

GRADUATE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



SPRING & SUMMER 2016

P.02 Dean's Message

P.03 Research Week

P.06 Portrait of a Mentor

P.08 Seed Grants

P.10 Global Urban
Futures Conference

P.12 Keynote Speaker:
Minister Albert Fritz

P.13 Student Profile

P.15 Hooding Ceremony

P.16 Announcements



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Students, Alumni, Colleagues and Friends,

We at the Graduate School-Newark are proud to look back on another academic year in which we continue to grow in our commitment to Rutgers University-Newark, to the City of Newark, and to the global community.

In line with the university's strategic plan, a major part of our mission at GSN is to further strengthen the already vibrant diversity for which our campus is renowned. This year we have expanded in a myriad of ways, which we would like to share with you.

In April, we held our first annual Research Week, which brought together students, alumni, and experts to share their work and to discuss how to increase racial and gender diversity at the highest levels of science research. One day was dedicated to celebrating 32 years of the Minority Biomedical Research Support program, which has offered funding and mentorship to more than 150 students as they pursued graduate degrees in science research. Another day was designated to building a stronger pathway between Newark Public Schools and GSN as we opened the doors to more than 60 high school students for an introduction to STEM careers.

This past winter we also hosted a roundtable discussion with educators and administrators from local schools and colleges. At issue was the question of how to increase opportunities and support for Newark's young people to enter into studies with research doctorates.

Throughout the year we were pleased to cosponsor several events including the Ron Rice Lecture Series, in which Ryan Haygood, of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, discussed critical issues in criminal justice and public policy; and the Global Urban Futures Conference which featured Albert Fritz, Minister of Social Development of South Africa's Western Cape province.

We in the US face many of the same social issues as other nations around the world, such as poverty, and racial and economic inequality. That's why we are committed to connecting our graduate students with international opportunities that yield solutions for communities here and abroad. This past year we sent students to Tanzania and Namibia to work on development issues. And we have seven student researchers at work in South Africa for the summer growing a relationship with Community Chest, SA.

Finally, we are excited to distribute another \$2 million dollars of funding through the Chancellor's Seed Grant Program. These new awards went to 34 crosscutting, innovative proposals, in the first round of Seed Grants appointed last year. Many of the initial projects were showcased at our Seed Grant Open House this past January.

It's been a very productive year, and it's my pleasure to tell you that there is much more to come. We have some of the brightest minds in the country studying and working in GSN's departments and they are always pushing us forward.

Kyle Farmbry, J.D., Ph.D.
Dean of Graduate School

RESEARCH WEEK 2016

The Graduate School-Newark launched its first annual Research Week this past April, and the event was a resounding success. In previous years, GSN hosted Research Day, but this year the event was expanded to four days. Throughout the week, students, alumni, faculty, and international experts from several disciplines came together to share their innovative work, findings, and ongoing questions.

The theme for the week was Gender and Diversity, and several sessions and discussions were dedicated to increasing racial and gender diversity in research. It was a fitting theme, as this inaugural Research Week coincided with a special celebration of the Minority Biomedical Research Support Program (MBRS) – a program that aims to broaden science research by supporting students from underrepresented groups as they work towards advanced degrees.

