

EDUCATE



2021

▪ ANNUAL REPORT ▪

2022



SERVE

LEAD

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Cover: Top, from left: Dr. Adam Alvarez and Dr. Alicia Drelick. Bottom, from left: Dr. Amy Accardo and Holmes Scholar Sa-Rawla Stoute.

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> MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

EDUCATE. SERVE. LEAD.

For nearly a century, the College of Education has adhered to this commitment. Our dedication to social justice, equity, inclusion and diversity resides at the core of our efforts. It drives our researchers, faculty, committees, institutes and centers. It is also reflected in our classrooms and engagement with school districts, local educational associations and educational leaders throughout the region and state.

We have entered a new era in education. Our students, faculty, staff and communities are called to respond to extraordinary educational challenges presented by the pandemic and ongoing and emerging social issues.

This report shows just some of the ways our students, faculty and staff are taking action. For example, we are leading Rowan University's Opportunity for Postsecondary Excellence and Success (ROPES), which was developed to help students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant-funded program creates educational pathways to college for historically disadvantaged students. By earning University

credits before they graduate from high school, students gain confidence, recognizing that they can be successful in the college setting.

The College also launched the Rowan Institute for Educational Leadership, providing resources and a rich professional network for school- and district-level educational leaders. Participants share their experiences, learn from each other and receive support from experts in the field. Additionally, the Holmes Scholars program has enhanced efforts to assist doctoral students, who also connect with a national network that prepares diverse scholars for academia.

We will continue to respond to today's challenges and engage with our students, faculty and partners to educate, serve and lead in new and innovative ways. We join you in the collective efforts in transforming our communities and helping to elevate our profession.

DR. GAËTANE JEAN-MARIE
Dean

ASCENDING THE ROPES TO SUCCESS



Although dual enrollment programs have existed for some time, this program is unique because students take online courses taught by Rowan professors rather than earning community college credit from courses taught by their high school teachers, said Dr. Elisa Di Lolle, program coordinator. Students choose from majors that include teacher education, engineering, music business, social services/social work, and computer science.

“We had great keynote speakers, like Ric Edelman, who spoke to students about financial issues, like how to make smart financial choices when they go to college and the types of loans that are available,” Di Lolle said. A Rowan alumnus, Edelman is an investor and *New York Times* best-selling author.

Through the ROPES program, students learn to navigate the campus and their courses, easing their future transition to college life.

“For a lot of the students, that anxiety has been removed,” Di Lolle said.

During the on-campus Summer ROPES Institute, students worked with professors on a culminating project. For example, teacher education students focused on the education system and created a lesson they would implement.



Students are regaining ground lost to the COVID-19 pandemic through Rowan University’s Opportunity for Postsecondary Excellence and Success (ROPES).

The two-year dual enrollment program, funded by a \$1.5 million grant through the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) from the U.S. Department of Education, supports urban and rural students who were among those most impacted. It is part of a \$28.5 million grant to the state from the U.S. Department of Education. The districts involved in the ROPES grant are Atlantic City, Bridgeton, Camden City, Paulsboro, Pleasantville, Salem City and Vineland.

“Five Rowan colleges are working to help 100 high school juniors to develop a seamless transition and successful matriculation into college. We follow a hand, heart and mind focus, offering students interactive programs to address their college readiness,” said Dean Gaëtane Jean-Marie.

“The dual enrollment program offered through ROPES will help us increase access and eliminate affordability barriers for students by creating a pipeline of students through engagement in the high schools,” Rowan Provost Tony Lowman added.



