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Director's Column:
An Embarrassment of Students

By Dr. Timothy Martin

The academic year 2018-19 represents a high-water mark at Rutgers-Camden. Total campus enrollment, fueled by an historic first-year class, has reached 7350, up from about 6500 in the Fall of 2013. Among these students are a record 1075 freshmen and women. Numbers like this present our campus with both challenges and opportunities.

The Honors College is a beneficiary of this increasing interest in undergraduate and graduate programs here. We have 156 new first-year students, many of them attracted by a generous, innovative scholarship program designed not only to increase access to New Jersey’s best public education but also to attract high-achieving students. And each year, we expand our numbers with a few dozen well-qualified transfers and high-achieving “rising sophomores.” With 525 members, the Honors College has reached capacity.

A larger Honors College means recruiting more seminar instructors, finding more destinations for Impact Day, and ordering more pizza slices, not to speak of finding enough time in the work week to get academic advice to our students and keep them on track for graduation. But a larger Rutgers-Camden opens many possibilities. In particular, it creates critical mass for new programs and initiatives, including a recent five-year Bachelor-plus-Master's degree in Teaching and a Master of Science in Forensic Science. It has also supported a new, 100,000-square-foot Nursing and Science Building, which connects Rutgers-Camden with an important "eds and meds" corridor in the city and expands our campus footprint several blocks to the south.

As our Honors College community has grown, we’ve created a new distinction among our students. Starting this past Spring, we’ve begun to identify students who have completed the Honors College program with special dedication. These are students with a final GPA of at least 3.75, which is the equivalent of Magna cum Laude in Arts and Sciences; a perfect record of Honors Engagement; and an academic minor, a second major, or a senior thesis on their transcript. This past May, twenty-nine Honors College students were certified as graduating "with Distinction."

The lines are longer at Starbucks, but there's a lot of excitement at Rutgers-Camden.
How I Spent My Summer Vacation

Profiling Honors College students and their exceptional summer experiences

Miranda Stafford (Political Science ’19) spent her summer interning for Congressman Dwight Evans of Pennsylvania’s 2nd District, which includes much of the city of Philadelphia as well as some parts of its western suburbs. Miranda’s summer working on Capitol Hill was supported by an Eagleton Washington Internship Program Award, of which Miranda was one of only seven total recipients across all Rutgers campuses.

Miranda’s central responsibilities were to answer and log constituent calls and emails, complete legislative research on a variety of issues, attend briefings and compile memos which included policy analysis, and compile a weekly legislative report detailing all votes and actions made on the House floor. She found the most meaningful part of her Capitol Hill experience to be the relationships she forged with her coworkers. "Everyone was kind and welcoming, and they all seemed genuinely interested in my success moving forward," Miranda said. "My internship supervisor was even a RUC alumna from Pennsauken, so we definitely bonded over that!"

Miranda’s overall assessment of her internship experience is that it was a powerful stepping stone into the world of politics. After her graduation this Fall, she intends to pursue a career in politics just over the bridge in Philadelphia.

Miranda was also profiled recently in a Rutgers-Camden Magazine feature about young women entering politics. Read about Miranda’s first foray into the political arena, her run for town committee in her native Waterford Township, in “Politics is a Space For You.”
Sean Alexander (Biology ’20) completed a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) at Tarleton State University in Texas. The REU is a prestigious grant-funded program sponsored by the National Science Foundation, wherein undergraduate students from across the country undergo a grueling application process to be chosen for a research site and work closely under the mentorship of faculty and professional researchers. Sean, an aspiring veterinarian, was selected to work with Dr. Jesse Meik, a professor of herpetology and evolutionary biology.

Sean and his nine fellow undergraduate researchers each had the opportunity to design their own experiment. Sean chose to study the environmental factors surrounding the Blanchard’s cricket frog’s habitat and how these factors correlate to population density. Determining the Blanchard’s cricket frog’s preferred environmental conditions will ultimately help with conservation efforts, as they are classified as threatened or endangered in several of their native states throughout the Midwest.

Two days after completing his REU commitment in Texas, Sean flew to the Florida Keys to participate in the Rutgers-Camden Biology department’s annual Marine Field Ecology trip. The intensive 10-day experiential learning course, led by Dr. Alejandro Vagelli, helps students gain hands-on experience in marine biology and ecology research. Dr. Vagelli’s students designed and conducted experiments and field observations of seagrass beds, mangrove forests, coral reefs, and other complex marine habitats.

With Sean’s busy summer at an end, he has turned his sights back to Rutgers-Camden and the legacy he hopes to leave for his fellow Biology students when he graduates next Fall. Along with Honors College students Jesse Cecero, Anthony Doran, and Brittanylynn Watson (all Biology ’21), Sean is working to develop RUC’s first-ever Pre-Veterinary & Animal Science Club, a student organization dedicated to helping students on a Pre-Veterinary track gain access to resources, opportunities, and professional connections. Sean hopes the club will provide greater visibility for the Pre-Veterinary population at Camden and ultimately compel the university to offer a greater selection of Animal Science electives.
Four additional Honors College students accompanied Sean and Dr. Vagelli on the Marine Field Ecology trip this August:

- **J.T. Reichard**, Biology ‘20 (pictured above, right)
- **Andrew Robinson**, Biology ‘21 (pictured above, left)
- **Amrinder Singh**, Biology ‘20 (pictured left)
- **Jesse Kirk** (Accounting ’21) pictured right
Ashly Estevez-Perez (Urban Studies ’20) served as a Government Affairs Intern for Atlantic City Electric in Trenton, NJ this summer. Ashly’s primary role was to analyze upcoming legislation for its relevance to Atlantic City Electric’s interests and issue reports about her findings to company employees and local legislators alike. She communicated with legislators about pending bills, set meetings between Atlantic City Electric and government officials, and even crafted briefs for meetings with some of New Jersey’s biggest politicians, including Senate President Steve Sweeney. One of the most valuable parts of her internship, according to Ashly, was meeting with political heavy hitters and observing their language and professional behaviors. “Speaking to them gave me insight into what it’s actually like working in political spaces and how to communicate in high-pressure situations,” Ashly said.