Poster Presentation Day

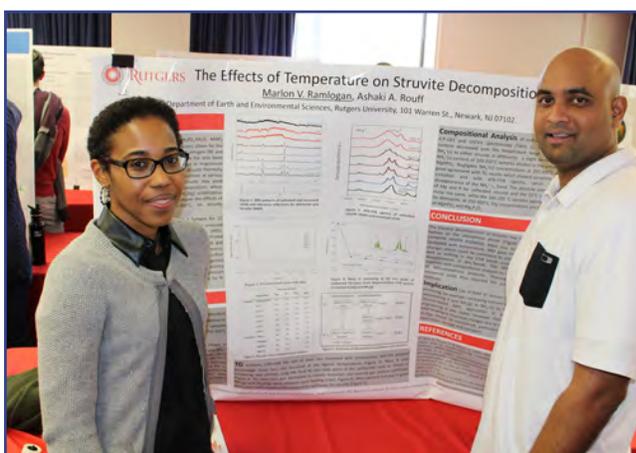
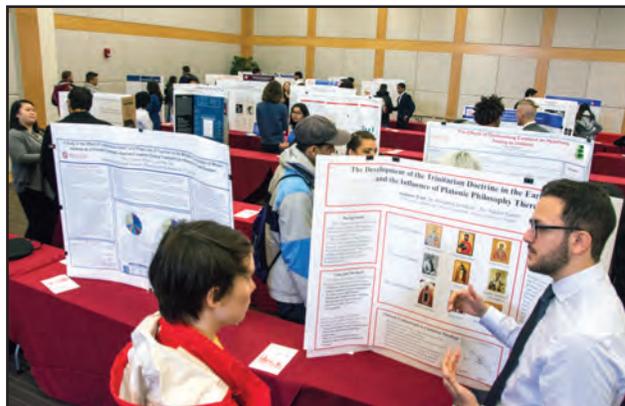
From new treatments for Huntington's disease, to the impact of social media on self-esteem, the poster exhibition was an eye-opening event. On Monday, April 11, more than 100 students, faculty, and guests came to share and learn about the important research underway at RU-N.

Graduate and undergraduate students from across the arts and sciences filled two conference rooms in the Paul Robeson Campus Center. They showcased their months of intense study and discovery on creatively designed displays.

Criminal Justice Ph.D. candidate Henri Buccine-Schraeder said the event was important to her because it let her meet other students whose work intersected with hers. "Through this event knowledge gets expanded a little further," she said.

Students who came to browse said they were inspired by the work of their peers. "It's a good way to be exposed to different sciences. I would be interested in presenting my research one day," said Rodrigo Gomez, a junior studying economics and finance.

Several students said that presenting their work taught them public speaking skills and how to make their research understandable for a wide audience.



RESEARCH WEEK



Newark Public School STEM Day

It's not every day that Newark public high school students get to witness one of the world's most advanced MRI systems in action, or examine a dog's kidney cells under a microscope. But on Tuesday, April 12, more than sixty grade-nine students from Barringer STEAM Academy came to RU-N to do just that. For many, it was their first glimpse into science research and college life.

The public school visit was an important part of Research Week, as it addressed the lack of opportunity for Newark's young people, and a lack of diversity in the upper levels of science research. The goal was to expose students to a greater variety of options for their future and to trigger their interest in the sciences.

Their day started with a panel of current RU-N students who shared the many reasons they chose to study here. The visiting students cheered when they were told about programs that offer free tuition and free housing.

Afterwards, the teenagers visited labs in different departments including chemistry, neuroscience, psychology, biology, geology, and the brain-imaging center.



"The best part was having the hands-on experience... and getting new thoughts about my future."

Throughout the morning, the students' curiosity and excitement shone through in their questions and their eagerness to volunteer in demonstrations.

"The best part was having the hands on experience, and seeing the campus, and seeing the students, and seeing how things work, and getting new thoughts about my future," said student Josias Paredes.

Their day wrapped up with lunch and a reflection on their visit. Ashley Orellana, said the experience was "awesome" because she enjoyed learning about how cells move. "I would love to come here," she said, "Today made me more excited about university."

Gender Diversity Day

On the final day of Research Week, Dr. Simone Buitendijk, Vice-Rector of Leiden University in the Netherlands and Chair of the League of European Research Universities Gender Equality Group, gave the keynote address.

Buitendijk shared her findings on the issue of gender diversity. She said academic research suffers the effects of implicit bias, just like every other institution, and that a failure to recognize it stalls progress toward equality. Faculty selection, promotion, teacher evaluations, peer review, and the content of research are all influenced by gender bias.

Buitendijk admitted that implicit bias is difficult to see and overcome, but she called for the scientific community to acknowledge that it's not always sufficiently objective.

Buitendijk then advocated for expanding women's leadership roles in universities and research



Dr. Shana Russell, Dr. Carolyn Suzuki, Dr. Natasha Gutierrez, Dr. Jessica Ware



Dr. Simone Buitendijk

institutions. She suggested that institutions should adopt guidelines for making research methodology gender-sensitive.