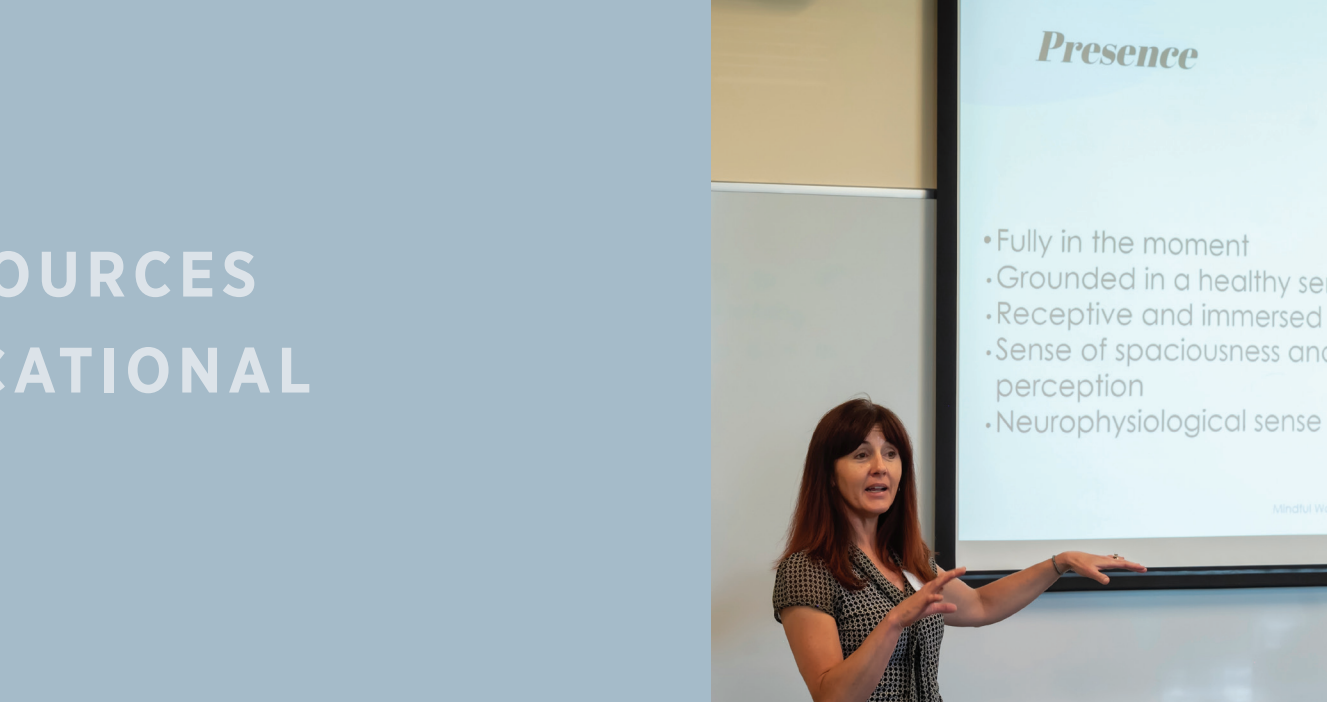
We follow a hand, heart and mind focus, offering students interactive programs to address their college readiness.”





ADVANCED RESOURCES EMPOWER EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

“RIEL now provides a professional platform to foster collaboration among PK-12 leaders in the region in a supportive learning environment.”



Presence

- Fully in the moment
- Grounded in a healthy serenity
- Receptive and immersed in the present
- Sense of spaciousness and open perception
- Neurophysiological sense of calm



RIEL INSTITUTE

Each year, the College of Education graduates hundreds of exceptional teachers and administrators. In 2021, the College launched the Rowan Institute for Educational Leadership (RIEL) to support PK-12 educational leaders on their leadership journey.

“School and district leaders often had to travel a distance to find resources and support. RIEL now provides a professional platform to foster collaboration among PK-12 leaders in the region in a supportive learning environment that offers the opportunity to reflect, assess, discuss and pursue innovative strategies and research-based training nearby from a regional leader in education,” said Dr. David Lindenmuth, RIEL director. “Dean Jean-Marie was very influential in her vision and support for RIEL and educational leaders as a whole.”

School leaders drive the content of RIEL programs. “We pride ourselves on being responsive to the needs they express and try to offer resources that are timely and relevant,” he said.

During its first year, RIEL offered a variety of programs, including the annual Educational Leadership Symposium, which identified key challenges that administrators face, as well as research-based strategies. Through RIEL’s Superintendent Leadership Network and the Principal Study Council, members work

collaboratively with a network of peers and gain insight from various experts in educational leadership. RIEL also held the Women in Education Leadership Conference (WE LEAD) and a Summer Academy for New Administrators and one on Leadership in Challenging Times.

Dr. Melissa Williams, superintendent of the Pine Hill School District, welcomed the opportunity to network and learn during the WE LEAD Conference.

Although the tide has started to shift, the percentage of women in leadership positions in education does not yet match the percentage of women who are teachers, said Williams, who served as a panelist.

“Especially for aspiring female leaders, it is important to have this network and group of people who have gone before them, who can mentor them. I had amazing mentors — male and female — so I believe it’s my responsibility to reach down and pull up another person.”

Williams values connecting with like-minded professionals. “It helps you grow as a leader,” she said. “If you’re not constantly reflecting and having these critical conversations, it’s going to be difficult to grow and to move your organization forward.”

