another 15 in the second cohort expected to graduate in 2010, the CSUCL is building on its school leadership agenda and its mission to strengthen education for children and families in Camden City.

“The MPA Cohort for Aspiring School Leaders is designed to create and prepare a new cadre of school administrators for leadership positions in urban schools.” -Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago

Rutgers Law School from page 5

A staff of four law students is available each session, with at least one practicing immigration attorney on site to ensure accurate information.

For 2009, the project will hold sessions at LEAP Elementary School twice a month through December and work in concert with the Rutgers/LEAP Health Center’s HOP Clinic to provide common office hours. The HOP Clinic provides free medical services to uninsured families in Camden each Wednesday evening and the Law School hopes these same families will take advantage of the free legal information and referral services, located next door.

Meanwhile, the Law School is reaching out to high school students through legal education initiatives like “Street Law”. This program brings Rutgers law students to LEAP High School classrooms each week where they use lessons, debates, and mock trials to inform teenagers about legal topics like employment and consumer law and the Supreme Court.

At the same time, the Law School’s “Financial Literacy Program” uses law students and bankruptcy lawyers to provide important finance information to LEAP high school students, parents, and even staff members. A series of 90-minute assemblies cover credit, credit cards, and budgeting and introduce students to essential financial knowledge as they transition into college and adulthood.

These Law School initiatives extend the CSUCL’s goal to make LEAP Academy a community service hub and to develop resources to help urban families. It also incorporates the Center’s focus on “Engaged Scholarship” by providing applied-learning opportunities for current law students.

These future attorneys are able to work one-on-one with clients and receive valuable firsthand experience. “Students develop their legal skills while serving people in need; by participating they also increase their knowledge on immigration,” Friedman said, adding that many of the law students who volunteer for the Pro Bono project have a strong interest in immigration law.

For more information, please contact: Jill Friedman, Director of Pro Bono and Public Interest Programs, at (856) 225-6263 or jillfrie@camden.rutgers.edu.
CSUCL BRINGS SERVICE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TOGETHER IN NEW COURSE AT RUTGERS

The CSUCL has partnered with the Rutgers–Camden Department of Urban Studies to create a new academic course designed to provide college students with civic leadership development through service-learning opportunities.

*The Experiential Learning and Community Leadership Service-Learning Seminar* is a combined graduate and undergraduate course that will expose students to real issues facing Camden, introduce them into key stakeholder meetings and community networks, and allow them to discuss, research, and propose community-wide solutions.

The class is structured as a two-semester seminar course in which students learn about community leadership and development and conduct applied research during the first semester, then engage their research in a supervised service project in the second.

“This unique course will promote learning and community leadership development by exposing students to structured service-learning experiences,” said CSUCL Director and Distinguished Service Professor Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago. “It will enhance the academic growth of students while advancing the university’s mission of community development and revitalization.”

Dr. Santiago is joined by Dr. Russell Harrison, Director of Urban Studies, as the faculty instructors for the course; co-instructor Tatiana Poladko Alleyne, an MPA graduate from Rutgers–Camden and a current doctoral student at Temple University, will also deliver the curriculum.

The course will be based at LEAP Academy University Charter School in Camden and students will work closely with LEAP experts to learn the school’s approach to child/family well-being and its strategic importance in Camden’s overall redevelopment agenda.

Using existing community development models like the White House’s new Promise Neighborhoods program or the Harlem Children’s Zone, students in the course will conduct community S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses and develop community needs assessments through direct resident interviews, photographs, and video documentation.

All students will develop a paper on their service project, which they will later present at the Rutgers–Camden Service Learning Conference in Spring 2010.

IMPLEMENTING A BLUEPRINT

*by Randy R. Miller, CSUCL Staff*

In life, we are faced with many questions to answer. I remember vividly when I was asked one of the questions by my fourth grade teacher: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer at the time and through much of my youth was that I wasn’t sure. But how can we ask this to children as early as third or fourth grade when many adults do not know the answer for themselves after they graduate from college?

It’s great for children of all ages to begin thinking about areas they’d like to pursue as a career, but we—parents and educators in urban school districts—must cultivate the passions, interest, and talents of our children to help make this process a more fulfilling one. It is no longer enough to get our children out of high school and into college; our children must have career plans and the abilities to carry them out once they arrive on college campuses. The best means to this end in America is through our charter schools.