A panel of Rutgers faculty and alumni scientists also convened to discuss the challenges women, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals face in academia and scientific fields. Although the panel was part of Gender Day, Dr. Natasha Gutierrez, who received her Ph.D. in biology from RU-N and now works as a high school science educator in the Bronx, pointed out that a conversation about diversity shouldn't focus on only one identity marker, or the dialogue becomes exclusive and less productive.

Panelists emphasized how important it is for young scientists to receive mentorship. Gutierrez raised questions of structural inequality; while she's returned to the Bronx to help more people from her underserved community become scientists, she pointed out that even a \$25 field trip fee can be prohibitively expensive for her students.

MBRS Program Celebration Day

On the day dedicated to the Minority Biomedical Research Support Program (MBRS), the constant refrain was: "This program changes lives." Dozens of current and past students came to share their research, reflect on the positive career impacts of the program, and to honor the director who made it all possible.

The day kicked off with a series of presentations spotlighting the groundbreaking science research that has come out of the program. More than fifty people came to learn about the work of current students like Melanie Rodriguez who is figuring out new ways to use fluorine compounds to improve medicines.

Next, over a well-attended lunch, guest speaker Dr. Clifton A. Poodry, a former director at the NIH, shared his thoughts on the invaluable nature of the MBRS program. Since its inception in 1984, RU-N's MBRS program has provided funding and mentorship to more than 150 science students from underrepresented groups.



MBRS Alumni

In the afternoon, nine MBRS alumni discussed how they made it to the top of their fields and the barriers they faced as people of color. Current RU-N students asked about imposter syndrome, the value of conducting research abroad, and about the passion and focus it takes to succeed, among other questions. The panelists offered helpful, practical advice drawn from their personal experiences.

The evening turned festive as more than a hundred people gathered for a celebratory dinner, where there was much to commemorate. Not only is the program marking its 32nd year, but the NIH has also renewed its funding. Starting July 1, 2016, RU-N's MBRS program will receive a \$3 million grant to cover the next five years.

Throughout the day, the biggest thanks went to Dr. Barry Komisaruk, founder and director of MBRS at RU-N. During the dinner, Komisaruk was honored for the dozens of lives he's changed. Students shared their heartfelt gratitude for his influence in a tribute video. And Dr. Kyle Farmbry, Dean of the Graduate School – Newark, presented Komisaruk with a plaque for his commitment to MBRS and his more than 50 years of service in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

PORTRAIT OF A MENTOR

Dr. Kinna Perry: Helping Students Succeed



It's not every person who devotes their life to student success. Dr. Kinna Perry, Associate Dean of the Graduate School - Newark, is one of those rare people. Whether in the office, or on her own time, Perry is committed to increasing opportunities for young people, especially those from underrepresented groups.

"It's important to me because young people in urban centers are often forgotten when people talk about how to make America great," she says. "They're not getting the same educational opportunities." In her daily work, Perry is driven by the question: "What if all young people of color, specifically those from underrepresented groups, had the same opportunities?"

University students from underrepresented groups often face several challenges related to finances, personal support, and under-preparation at the high school level.

These obstacles combine to reduce the chances that students of color will attain a college degree. Across the country, 63 percent of white students complete their four-year degrees within six years, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Meanwhile, only 53 percent of Hispanics complete their degrees in the same time span, and just 41 percent of black students.

Perry addresses these issues in her work with students every day. Sometimes that can mean offering a bursary, other times it can mean sitting down and creating a plan to guide them towards their aspirations. "And sometimes it's difficult conversations about their behavior," she says. "Because you see all this potential that they can't see in themselves."



"It's important to me because young people in urban centers are often forgotten when people talk about how to make America great"

Perry joined RU-N in 2007 as Associate Dean for Student Affairs at the School of Nursing. The following year she became Director of the Honors College, a position she held until moving to the Graduate School-Newark in 2015. At GSN, Perry is responsible for student recruitment, retention, and outreach. Over the years, she has mentored many students and connected many others with faculty members and alumni. She says these relationships are always "extremely beneficial" for the students.