HOLMES SCHOLARS: ACCESSING CONNECTIONS AND RESOURCES TO LEAD

“

*Without this program,
I would not have the
conversations, friends,
experiences and exposure
that I have.”*

Through the Holmes Scholars program of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Sa-Rawla Stoute, D’23, has unlocked a wealth of resources on her path to earn a Ph.D. in Higher Education.

“The number one benefit is being able to see people like you achieving something that you are attempting to do,” said the New York resident. “Leaving my state, leaving my job to head into this program was like nothing else. But I realized this is something I can do because I saw people doing the same thing I am, who look like me, who are similar in age, who are similar in background and who I have so many things in common with.”

Stoute is grateful for the network, mentorship, support and resources the Holmes Scholars program offers, which assists high-achieving students from underrepresented backgrounds as they pursue doctoral degrees in education. “Without this program, I would not have the conversations, friends, experiences and exposure that I have,” she said. Eager to serve and give back to the program, Stoute serves on the national Holmes Scholars board.



SA-RAWLA STOUTE

Rowan welcomed the Holmes Scholars program in 2016 and currently has 10 active scholars. In the last year, the program hosted a research boot camp and a networking session. Scholars also traveled to AACTE’s 2022 Washington Week.

“It allows students who come from various backgrounds to explore things they may never have heard about, never had the opportunity to engage in,” said Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair, assistant professor, Educational Services & Leadership and Holmes Scholars advisor. “Many of them are studying issues of access, success and equity, so it is a great opportunity for them to be involved in a way that they otherwise may not have experienced.”

Wright-Mair explained that the program prepares scholars for faculty positions. “There are very few faculty from underrepresented racial backgrounds.”

Scholars’ experiences and perspectives also influence their students. “Engaging in this program gives them a unique lens to navigate the world,” Wright-Mair said. “I think they are able to better support their students because of the opportunities provided by the program, the mentorship they receive and the different people they interact with.”

> BUILDING INNOVATIVE RESPONSES TO YOUTH TRAUMA



DR. ADAM ALVAREZ

Youth exposed to trauma often do not receive the help they need because researchers miss a key part of the problem. Dr. Adam Alvarez, assistant professor of urban education, hopes to change that.

Researchers tend to base their studies on white, upper-class males, he noted. “Therefore, a lot of the interventions they’re applying are not as effective,” said Alvarez, who studies how race and racism shape the social context of education. Moreover, labels that are applied create more problems for marginalized people.

Sharing his insights on youth trauma in an article published in *Review of Educational Research*, Alvarez was awarded the 2021 Review of Research Award by the American Educational Research Association.

Alvarez and a colleague are taking a culturally responsive approach as they evaluate a community-based trauma-informed program serving predominantly Black North Carolina residents.

Students must feel cared for and safe before they can learn, Alvarez said. He discovered this while teaching elementary school for six years at a residential treatment facility in Texas. “Too many teachers learn later that students bring complex experiences into the classroom,” he said.

Alvarez carried this understanding into his doctoral studies, where he focused on urban education, communities, systems and policies. “We need to think deeply about how we are preparing teachers to serve students who may be grappling with an array of trauma.”

Alvarez hopes his research helps researchers, teachers and policymakers develop innovative new strategies and support systems that do not pin blame on those exposed to trauma, violence and economic hardships.

“I want the future of research around youth trauma to recognize the harm that systems can do to young people and how limiting options can sometimes make two bad choices the only option,” he said.

In addition, he said, schools need to feel safer for students. “People must recognize the problems in our systems and work with communities and youth to foster spaces of joy, resistance and healing,” he said.



“

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DR. ALICIA DRELICK



EMBRACING THE BENEFITS OF NEURODIVERSITY

With a focus on empowering neurodivergent students, faculty and staff, Rowan’s Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion opened the state’s first center for neurodiversity in fall of 2021.

“Neurodiversity is recognizing brain, mind and body differences as natural human variations and, most importantly, as valuable,” said Dr. Amy Accardo, 2021-22 faculty director of the center and associate professor, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education.

“This is important to the College of Education. We’re educating future teachers and need to recognize that a variety of minds and brains benefits society. We also need to recognize that we need to make shifts in our educational systems and practices to value and prioritize our neurodivergent students, community members, faculty, teachers in schools — everyone.”

The center features a variety of activities and educational events, a sensory-friendly student suite and a neurodiversity club.

“We need to make sure preservice teachers have a foundation in Disability Studies, which is part of the Neurodiversity Center,” said Dr. Alicia Drelick, assistant professor, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education and coordinator of the B.A. in Inclusive Education program. “They need to value the lived experience of individuals with disabilities. The knowledge foundation and approach to practice are key to our Inclusive Education program.”