I remember the pride felt by my parents when I was accepted to five colleges during my senior year of high school. They worked very hard through long and exhaustive hours to provide me with a good education and advised me on what I needed to graduate and get into college. But unfortunately my parents had never experienced college and had difficulty offering me the counsel I needed to succeed academically and transition into a professional career. I was left to fend for myself, chasing down overburdened professors and advisors for help. As a consequence, translating my own passion and talent into a meaningful career was frustrating process coming out of college.

My story is not a unique experience for youth from urban school districts; thousands of students each year enter college unprepared for the rigor of college academics and lack the support system needed to succeed. According to Jill Jurgens, “Indecision in educational and vocationally undecided—undeclared college students has been a concern of college faculty, counselors, academic advisors, administrators, and researchers for the last 70 years.”

While many of us have achieved a level of success personally (surviving our urban neighborhoods) and academically (obtaining a college degree), we now seek to define our next level of success professionally, through our careers.
But in a time when, more than ever, a college degree is necessary for individuals to compete in the global marketplace, urban students are entering the game without the benefit of social capital and even those with college degrees are at a disadvantage. The reality is that this responsibility of preparing urban children falls on urban schools, which already shoulder much more responsibility than other districts. In addition to educating their students, they are called to protect them from the streets, provide for their physical and socio-emotional health, and instill core values that may not be learned at home. But in addition to providing these immediate needs, urban schools must prepare students for the future, specifically the all-important transitions to college and career; they must create a clear blueprint for success.

The best way to achieve this is through America’s charter schools. The charter school has been positioned by President Obama to take the lead in urban education reform. In his first speech on education, addressed to the United States Chamber of Commerce, President Obama said that many of the innovations in education today are happening in charter schools. Charter schools must take this opportunity to prepare their students.

I believe that urban charter schools must institute programming designed to help students begin thinking about their career options. Such programming should focus on (1) exploring the talents and passions of students in an effort to facilitate a plan for academic and career success; (2) developing the student’s interpersonal skills and potential for leadership within the community; and (3) developing the student personally, promoting personal accountability and civic responsibility.

A 2009 Harvard Educational Review article by Charles Payne and Tim Knowles concludes that “charter schools have the ability to provide new schooling options for children and families who have had, historically, far too few, and to create the possibility for new institutional partners to increase their stake in the educational outcomes of children.” Incorporated within the goals for educational options and outcomes must be the mission to nurture the dreams and talents of students.

Our students hold limitless potential. Our urban centers of learning can no longer afford to fail them by failing to build capacity from within. As our economy becomes increasingly globalized, our students can no longer afford to begin their race far behind the starting line. Charter schools must step to the forefront of this effort; they must form meaningful partnerships to cultivate urban students to achieve their goals and aspirations. Charter schools must lead to create lifelong learners and lead to transform talented students into focused young men and women with their blueprint for personal and professional success.

NEW STAFF BRINGS NEW ENTHUSIASM TO PRE COLLEGE OFFICE

The Pre College Office is capitalizing on the energy brought by a new staff of dedicated advisors this year who are committed to increasing college preparedness, access to financial aid, and the overall experience for Pre College students.

Carmen Ubarry-Rivera has been appointed the new Senior Administrator of The Pre College Office after four years as the coordinator for the LEAP Parents Council. Ms. Ubarry-Rivera was a founding parent of LEAP Academy in 1997 and worked as LEAP’s afterschool program coordinator until taking over the Parents Council in 2005. She is currently taking courses in Lincoln University’s dual BA/MA Human Services program and will graduate in 2010.

Khary Golden joined the Pre College Office last year as a graduate fellow from Rutgers, but now joins the staff full-time as a program assistant. Khary is in his final semester in the Rutgers–Camden Master’s in Public Administration program and earned his BA in political science from Rutgers in 2007. Once finished his MPA he plans to pursue a doctorate in Community Development or Education.

Tarik Bronson is a LEAP Academy alumnus who graduated in 2005. Tarik joined the Pre College Office this summer after completing his Liberal Arts degree from Drew University with a concentration in Pan-African Studies. He hopes to pursue a Master’s degree and teach High School Social Studies.