“Having someone to help you navigate the system is huge and that can make the difference between a student staying or not.” A mentor can show them the path to a successful career and give them access to their personal networks.

Perry says underrepresented students are often missing the practical information and connections that make university success more likely.

This past spring, Perry coordinated a session on graduate school preparation, 'College Knowledge 2.0' aimed at giving undergraduates the information and support they need to apply to graduate school and to increase the chances that they'll succeed once there.

“I think the biggest disadvantage for a number of students especially here at Rutgers-Newark is that they don't start thinking about their next steps soon enough,” says Perry. She says she often speaks with students who don't know about all the careers available to them with their specific degrees. Other students don't know about available graduate fellowships. Many aren't aware of just how early they need to start applying for funding, or studying for the GRE. “They don't have anybody to tell them about the plan-ahead part,” she says. “The time to start preparing is in your first year, not your third year.”

Outside of the office, on her own time, Perry continues her mission to support young people by offering courses like College Survival Skills, Becoming

a Professional, and Preparing for Graduate School.

Perry grew up in Louisiana but finished high school in New Jersey. When she didn't have something she needed for school, her extended family would step in to help. They gave her the encouragement she needed when she was doubting her own abilities. “I think the biggest obstacle has always been about people's perception of you,” she says. “Based on your background, they make an assumption about what it is that you're capable of.”

It was also that same supportive network that opened her eyes to social justice issues, and inspired her to effect positive change. “I have activists in my family and while they may not be the most educated people, it's still a put up or shut up kind of thing. They were like, 'Stop talking about it, go do something about it.'”

This perspective influenced her decision to veer her career away from fashion merchandising, which she studied as an undergraduate. Instead Perry earned a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration at Seton Hall University. “If I want to level the playing field, I need to be able to do my part,” she explains.

Perry says she's fortunate that she gets to follow her passion at work. “Every semester kids are graduating and I get to have a role in that,” she says. “It's just so incredibly fulfilling.”



SEED GRANT UPDATES



Queer Newark Oral History Project

James Credle was one among 14 children raised in Mesic, North Carolina. He knew he was gay early on, although his church preached it was an abomination. After serving as a field medic in the Vietnam War, Credle came to Newark to attend Rutgers University. He chose to settle in Newark to help further HIV awareness in the 1980s, when the virus was taking an outsized toll here. For decades, Credle worked tirelessly on behalf of local veterans and Newark's LGBTQ community.

Credle's is one among many poignant stories now online at the Queer Newark Oral History Project (queer.newark.rutgers.edu). Started in 2011, the project is a community-university partnership which brings faculty, students, staff, and community members together around the task of researching, collecting, archiving, and making available to the public the history of Newark's queer community.

For over five years, Queer Newark has worked closely with organizations in Newark to offer public events that commemorate the history and continued vibrancy of the LGBTQ community in the city.

Thanks, in large part, to receiving a Chancellor's Seed Grant, the project is now moving into a concerted phase of collecting, archiving, processing, and disseminating oral histories of Newark's LGBTQ residents. This project is a model partnership between university and community, and has already made an enormous difference to both.

Want to get involved?

The Queer Newark Oral History Project is looking for volunteers. Email: queernk@newark.rutgers.edu



Newark LandCare

There are almost 3,000 vacant and abandoned lots in Newark. Vacant lots are not just eyesores, they're linked to poor health and higher crime. Researchers studying blight in Philadelphia have found that greening vacant lots can raise nearby property values, decrease gun crime, and reduce stress among area residents. Dr. Bernadette Hohl aims to reap similar results through Newark LandCare.

As a public health researcher, Hohl divides her time between the School of Criminal Justice and the School of Public Health. In fall 2015, she brought a group from Rutgers and Newark-based community organizations to Philadelphia to learn about the city's greening efforts. This spring she initiated a demonstration involving five Newark lots.

Sprucing up vacant lots involves hauling away debris, planting grass and trees, and building small fences around the space, which discourages people from backing trucks in and dumping waste. (Vacant lots can fill up with construction scrap because there's no cost to illicit littering, whereas proper dumping includes fees.) Newark LandCare is collaborating with the Greater Newark Conservancy, and YouthBuild Newark, organizations with expertise in greening and youth engagement. This city is also an active partner.

