

RUTGERS NEWARK

The Graduate School



Tackling Debt: Developing Strategies for a Major Challenge

Winter 2013

Tackling Debt is an initiative being launched by The Graduate School at Rutgers-Newark to identify strategies to address one of the pressing challenges facing students today, the rising burden of debt many are carrying as they advance their educational careers.

The Office of the Dean at The Graduate School-Newark is concerned about the significance of the student-loan debt issue. Tackling Debt is our attempt to frame a strategy for how we might identify approaches that could be developed to address the issue. The project will have several phases.

The first phase will engage key stakeholders who are willing to participate in a **dialogue** around student debt issues. The second phase will consist of the development of **financial literacy tools** aimed at helping students plan for expenses, and better manage some of the costs of obtaining a higher education degree. Third, will be an **analysis of resources** available on the campus of Rutgers Newark, to help students better manage their student debt issues.

Throughout the process, The Graduate School will engage in a **resource development** campaign to identify funds that will enable the school to provide greater levels of assistance to its graduate students.

Program Highlight: Earth & Environmental Sciences

The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences offers a unique geoscience education and research opportunities. The graduate program focuses on applied environmental education and research that serves students wishing to pursue careers in the environmental consulting sector.

For our “Program Highlights” interview, Director Lee Slater talks to us about the department’s work with graduate students and its innovative goals for the upcoming academic year.

GSN: What are some of the exciting projects currently conducted by your graduate students?

Slater: Our department includes a rich array of research areas, including atmospheric chemistry, soil geochemistry, near surface geophysics, ocean biogeochemistry and structural geology.

Currently, our graduate students are working on several projects that have received national and international attention. For example, students of the Rutgers Newark Geophysical Society (a student chapter of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists) organize an annual workshop in hydrogeophysics at the NSF funded Christina River Critical Zone Observatory in Delaware. Last year, they were invited to NSF headquarters to give a presentation on their work to program directors and division directors within the NSF Division of Earth Sciences.

We are also heavily vested in making an international impact. Graduate students in geophysics provide their expertise to the archaeological field camp in Italy to train undergraduates in geophysical techniques.

Students in atmospheric chemistry and marine biogeochemistry have served as research assistants on oceanographic cruises to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.

This October, a graduate student will participate in a research trip to Indonesia to investigate whether geophysical methods can help evaluate

“Our goal is to contribute to the strength and vitality of the U.S. science and engineering enterprise while establishing educational outreach programs within the Newark Public Schools system.”

Director Lee Slater

the carbon stocks in tropical peat lands of Indonesia.

And, this summer, two graduate students in hydrogeology participated in an international research and teaching workshop in Norway focused on multi-scale assessment of vadose zone hydrology.

GSN: What are your goals for 2013-2014?

Slater: We are working to improve the writing skills of our graduate students. Those pursuing their M.S. and Ph.D. degrees are required to publish papers and we want to ensure that our students are competitive in their submissions. We are also encouraging our students to apply for prestigious fellowships.

GSN: What kind of work is the center undertaking to help Newark residents this year?

Slater: Alec Gates, our former chair, had a major NSF award (OEDG) that focused on engaging graduate students to participate in improving geoscience education in the Newark Public Schools. Alec currently directs a program that is focused on encouraging minority high school students to pursue an undergraduate degree in geoscience. Our graduate students are playing a major active role in mentoring these young scholars in research experiences.

We also organize the annual Dinosaur Day at the Newark Museum that is typically visited by +10,000 people from the local community.

Research Focus Areas
Atmospheric Chemistry
Environmental Geochemistry
Phytoplankton Physiology and Biogeochemistry
Near-Surface Geophysics
Fractured Rock Research

Dean's Letter: Tackling Student Debt

This past summer there was quite a bit in the news about the issue of student debt. Political debates on whether to allow an increase of [interest rates](#) on student debt gave rise to a number of stories of the impact of the debt that many students were incurring to obtain their educations.

Much of the data that surfaced in these stories pointed to the decisions to delay important [life activities](#) due to the amount of debt that students were carrying. Some people are not buying homes, others are choosing to not start businesses, some are beginning their careers in jobs that are only appealing because they cover enough to enable people to pay their [student loans](#), and some people are choosing to defer or even avoid pursuing a graduate education, because of the student debt they are carrying.

