



**Advancing Education Through  
Collaboration, Innovation and Transformation**

**2019-2020  
ANNUAL REPORT**

**Rowan**   
**University**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



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# Message From the Dean

**W**e are living in unprecedented and uncertain times. 2020 brought new tests to higher education with the COVID-19 pandemic. Within a few short weeks, we transitioned fully to online learning. It challenged both professors and students, but they rose to the challenge.

In the midst of this pandemic, we experienced collective outrage at the brutal murder of George Floyd by a law enforcement officer and the systemic inequities that led to such a crime. Black lives matter. Will this traumatic death be the tipping point that will finally lead to justice and equality for all?

Our society must change for the better. As educators, we have the vision and will to deeply engage about access, success and equity. What matters is a willingness to authentically engage about social justice. Let's learn, unlearn and relearn together.

As you will see in this annual report, we persistently strive to address these issues through several channels. The College of Education is dedicated to elevating research, education and service through interdisciplinary collaboration, robust innovation and transformative impact.

First, many facets of our research, education and service involve interdisciplinary collaborations, connecting faculty from many disciplines, K-12 professionals and individuals from other academic sectors.

Secondly, through robust innovation, our faculty strive to help Rowan education students envision what an education enables them to be — not just what it prepares them to do.

Robust innovation drives how we are revising our curriculum to integrate equity, social justice, diversity and inclusion so our students and faculty can respond to demographic shifts and changes in our society. Robust innovation also challenges us to think about our efforts to reach and support diverse populations of students through our online programs, the Learning Resource Center-South, school-embedded professional development and other research initiatives through the Center for Access, Success and Equity.

Finally, we will continue to be a leading force in preparing and supporting reflective practitioners who use education to revolutionize our increasingly diverse and global society.

We are so proud of the Class of 2020, which has endured so much this year. Together, we pledge to reengage our mission to ensure access, success and equity in education and our society.



**In Service,  
Dr. Gaëtane Jean-Marie  
Dean**

# Rowan Innovators: Transforming Education Statewide

As graduates of doctoral, master's and bachelor's degree programs, Rowan University's College of Education alumni are transforming students' lives throughout the state.\*

With the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, schools closed to prevent disease transmission. Teachers all over New Jersey swiftly revamped their lesson plans and developed new strategies to teach remotely. Regardless of the challenges they face in any era, Rowan teachers demonstrate creativity and resilience as they address the needs of each student.

\* Numbers are approximate, estimated from alumni reports.



# New Ph.D. Program: Conquering Obstacles to Access, Success and Equity

**T**he College of Education's second doctoral program, the Ph.D. in Education, graduated students from its first cohort this year — professionals who are uniquely empowered to address today's educational challenges.

"From the first course, we work with Ph.D. students to tackle inequities in education and think about how to bridge research and practice," said Dr. Amy Accardo, director of the Ph.D. in Education program.

Through this research-oriented program, a number of graduating students have served as professors-in-residence at Rowan's Professional Development Schools. "They have routinely worked with educators and school systems to improve the outcome of students in our local schools. As a result, they are equipped to address inequities, change policies and consider access, success and equity issues."

All of the Ph.D. in Education program students are mentored by interdisciplinary faculty, as well as faculty who are leaders in social justice theory and practice.

"We are thrilled to share that this spring we celebrated the graduation of Ph.D. students from the program's first cohort," Accardo said. "We extend our congratulations to Dr. Madji Fall, Dr. Janelle Alexander and Dr. Stephanie Lezotte, three trailblazers who are setting the bar high for scholars to follow."



Left to right, Dr. Madji Fall, Dr. Janelle Alexander and Dr. Stephanie Lezotte earned their doctorates this spring from the College's first Ph.D. program.