Greening of the five demo lots is slated for completion by the end of June. Over the summer, Hohl will conduct citywide focus groups and will be interviewing residents to gather community perspective on existing vacant lots and what people would like to see the space used for in the future. Hohl hopes if the results of her study are positive, the City of Newark will move forward with a strategic plan for greening vacant and abandoned property.

"This is not meant to be a long-term solution," Hohl said. It's an interim remedy to be included in a long-term vision: Greened lots benefit communities. They have the potential to attract newcomers (both commercial and residential), and they afford residents a cleaner, safer environment.



Plugging the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Black students get suspended three times more often than whites, according to the Department of Education. And there's a strong correlation between time out of school and rates of arrest. The Law School's Newark Educational Access and Advocacy Project (NEAAP) is finding new ways to keep Newark students in school and out of prison.

NEAAP has three legs: community outreach to help parents and students understand their rights; facilitating legal representation for students facing suspension or expulsion; and starting a policy-reform coalition aimed at legal remedies to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Rutgers Law School fellow Ariana Fink, directs NEAAP. After finishing law school at University of Michigan, Fink clerked for a family court judge in Flint, Michigan, and witnessed a grim, systemic truth: the same children coming to court for abuse and neglect cases were also coming in for juvenile justice (criminal) cases.

"Often times they were minorities, lower socioeconomic status, children with disabilities," Fink said. "I became concerned with that particular group of vulnerable youth."

So far, NEAAP has successfully challenged a school that wanted to permanently move a 6-year-old with ADHD into a special ed. class, which could have changed the entire trajectory of his schooling. The project also put pressure on the district to quickly find a new school for a 15-year-old girl with severe emotional issues who had problems at her old one, rather than consign her to homeschooling for a long stretch (a frequent occurrence in such cases).

Fink partners with local non-profits and conducts listening sessions with Newark parents. She's put together a know-your-rights presentation, and is looking into legal means to bring transparency to school discipline and keep kids from being pushed out.



African-American Brain Health Initiative

When Ashlee Shaw was finishing her doctorate in psycholinguistics at the University of Connecticut, she never dreamed there was a post-doctoral position out there that might entail leading a dance class, but today you can find her at twice-weekly Zumba Fitness sessions at Bethany Senior Center.

The classes are part of a 20-week study looking at how a community-based exercise class affects brain health in African-Americans aged 55 and older. Studies show African-Americans have greater rates of Alzheimer's and other brain-health problems. These problems are correlated to both environmental factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, and social support; as well as lifestyle factors, like diet, exercise, smoking, and amount of sleep.

The initiative started in 2006 and featured a number of outreach programs in Newark like heart- and brain-healthy soul food cooking, caregiver support days, and information sessions on healthy habits that can help stave off Alzheimer's. With help from Seed Grant funding, Shaw is embarking on a comprehensive study on how lifestyle, attitudes, and habits affect rates of Alzheimer's and brain disease in the African-American community. Previous shorter studies (6 and 16 weeks) showed both physical improvement and increased learning faculties.

African-Americans are a relatively understudied segment of the population when it comes to brain health, Shaw said. Shaw, who is African-American, attributed this to the research bias that "we're hesitant to show up to research studies and retention is not particularly great."

Her Zumba classes are community-centric: They take place in churches, senior centers, and public housing, and retention rates have been very good, Shaw said. Although the studies are of limited duration, Shaw has Zumba students who've been with her since she started teaching classes in 2014.

Seeking Graduate Interns: The African-American Brain Health Initiative welcomes graduate students for projects related to public health, social work, psychology and/or neuroscience. <http://brainhealth.rutgers.edu>



GLOBAL URBAN FUTURES

Researchers Address Global Urban Inequality Crisis

In April, the Global Urban Futures: Inclusive Cities in Theory and Practice conference at RU-N brought together academics, researchers, and community engagement practitioners to discuss education, urban systems, and the need to address increasing inequality in cities throughout the world.