Genna Deagan has joined the Office as an Education Fellow from Rutgers–Camden, where she is pursuing her BA in English. Her work at the Pre College Office focuses on promoting early awareness of college and career opportunities for elementary students (K–6). Genna is completing her degree in December and plans to pursue a Master’s in School Psychology and a career in urban education.
YES Institute extends tutoring services to Camden County schools

The Rutgers YES Institute will have the opportunity to offer its tutoring services to students in school districts across Camden County for the 2009-10 year. Now in its third year as a supplemental education services provider, the Rutgers Young Educated Scholars (YES) Institute has shown success in helping hundreds of students improve their math and literacy skills.

Beginning in September, YES is offering its services to Camden County public schools in the following districts: Camden City, Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, Gloucester City and Collingswood; and the following public charter schools: Camden’s Promise, Camden Academy, Camden’s Pride, DUE Season, ECO, and Freedom Academy.

“The YES Institute is thrilled to have the opportunity to offer its SES program to more public and charter schools in Camden County. Our program is student-centered and experience-oriented and will help students and parents in these schools prepare for state exams and improve classroom performance,” said YES program coordinator Jade Edwards.

YES hopes to replicate the same results it has had at LEAP Academy University Charter School, where its successful 2008-09 program saw students average 29% gains in Language Arts and 25% gains in Mathematics, according to pre/post testing.

“We are confident that the efforts of everyone involved at YES will be reflected in improved grades and state test scores for LEAP students. It is our goal to make even greater gains for every student this year and to make the Rutgers YES Institute a more rewarding experience for everyone,” Edwards said.

In addition to positive test results, 89% of students reported satisfaction with their tutoring experience and YES staff have analyzed feedback from alumni, parents and teachers to guarantee 100% satisfaction going forward.

With the 2009 school year approaching, YES has implemented several improvements like an enhanced skill-based curriculum, expanded after school and Saturday hours, documented weekly communication with parents and school staff, additional YES staff hirings, tutor logs, and an interactive website.

PRE COLLEGE OFFICE SUPPORTS RUTGERS FUTURE SCHOLARS AT LEAP

As one of the Rutgers Centers of Excellence, the Office of Pre College Initiatives is continuing its mission to support the students of LEAP Academy with academic advising, college placement, and academic enrichment opportunities.

The Pre College Office is supporting the latest group of LEAP Academy students selected by Rutgers–Camden to participate in the Rutgers Future Scholars program. The program is an effort created by Rutgers University to improve retention, graduation, and college enrollment rates for students living near Rutgers campuses in Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark.

Ten LEAP eighth grade students were chosen and are receiving career counseling and SAT training from Rutgers–Camden faculty, consulting with Rutgers student-mentors, and visiting the Camden campus to engage in a range of activities. Students who complete the program and
In June, the CSUCL’s Parents Academy for School Reform recognized the achievement of 20 parents who became the Certified Parent Educators Institute’s Class of 2009. These graduates completed 24 weeks of intensive parent training and professional development from the CSUCL and are now certified parent educators.

The Parents Academy for School Reform is one of the CSUCL’s Centers of Excellence and focuses on school involvement, leadership, and empowerment in order to improve education in Camden City. The Academy’s parent training sessions, like the Certified Parent Educators Institute, help residents become better parents, better community leaders, and more effective advocates for their children’s education.

The 2009 ceremony was held at the Waterfront Technology Center in Camden, where members of the Rutgers/LEAP community gathered to celebrate the past, present, and future of the Parents Academy. Several parents from the original Class of 1996 returned for the event and watched the latest group of graduates earn their certificates.

“The 2009 graduation program was a celebration of 16 years of hard work and dedication by the members of the Camden community and the CSUCL,” said Stephanie Weaver-Rogers, Program Coordinator for the Rutgers/LEAP Parents Academy. “This event marks a new direction for the Academy that will incorporate its past success and bring about new programs and curriculums to address new issues and areas for the Camden community.”

This year’s ceremony also marked the Parent’s Academy’s first three-generational family of graduates. Class of 2009 graduate Victoria McKie joined her mother Antoinette McKie and grandmother Fatima Dorsey, who both graduated from the Parent Educators Institute in 2007.

When asked to describe her experience with the Institute, Victoria said: “The class was fun, exciting and we made lifetime friendships. The experience was both challenging and rewarding, we walked away changed for life, empowered to help change others.”

are admitted to one of Rutgers three campuses will receive four years of full-tuition from Rutgers.