# Earning Widespread Acclaim

Rowan's Professional Development Schools (PDS) network captured nationwide attention this year when the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) awarded the College of Education the 2020 Exemplary Professional Development Achievement Award in February during its annual conference. Rowan faculty also served on one of the conference keynote panels. In addition, Dr. Stacey Leftwich, executive director of the Office for Educational Support and Partnerships, was elected to the NAPDS executive board in 2019. Throughout the South Jersey region, the College's influence continues to spread.



Dean Gaëtane Jean-Marie (left) and Dr. Stacey Leftwich accept the 2020 Exemplary Professional Development Achievement Award from the National Association for Professional Development Schools.

Several areas guide PDS work. The schools provide professional development for Rowan clinical interns, as Rowan provides professional development for faculty and staff and conducts research that aligns with each school's focus.

"Those three areas should increase student achievement, which is ultimately the goal of being a PDS," Leftwich said.

This year, Rowan's PDS network expanded to include a total of 11 schools in six districts, adding two new schools — the Sewell School in Mantua and the D'Ippolito School in Vineland.

While all of these schools are Rowan PDSs, each sets its own goals and objectives. "The impact is determined by each PDS team identifying what their goals and objectives are for the year and then using the resources they have available as a PDS," Leftwich said. One resource, for example, is tapping into the wealth of resources offered by the Learning Resource Center-South, such as professional development.

Each school has a steering committee, including P-12 school partners, a Rowan professor-in-residence, a site coordinator and school administrators. They also invite community members to serve on the committee. "That helps members in the community stay abreast of the work that's happening in their district," she said.

# College of Education Research: Impacting the Future of Education

The College of Education collaborates with government, nonprofit and private entities to attain funding for research that will address obstacles to access, success and equity, helping all students achieve a quality education.

Here are several major initiatives:

## **Unified Champion Schools & Special Olympics of New Jersey**

**\$2M awarded; total: \$7.5M in 5 years**

**Investigators: Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson (PI), Dr. Casey Woodfield (co-PI), Dr. Justin Freedman (co-PI)**

**Sponsor: N.J. Department of Education (NJDOE)**

This partnership between the Department of Interdisciplinary & Inclusive Education and Special Olympics of New Jersey's Unified Champion Schools focuses on researching the impact and evaluating the inclusive efforts of the Unified Champion Schools programs across New Jersey.

## **Learning Resource Center-South (LRC-S)**

**\$1.25M per year for 3 years**

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson**

**Sponsor: Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act funding through the NJDOE**

The purpose of the LRC-S is to provide opportunities to improve outcomes for students with identified disabilities. The LRC-S hosts professional learning opportunities for educators, conducts material development activities and family events, lends resources and provides technical assistance to increase inclusive practices in P-12 schools.



## **Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE)**

**\$3.6M plus \$121K sub-award for 3 years**

**Lead Principal Investigator, research lead for Cambodia:**

**Dr. Brent Elder**

**Sponsor: Inclusive Development Partners**

This project evaluates inclusive education programs in Cambodia, Malawi and Nepal for the U.S. Agency for International Development so their education projects around the world can incorporate these suggestions.

## **Rowan Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program**

**\$231K**

**Investigators: Dr. Hannah Kye (PI), Leah Walker,**

**Dr. Corine Meredith Brown**

**Sponsor: U.S. Department of Education**

This program increases access to college education for student parents and access to high-quality early childhood education for their children. Supports for low-income students include tuition assistance at Rowan's Early Childhood Demonstration Center, as well as parenting and academic services to reduce costs and time to graduation.

## **Project MOTIVATE: MOBilizing and Training Inspirational Veterans to Achieve in Teacher Education**

**\$400K in 4 years**

**Investigator: Dr. Corine Meredith Brown (PI)**

**Sponsor: NJDOE and U.S. Department of Defense**

Project MOTIVATE is the first recipient of this grant awarded to a university in the New Jersey/Delaware consortium of Troops to Teachers: Pathways to Certification. MOTIVATE helps military veterans succeed in becoming K-12 teachers in hard-to-fill disciplines. Goals include increasing the number of veterans completing education preparation programs, establishing clinical partnerships within a high-needs district, developing support structures, creating a data collection system and identifying a plan for future sustainability.