The conference was organized by the new co-directors of the Global Urban Studies Ph.D. program, Dr. Mara Sidney and Dr. Jamie Lew. Their shared vision is to highlight the complexities and challenges facing cities around the world and provide opportunities to address them.

Keynote speakers included RU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor; Provincial Minister of Social Development for Western Cape, South Africa, Albert Fritz; and Columbia sociologist Dr. Saskia Sassen. The event was made possible in part by funding from the Chancellor's Seed Grant program and developed by the Rutgers Centers of

Global Avancement and International Affairs (GAIA) and with the support of the GSN.

Seeking critical understanding of urban citizens instead of blindly instituting top-down solutions was a theme that echoed through morning and afternoon panels. The day kicked off with a somewhat simpler inquiry: What exactly is a city?

Cities are "complex but in-complete" systems, according to Sassen's keynote. Counter-intuitively, this incompleteness is actually an advantage: Cities and neighborhoods often have more longevity than more powerful and enclosed formal systems: Like banks and government institutions. Cities are also where the powerless make themselves known and where many progressive policies have been born.

"Built reality is telling you a partial story," she said, explaining that wealth concentration and real estate investment have obscured the harsh

reality of some 14 million American households that lost their homes over the last decade.

Chancellor Nancy Cantor spoke on the importance of cross-institutional partnerships for building inclusive cities. She used the example of RU-N as an anchor institution in Newark: By partnering with local organizations, RU-N can lead in creating an environment of interdependence to combat urban inequality.

Political science and Africana studies associate professor Dr. Lester Spence from Johns Hopkins University, garnered applause when he asked faculty in the audience what the odds would have been 15 years ago that if a student emailed them at midnight they would have felt obligated to respond. He contrasted that to the present day, where the expectation of constant availability is becoming more normal.

"That's called an increase in productivity," Spence said. "So why are your wages stagnant?"

Spence tied increasing economic inequality to a decline in government programs after the New Deal Era. He also cited the ill effects of city budgets that rely heavily on fees and fines collected by police, since this revenue is disproportionately "levied on black bodies."

Spence credited the Black Lives Matter movement with issuing a powerful challenge to police violence waged on black people, but he also called for more attention to the slow death of "economic violence" wrought on those stuck in segregated and resource-sapped communities that are the continuing legacy of federal redlining and institutional racism.

Even in relatively progressive cities, it's not always easy to tell the difference between a program that is truly progressive as opposed to placating: associate professor of political science Dr. Celina Su from Brooklyn College shared her research on participatory budgeting in New York City.

Participatory budgeting intends to give residents a more active role in their government by allowing people to choose what kind of projects are undertaken in their neighborhoods. However, imperfect bureaucracy often effects what projects are ultimately selected. At worst, participatory budgeting risks becoming merely a "trendy technocratic tool," Su said.

Speaking on education, associate professor, Dana Burde from NYU surveyed students in Pakistan, a county with a high rate of children un-enrolled in school. Excepting only socioeconomically elite students, almost everyone surveyed said they wanted good, free education that was accessible to all. For many Pakistani children, education fees are prohibitively high.

Conference presenters showcased ideas that, like the cities they study, were complex and incomplete – leaving the doorway open to cultivate deeper understanding of the international urban future.



Dr. Saskia Sassen



Dr. Lester Spence

Keynote Speaker: Minister Albert Fritz



Traveling from South Africa, the Minister for Social Development of the Western Cape Province Albert Fritz spoke about his government's approach to engaging with South African youth.

"The notion of a 'lost generation' does not feature in our outlook on young people," he said during his keynote speech. "The fundamental starting point of our policy for young people is to see them as partners rather than members of a lost generation of potential deviants."

Fritz's trip to RU-N was facilitated as part of GSN's ongoing partnership-building efforts in Africa. In Newark, Fritz met with Dean Kyle Farmbry and others to discuss RU-N partnering in the Skills Transfer Programme to train young entrepreneurs living in the Western Cape.

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GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Minister Fritz profile cont.



photo: Gareth Smit

High levels of youth unemployment are an ongoing problem in South Africa. Although apartheid ended in 1994, the country still grapples with the resilience of its segregated and exclusionary legacy.