Meanwhile, the Pre College Office is supporting every future scholar at LEAP with a diverse portfolio of programs designed to introduce students to the college experience. This fall, the Office is sponsoring overnight multi-campus visits to regional universities. So far, four trips have been arranged and will cover over 20 schools from North Jersey to Washington D.C. like Rutgers–New Brunswick, Princeton, UPenn, Delaware, and Georgetown.

Notably, the Office will be working with its newly formed LEAP Alumni Association to arrange for LEAP graduates to lead campus tours and offer current students an everyday perspective not found in official university tours. What’s more, two of these four trips will include visits to National college fairs in Washington and Atlantic City, which will introduce students to hundreds of colleges across the country.

The Office is also busy organizing LEAP Academy’s own College Fair, scheduled for November 11th. The 2009 fair hopes to increase the number of participating colleges from 30 to 50 by inviting more regional schools. For the first time it will feature both day and evening sessions in order to allow parents and other local Camden High schools to attend.

These 2009-10 programs are being built off the success of the 2008-09 school year that—for the fifth consecutive year—saw 100% of LEAP graduates accepted to college. This year the Office will be increasing its focus on early awareness of college and career opportunities by working with LEAP Elementary school students; it will also expand available information on financial aid and require seniors to apply to at least five scholarships.
Race and the achievement gap in urban schools were the subjects of an educational dialogue held by Rutgers University and presented by Dr. Ronald Ferguson, a lecturer in Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Over 80 professionals from the Camden City district and Rutgers–Camden attended the event, which was co-sponsored by the Rutgers CSUCL and the Rutgers Department of Public Policy and Administration (DPPA). It was hosted at the Waterfront Technology Center in Camden.

Dr. Ferguson, who has taught at Harvard since 1983 and is a Senior Research Associate with the Malcolm Weiner Center for Social Policy, delivered an exciting seminar discussion that emphasized racial disparities, school culture, and effective teaching practices in urban education.

He also underscored the cultural and economic necessity for America to create “a social movement towards excellence with equity.”

During the 90-minute presentation, Dr. Ferguson used statistics from major educational studies (including many of his own) that analyzed performance across ethnic lines, engaged the audience with questions and polls, and laid a framework for educators and administrators to address learning disparities for minority children in their schools.

Among his informative points, he used a metaphor of seeds to apples and compared it to education and children and the need to yield more successful results. “We need to get more apples from these seeds. We need to unlock the latent, unharvested potential of children,” he said.

Dr. Ferguson also highlighted an ongoing population shift in the United States and said that the total minority population (non-whites) will increase by 22% from 2000 to 2050. He said that the U.S. was already falling far behind other nations in education and that “minority populations need to be brought up” in order for the U.S. to maintain its economic and social prosperity.

But bringing up minority students (and all students, for that matter), he said, depends on work at the local level, including policy, but mainly the efforts of teachers in the classroom. “How we cultivate students depends on how much time we spend on them,” Dr. Ferguson said, adding that peer pressure and school culture sometimes discourage student achievement. “Children want to learn. We (adults) sometimes need to be their excuse to learn.”

Dr. Ferguson warned teachers and administrators against giving up on students or rationalizing marginal success in schools as “being realistic”. “We need to work together in ways to unlock children’s potentials; we need to work hard enough and long enough to make it happen,” he said. “We need to believe we can do it even if we know we can’t.”
HELP PROJECT from page 1

A combination of high poverty, poor education, limited English proficiency, lack of health insurance, and low awareness of community health resources make these parents and children the most vulnerable population in the city.

The HELP project responds by providing a community support network for families and by offering health care personnel a better understanding of how to work with immigrants. It will also reach out to mothers of infants from birth to five years old as part of the CSUCL’s Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA).

“The RWJF grant brings together the work of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigration Integration with Dr. Santiago’s ongoing work of building strong parent relationships in the community,” said Dr. Christine Brenner, Professor of Public Administration at Rutgers–Camden and co-principal investigator on the project.

A total of 14 training sessions will be delivered once a week for six consecutive weeks by parent educators and third-year medical students from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). “The project will provide opportunities for medical students to interact with families and build relationships with patients,” added Dr. Santiago.

The curriculum for the project is currently being developed by the CSUCL and its partners: Cooper Family Medicine, UMDNJ, community agencies such as LEAP Academy Charter School, Respond, El Centro, Mi Casita, and Broadway Family Center, and even the Mexican Consulate.