After conversations with colleagues here at Rutgers and at other institutions about the impact that debt was having on students, I decided that beginning a [dialogue](#) on this critical issue would be a priority for The Graduate School.

The first page of this newsletter presents an introduction to The Graduate School's [Tackling Debt](#)



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Acting Dean Kyle Farmbry

[Project](#), an initiative we are currently launching.

With a reported \$1.1 trillion in outstanding student loans across the nation, the issue of student debt is something that students, faculty, administrators, and the public at large across the nation should be concerned about.

We hope that over the next few months, our dialogue and resultant

activity will have an impact for students in our community.

I invite you to join in the dialogue.

**Kyle Farmbry, J.D., Ph.D.
Acting Dean, Graduate School-Newark**

Student Highlight: Ashley Schappell

NSF Dissertation Fellow

Ashley Schappell is a Ph.D. candidate in the Psychology Department at Rutgers University-Newark. Ashley's dissertation focuses on the impact of victimization on mental and behavioral health outcomes in jail inmates.

GSN: How did you prepare for the NSF application?

Schappell: My advisor and I talked about this fellowship well in advance of

applying. After many discussions and a lot of guidance, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted my dissertation to focus on.

Once the actual project was in place, I met with the [Research Office](#) to inform them that I would be applying for the fellowship. They offered some tips based on their experience with successful grants and fellowships.

I looked at the funder's website many times, but those sites can often be confusing. The Research Office was able to answer many of the remaining questions and concerns I had.

GSN: What advice would you give to students who are applying for fellowships?

Schappell: I would advise other students applying for fellowships to start early and don't give up! Large, national fellowships usually require the coordination of many departments, so don't wait until the last minute. In addition to being the scientist coming up with the idea and writing it in a clear, concise manner, you also have to learn how to write a budget and who needs to sign the appropriate documents. It can be confusing and tiresome, but be persistent!

Assistant Dean Claire Bautista Retirement

On October 7th, the Rutgers-Newark community honored retiring Assistant Dean Claire G. Bautista, who served with distinction at the Graduate School-Newark Dean's Office for 29 years.

Amongst the many colleagues, friends, and family members in attendance, Dean Bautista received multitudes of best wishes and thanks for her many years of service to the students, faculty, and graduate programs. In many heartfelt speeches, colleagues expressed their sincere appreciation for her utmost dedication to serving the needs of the graduate student population, her in-depth knowledge of policies and procedures, and her strong work ethic.

"I have been amazed every May, October and January at how Claire manages to get so many dissertations approved for submission," said Alan R. Sadovnik, Director of the Ph.D. program in Urban Systems.



Claire Bautista
Assistant Dean

"In my experience, there are 'can do' people and 'can't do people.' Claire has always been a 'can do' person and has helped my graduate students to overcome challenges and march at graduation."

Lewis Porter
Professor of Music

"She works with our students sometimes every day to assist them in getting their forms and dissertations approved and uploaded."

"Claire has been a staple of the GS-N for the last 29 years," said Sandy Reyes, Program Coordinator in the

Office of the Dean. "We wish her a happy and healthy retirement."

Dean Bautista officially retires on December 31st and plans to enjoy her retirement with family in warm and sunny Arizona.

She will be missed by all.

Funding Highlight: Fellowships and Grants

The Graduate School wants to encourage all graduate students to apply for financial support for their research and innovative scholarship. Please visit gsn.newark.rutgers.edu for a list of fellowship and grant opportunities.

Linda Hall Library Winter (January 3, 2014 for this cycle)	Humanities, Interdisciplinary, Sciences	Linda Hall Library support resident fellowships up to \$3,500 per month in support of full-time research projects.
Marquette University Winter (January 3, 2014 for this cycle)	Humanities, Education, Social Sciences, Sciences	The award aims to help increase the presence of currently underrepresented racial and cultural groups in the U.S. professoriate by supporting doctoral candidates as they complete the final academic requirement, the dissertation. Two awards each year, up to \$35,000.
Science, Technology, and Society by NSF February of Each Year	Sciences and Social Sciences	Various grants/fellowships to 40 awardees, including research grants, scholar awards and postdoctoral fellows, conferences and workshops, doctoral dissertation.