Students explore hands-on activities at the Learning Resource Center-South.



Dr. James Coaxum (standing) inspires Ed.D. students, who will become leaders in education. From left, Lauren DeBello, Nathan Frey, Fatmata Kabia, Eunice Adigun, Dumar Burgess, and Nancy Hollenweger.



# Empowering Innovators in Education

**M**ore than two decades ago, the College of Education's Ed.D. in Educational Leadership broke new ground as Rowan's first doctoral program. It continues to transform education in K-12 schools and higher education throughout the state and beyond.

"Our students are in schools, districts and colleges throughout the state in all positions," said Dr. Monica Reid Kerrigan, associate professor, Educational Services and Leadership. "That's notable because we frame this educational leadership program as an opportunity to recognize that leadership happens from anywhere within the organization and is not just a function of positional leadership."

"With leaders in all sectors, we have been focused on one mission and that's to develop social justice advocates who eradicate vestiges of injustices in educational settings," said Dr. James Coaxum, program coordinator and associate professor, Educational Services and Leadership.

He explained that Rowan Ed.D. graduates have taken on educational challenges and turned schools and school districts around. Additionally, they have made higher education institutions more welcoming and engaging environments for students, faculty and staff.

The program empowers educators to effect change through their roles as scholar-practitioners. "We have seen a number of our doctoral candidates impact systematic change through their dissertation work," Coaxum said.

The Ed.D. program addresses "problems in practice" that doctoral students face daily. "We work through collaborative processes to solve complex issues that they encounter as teachers and faculty, principals, superintendents, student affairs practitioners and deans. There's real-time learning as they bring current and relevant work-related challenges to the classroom for academic discussion," he said.

"We've gone through some program changes over the years, but ultimately that fundamental mission of producing educational leaders to go out and make meaningful change within educational settings ... has been the core value that we've held onto as a program," he said.



## Chestnut Hall

Following a family example of service, Daniel Cardona was a third-generation resident director and is a third-generation graduate of the Counseling in Educational Settings program.

# Committing to Service

**D**aniel Cardona, '17, M'20, who graduated from the Counseling in Educational Settings program this year, practically grew up on the Rowan University campus. But his inspiration to serve took root long before he was born.

His grandfather, Jack Collins, '64, M'67, former N.J. General Assembly Speaker, and his mother, Joellen Collins-Cardona, M'92, M'12, both earned master's degrees from the program. Elected Student Government Association (SGA) president as a senior, Cardona followed in the steps of his father, Vice President for University Relations Joe Cardona, who was elected to the position in 1988.

"I think it's in our genes that our family is so giving," said Cardona, who is resident director of Chestnut Hall, as his mother had been. His grandfather also was a resident director. "The service aspect of education has been ingrained in us."

A chain of experiences led him to pursue his master's degree in this discipline. "Connecting with people is what drove my passion in counseling," said the Elmer resident. The spark ignited when he began as a Peer Referral and Orientation Staff (PROS) leader the summer after his freshman year. He majored in communication studies, concentrating on interpersonal communication, and also served as a resident assistant, assistant resident director, and coach and partner with Rowan Unified Sports.

Cardona, who will marry his high school sweetheart in September, enthusiastically anticipates working with K-12 students and plans to become involved with the American School Counselor Association.

Dr. Kara Ieva, associate professor, Counseling in Educational Settings, who also taught Cardona's mother, is thrilled about his potential. "To see him go from SGA president and teaching leadership and then applying to graduate school, it's really exciting to see. And the fact that he is a third-generation alumnus from our program makes it much more exciting," she said.

"The skillset that he has from both a processing and advocating perspective — and the drive that helps him to be able to implement that in service — could be a game changer for students and schools but also in the field of school counseling," Ieva said.