“We have a strong, ongoing partnership with the Mexican Consulate and we are counting on them to help promote participation of immigrants in Camden,” Dr. Brenner added.

“Our goal is to develop a curriculum that can be delivered in any immigrant community,” Dr. Santiago added, stressing the importance of cultural competency and a dual-language approach to improve communication between doctors and patients. In addition, the project will create “HELP Kits” that contain medical supplies and information to be distributed to all parent participants and “HELP Corners” with relevant medical information to be housed at area centers and agencies.

“Most patients do not understand the health care system and it is even more difficult for patients who did not grow up in this country,” said Dr. Dyanne Westerberg, a Medical Director of Cooper Family Medicine and the Health Center. “A physician might give a patient a prescription but the patient will not know what to do with it. Consequently, the patient will not get the medication, blood test or treatment that the doctor ordered.”

“This program will have an impact on everyone,” she said. “Patients will understand how to do their part to obtain the treatment they need and providers will know they made a difference in a patient’s life.”

Once completed, direct results of the project will include increased medical knowledge about medication, prescriptions, and pharmacies, increased English proficiency and communication of symptoms to medical staff, and awareness of available medical services.

Just as important, however, is the fact that the expanded health knowledge gained through HELP will create confident and well-informed parents. “Empowered parents are more self-sufficient, understand their rights, have trust in the system and doctors, and raise healthier children,” Dr. Santiago said. “Through HELP, we will be improving the health and quality of life for immigrant families.”

LATINO FELLOWS from page 6

“It inspired me to reach for higher goals and to look forward to serving my own community,” Mirelle said, and she plans to use her love of business and public policy to attend law school, become an attorney, and someday to manage her own law firm.

Outstanding students like Mirelle and Isaac understand how important programs like the Latino Fellows Institute are to increasing opportunities for higher education and to strengthening leadership for Latinos. “We need more Latino Leadership in this country,” said Mirelle, who plans to graduate in 2012 and was offered a part-time job by the NJHRIC. “Who knows, maybe our first Latino President in the U.S. will come out of a program like this!”
Respond is a community organization that provides support services to families, children, seniors, and workers in Camden City and County. Respond’s early childcare services have worked with Camden youth since 1975 and today its network of 13 childcare and preschool centers throughout the city serves more than 750 children each year.

The Jumpstart partnership is a pilot effort reaching out to 21 Respond preschoolers, but its success will have a greater impact for Respond beyond those few students. “We hope to take the values of this program and articulate them to our other classrooms.”

On August 26th, these students and their parents attended a special orientation program at Rowan. At the event, LEAP students met current undergraduates, toured the campus and classrooms, and registered for classes like Algebra or Biology.

José Napoleon, a senior at LEAP, has enrolled in Human Biology at Rowan and is thrilled to get a head start on his college academics. “It’s exciting. It’s going to be a big help because not a lot of students get this opportunity,” said José, Vice President of the LEAP National Honor Society with a 4.26 GPA. “Being one of the first students to participate is a privilege and it shows LEAP cares about its students. It’s an incentive to pursue my education.”

For high school students like José, the benefits of this program will go far beyond building his résumé; it offers tremendous experience in college classrooms, with college professors, and on college campuses. These partnerships are also important to universities like Rutgers and Rowan, schools where many of these LEAP students will someday attend full-time and bring with them the experience of this program.

“Such dual-enrollment programs offer numerous benefits to students, institutions, and society,” said Associate Chancellor Bowles. “Programs of this type can be viewed as potential tools for increasing preparation for and expanding access to postsecondary education.”
Not only will our students get a head-start on their college career by earning credit, the LEAP community will gain valuable insight about our how academic standards align with the college world. Second, LEAP students will get to take interesting classes on a college campus. I see this as an enormous incentive. Third, LEAP students will be exposed to adult expectations and environments. This will provide our students with invaluable experience and preparation for life after high school, both in and out of college. Finally, all LEAP students will receive support to ensure their success. We will take an active interest in ensuring that the experience is fruitful to them, both academically as well as socially.

I am only echoing the research supporting dual-enrollment initiatives. A 2006 article from the American Youth Policy Forum by Jennifer Brown Lerner and Betsy Brand concludes, “These programs are high value programs, because they provide many of the important elements that have been missing from high school for most students: challenge, engagement, access to the adult world, and support.”