Although Ashly has no designs on becoming an energy lobbyist herself, she values the understanding she gained about both the energy industry and New Jersey state government operations, as well as the strong contacts she made. When asked what she enjoyed most about her internship experience, Ashly answered, “It helped me learn to navigate the workplace, communicate effectively, and hold myself accountable.” Ashly’s summer experience also helped solidify her own future plans: “seeing a different side of politics and observing how everything works firsthand made me realize that running for office someday is definitely a priority for me,” she said. Proving there is no rest for the ambitious student, Ashly wrapped up her Government Affairs internship in August...only to be recruited for a Congressional Intern position in United States Congressman Donald Norcross' Camden office starting in September! Ashly will be responsible for communicating with Spanish-speaking constituents in New Jersey's 1st Congressional district.
• Nursing class of 2019 students Abigail Monteleone, Shontiana Butcher, Alyssa Martin, Brittany Jonson, and Annie LeBeau (picted in order above, left) completed the summer nursing extemship program at Cooper University Hospital.

• Ryma Choudhry (Biology ’20, pictured above, right) toured the historical sites and cities of Turkey as part of the Turken Youth Bridges program. Turken Youth Bridges participants engage in a cultural exchange program wherein American Muslim students interact with the people and cultures of Turkey to develop a greater understanding of their shared Islamic heritage.

• Delaney Bray (Theater & Management ’20, pictured below, left) interned in Production at the prestigious Jacob’s Pillow Summer Dance Festival in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. Production interns rotate their responsibilities with each new performance throughout the festival season; Delaney completed rotations in sound design, lighting design, set design, and stage management.

• Jesse Cecero (Biology ’21, pictured below, right) participated in the University of Pennsylvania’s Summer VETS (Veterinary Exploration Through Science) program. Students in the program shadow veterinarians in departments such as oncology and dentistry to gain a greater understanding of the variety of different specializations within the field of veterinary medicine.
- Biology juniors Salsabill Subah, Ryma Choudhry, and Trinh Nguyen (pictured below) participated in Cooper PULSE, a six-week academic program designed to expose students interested in health professions to clinical, research, and service opportunities in urban healthcare.

- Bielka Gonzalez (Accounting ’20, pictured below) participated in PricewaterhouseCoopers’ “PwC START” internship for the second summer in a row. This second phase of the internship program, called “START Masters,” included an all-expenses paid trip to Dallas, Texas for PwC’s Give Back program. Once in Texas, Bielka and her fellow interns presented their final presentations to PwC partners and staff and then facilitated financial literacy lessons to local area high school students.

- Ramneet Sawhney (Nursing ’19, pictured above) spent the summer as a Nurse Extern in the Cardiology unit at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Ramneet turned his externship experience into a part-time position as a Nursing Technician while he completes his studies.
HCAA Updates

The Honors College Alumni Association welcomed its new executive board this June after elections were held in May. We were particularly excited to see three Class of 2018 graduates (Kristina Isshak, Brittany Eachus, and Maggie Montalto) join the team! All board members will serve a two-year term.

- Josh Hanson ’08, President (pictured far left)
- Margie Brining ’15, Vice President (pictured second from right)
- Ydian Velez ’16, Events Chair (pictured second from left)
- Brittany Striewski ’17, Student Engagement (pictured bottom row left)
  - Kristina Isshak ’18, Treasurer (pictured next page)
  - Brittany Eachus ’18, Secretary (pictured next page)
  - Maggie Montalto ’18, Social Media Chair (pictured next page)

We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to the outgoing executive board for their dedicated service to the Honors College staff and student body.

- Megan York-Parker ’02 (pictured far right)
- Becky Holloway ’02 (pictured third from right)
  - Meghan Youngblood ’15 (not pictured)
- Daniel Swartley-McArdle ’13 (pictured third from left)
- Christine Abacan ’17 (pictured bottom row right)

Follow the HCAA on Facebook for updates and upcoming events, including general meetings, alumni service opportunities, and a family-friendly Spring celebration to be announced!
Giving to the Honors College

Contributions to our **Scholarship Fund** help the Honors College provide financial support to our students as they pursue unique study opportunities, learn abroad, or otherwise supplement their education with meaningful experiences.

Donations to our **Gift Fund** help with programmatic expenses incurred by the Honors College and help fund our signature events (such as IMPACT Day) and field trips!

Keep in Touch with the HC

- **Email**: hcollege@camden.rutgers.edu
- **Facebook**: www.facebook.com/RUCHonorsCollege
- **Twitter**: twitter.com/RUCHonors
- **Instagram**: instagram.com/ruchonors