Accardo, Drelick and Dr. Maria-Lapore Stevens, instructor, STEAM Education, collaborated with the Haddon Heights School District to establish Haddon Heights REACH (Realizing Educational Achievement for the Children of Heights) at Rowan University to meet the inclusive needs of the school’s transition-age students from 18 to 21 years old.

“They need to value the lived experience of individuals with disabilities. The knowledge foundation and approach to practice are key to our Inclusive Education program.”



DR. AMY ACCARDO

REACH students visited campus several times, eating in the dining hall and touring James Hall and the Center for Neurodiversity. Preservice teachers created experiences and joined REACH students in physical education activities and a scavenger hunt.

“The idea was engaging our students in a mutually beneficial inclusive experience where they built real connections with students,” Drelick said. “It’s important that everyone feels that inclusive environment. Without that feeling and experience, it’s hard to create it later when you are a lead teacher in a classroom.”



➤ *Haddon Heights REACH students visit Rowan University’s Glassboro campus.’*



PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY ON THE PAGE AND IN THE CLASSROOM

“

I don't believe that the cleft lip, cleft palate community is represented enough," she said. "We don't see it in movies. We don't see it on TV."



Paige Starr, '22 is all about celebrating differences.

She conveys this attitude to her students as a first-year special education teacher at Aura Elementary School in Elk Township. It also propelled the book she wrote, *Brave Blake*, onto classroom shelves.

The Franklinville resident was a senior special education major when she published her book, inspired by her brother, who was born with a cleft palate due to Van der Woude syndrome.

It tells the story of a second grader with cleft palate who triumphs over the jeering of a bully to win the "Best Smile Contest." She wanted to help other families and children with the condition.

"I don't believe that the cleft lip, cleft palate community is represented enough," she said. "We don't see it in movies. We don't see it on TV."

As a child, her brother Blake, now 14, often responded with inventive answers when people

asked about his surgical scars. Once he revealed that he had been attacked on a pirate ship. Another time, he disclosed that his scar resulted from a karate accident.

"Now he's older and can comprehend what it is and why he has it. He's very proud. He tells people, 'I was born with a cleft lip, and this is part of me,'" Starr said.

Since the book was published by Dorrance Publishing, many families have contacted Starr.

"A family in Australia has reached out to me. It has been so nice because all I wanted was to help one family. And then I did. All I wanted was to see my book in one classroom, and it's in so many. It's been rewarding to see it help other families," she said.

Starr's message is simple and applies to many conditions: "It is so cool to be different. I always joke that blending in is out of season."

“

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➤ **CONVERGING TALENTS
ONSTAGE AND IN THE
CLASSROOM**



Steven Calakos, '08, loves the spotlight — whether he's performing onstage or helping students shine in their roles.

His dual talents in theater and education led the Tony Awards and Carnegie Mellon University to award him a 2022 Excellence in Theatre Education Award honorable mention.

Calakos began performing onstage when he was in high school. As a Rowan Elementary Education and Theatre/Child Drama major, he performed throughout the region and beyond. He competed in the NBC reality series *Grease: You're the One That I Want!* and made it to the top 12 men vying for the lead male role. Although he didn't win the competition, he continued to perform in various roles after graduation and taught full-time in Vineland Public Schools for more than 11 years.

"I combined teaching with my love of theater and started the drama club at Petway Elementary School," he said. "I created and enhanced the theater arts programs in whatever school I was teaching in."

Calakos believes theater arts create better human beings. "I think empathy is so crucial to being a well-rounded individual. And I firmly believe that theater teaches us how to be empathetic."

Honing his educational and theater experience, in 2020 Calakos landed the position of director of education at Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples, Florida. He continues to draw daily on all his career experience in this position, overseeing the organization's educational programs, which are geared for students of all ages.

His College of Education foundation was invaluable on this journey, he said.

"It prepared me to become an educator — the combination of courses I took, the professors I had, my clinical practice, my first few years as an elementary school teacher," Calakos said. "It was exactly where I needed to be and they provided what I needed to know to be successful."



"I combined teaching with my love of theater and started the drama club at Petway Elementary School. I created and enhanced the theater arts programs in whatever school I was teaching in."



> WHAT'S AHEAD IN THE COLLEGE OF ED



- Professional Development Opportunities**
- RIEL 2nd Annual Educational Leadership Symposium—February 10, 2023
 - WE LEAD Conference—June 29, 2023

- Milestone Celebrations**
- 25th Anniversary of CED's Education Doctoral Program
 - 100th Anniversary of the College of Education and Rowan University

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