The program has benefits for Rutgers as well. It will supply the University with a steady pipeline of local students with demonstrated academic and leadership potential. It will provide a setting whereby Rutgers faculty and graduate students can study the impact and effectiveness of its course offerings for high school students. Finally, it will allow Rutgers to assume a leadership position in local, state, and national state research and policy development in school-college partnerships.

It’s very valuable,” Dr. Mitchell said.

At Rutgers, Jumpstart is part of the CSUCL’s Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) and uses comprehensive reading and learning activities to engage children’s emerging literacy skills and prepare them for kindergarten. In addition, the program provides college students with the hands-on experience and training necessary for future careers as educators and professionals.

Beginning in September, 55 Rutgers students will begin a five-week professional training cycle before the official program start date of October 19th. Students will then work 12-15 hours per week with their designated preschool child on a one-to-one basis for the duration of the eight-month service period.

Last year’s program was extremely popular with Rutgers students and 18 program alumni (45%) have committed to Jumpstart for a second year.

“These returning students are taking on leadership roles and bringing valuable knowledge to the program,” said Katie Mills, new Site Manager for Rutgers Jumpstart. “Their skills and experience working with children will translate into greater gains for their preschoolers, will help our new members adjust more quickly, and make this year’s Jumpstart program an even greater success.”

In addition to one-on-one learning, Jumpstart holds literacy enrichment activities and events throughout the school year designed to build on preschoolers’ social skills and create a joy for learning. Its first scheduled activity for 2009 is Read for the Record on October 8th, when students and volunteers will join an international effort to read one million books to children.
10th Annual Rutgers/LEAP Gala comes home to Camden

Ten years since it first began a scholarship to send LEAP Academy graduates to college, the CSUCL will host its 10th Annual Alfredo Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fundraising Gala back to where it all began: the City of Camden.

On December 4th, 2009 the Gala returns to Camden City for the first time since 2000, when the Rutgers/LEAP community will gather at the Adventure Aquarium on the Waterfront to celebrate this year’s recipients and honorees. Bringing the Gala back to Camden is part of the CSUCL’s new emphasis on recognizing local individuals and organizations that are making a difference in the city.

Created in 2000, the scholarship seeks to increase the number of Camden youth who attend college and helps students and families afford the growing costs of higher education. In the 10 years since the scholarship was created, its endowment has grown to $1.2 million thanks in large part to the support from local businesses, organizations, and political leaders.

Since LEAP Academy students began graduating in 2005, the support of these Camden stakeholders has made it possible for the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship to help 25 LEAP alumni pursue a college education.

There are many ways to participate and contribute to this year’s Gala. Supporters can join us at the event by purchasing tickets, donate directly to the scholarship endowment, or contribute items to our Silent Auction. Our corporate and business friends may even choose to become official Gala sponsors or advertise in our Souvenir Gala Journal.

Together we can continue to improve opportunities for students and families. Please join us in celebrating the decade of dreams that the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship has helped create for LEAP alumni attending Rutgers, and the lifetime of discovery that lies ahead of them and the city of Camden.

The 2009 Rutgers/LEAP Gala Honorees

This year’s Gala honorees are two of Camden’s greatest supporters: New Jersey State Senator Dana Redd, the current Democratic candidate for Mayor of Camden, has been a lifelong resident of the city and is a strong advocate for its residents; she is also an alumna of Rutgers–University Camden.

PSE&G and its President & Chief Operating Officer, Ralph LaRossa, meanwhile, have their South Jersey headquarters based in the city and have been strong partners in Camden and in the region for over 100 years.

2009 GALA INFORMATION

DATE: Friday December 4, 2009
6:00 – 11:00pm
PLACE: Adventure Aquarium
1 Riverside Drive,
Camden NJ 08103

CONTACT: Randy Miller for tickets, donations, advertising, or silent auction items.
856.225.2922
RRmiller@camden.rutgers.edu

Visit us on the web!
cfsucl.camden.rutgers.edu/gala.html

2009 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

• Ilesha Tull (Rutgers–Camden)
• Ariel Figueroa (Rutgers–Camden)
• *Tyrell Johnson (Delaware St. Univ.)
• *Robert Ransom (Howard Univ.)

*TD Bank Alfredo Santiago Scholarship

THE 2009 RUTGERS / LEAP GALA HONOREES

Ralph LaRossa
President & COO, PSE&G

Dana Redd
NJ State Senator

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