At the fall tie-tying ceremony, former Project IMPACT scholar Amiel Holliday, '19 (center), was recognized as the first to graduate from the program. Other attendees included, row 1: Marcus King (left) and Elijah Robinson; row 2, from left: Ivan Perez, Deric Luciano, Jacob Brown and Alex Saavedra; row 3: Oscar Hu (left) and Odilon Perez; row 4, from left: Craig Jackson, Seth Bermudez and Yoosuf Byrd; row 5: Moral Best, Terence Jones, Nichalos Silva, Jesus Perez and Zachary Jimenez.

# Changing the Face of Education

**A**s Terrence Jones teaches students during his clinical practice at the Freedom Prep Elementary School in his home city of Camden, light is glimmering on the horizon.

In fall 2020, the elementary education major will be one of the first graduates of Project IMPACT (Increasing Male Practitioners and Classroom Teachers), a program designed to recruit men of color as classroom teachers.

While building expertise in the classroom, he's developing speaking skills on a larger platform. He presented his experiences with Project IMPACT at the New Jersey Convening on Diversifying the Teacher Workforce at William Paterson University and A Dream Deferred conference in Los Angeles.

Since the program's inception in 2016, 31 students have participated in the tie-tying ceremony, which welcomes them to Project IMPACT. Twelve have received blazers for passing the PRAXIS Core test. (Nine more may receive jackets in the coming months.) Project IMPACT currently has 17 members.

"The transition from high school to college is difficult for any student, but some of our young men of color are the first to go to college in their families. Oftentimes the experience is vastly different than anyone has ever explained to them, so we support our young men," said Nadeen Herring, teacher education recruiter and retention specialist.

A key component is the Men of Color Network, which consists of superintendents, principals and teachers who mentor Project IMPACT students to help them succeed. "We're trying to work it so that our Project IMPACT students can do their clinical experiences and ultimately their clinical practice yearlong experience in their mentor's school, district or classroom," said Dr. Stacey Leftwich, executive director of the Office of Educator Support and Partnerships.

Jones looks forward to influencing his students. "I hope to help them and be a mentor, resource and advocate," he said. "When I was growing up, I had a lot of teachers who were there for me and I still talk to a lot of them now."

Wendy Sooy Pfeffer, '50, displays her 50th published book, released the year she celebrated her 90th birthday.



# Celebrating a Lifetime in Education

Last year, Wendy Sooy Pfeffer received a package that marked a major milestone.

It contained the *Arctic Fox's Journey*, a children's book from Harper Collins' "Let's Read and Find Out Science" series — Pfeffer's 50th published book, released the same year she celebrated her 90th birthday.

After 30 years as a children's book author and many awards, it's still a thrill. "Each time you hold a brand-new book, it's all shiny and brand new. It's a nice feeling each time," she said.

The 1950 graduate from Glassboro State Teachers College began her career as a first-grade teacher in Pitman. She credited Professor Ora Lee Everts, principal of the campus Demonstration School, for inspiring her to focus on what children need to learn.

As she taught, she began to consider writing for children. "I started thinking, 'Here I am reading all these books. I know these children. I know what they like. I know what they don't like,'" she said.

After she married her husband, Tom, she expanded her role as a teacher by founding the Pennington Presbyterian Nursery School, which she directed for many years. After she retired, she turned to full-time writing. Most of her books focus on science topics.

The Pennington resident continues to teach through her books and by offering workshops in schools. Several years ago, a seventh-grade teacher called to thank her for her work. "He said, 'My students had a lot of problems learning about metamorphosis, so I read them *From Tadpole to Frog*. From that moment on, they had no trouble with metamorphosis,'" she recalled.

Pfeffer recently donated her collection of writing archives to the University Archives & Special Collections at Rowan's Campbell Library, which contains manuscripts, editors' notes and illustrations. She will come to campus in October 2020 to discuss her contributions with professors and students.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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