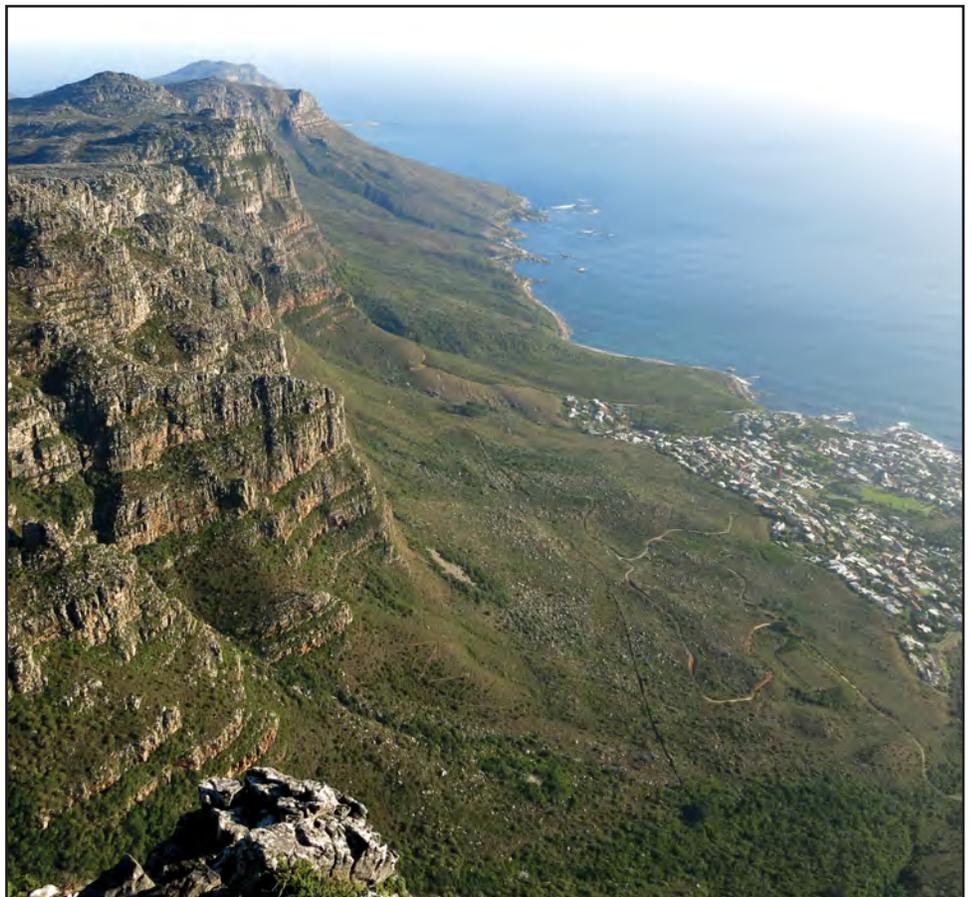
"I often think that we have underestimated how difficult it would be to undo and reverse the damage brought on by apartheid. As a result of these laws and others we have a legacy of entire communities – millions of people – trapped in historically racialized urban and rural ghettos," Fritz said.

Fritz is intimately versed in the critical potential of empowered youth: He was part of the "'76 Generation," the group of high school students who protested their segregated school system and inspired an outgrowth of boycotts and protests that eventually led to apartheid's downfall.



"I often think that we have underestimated how difficult it would be to undo and reverse the damage brought on by apartheid."

"One of our ultimate goals is the realization of a non-racial, equal, free and fair South Africa," Fritz said. "It is not possible to ignore the overwhelming inequality along racial lines which our government in the Western Cape especially is grappling with."



STUDENT PROFILE

Yvan Yenda was 11 when the child soldiers arrived. He'd seen them on TV in the preceding weeks. Not much older than him, they were fighting to overthrow President Mobutu Sese Seko's rapacious dictatorship of Zaire (known today as the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Yenda often played soccer outside, and sometimes the young soldiers took part. They laid their guns aside, reclaiming a few moments of childhood before returning to camp.

Yenda and his older brother told their parents they wanted to join the movement. "You don't know what you want," Yenda's father said. He forbade them to go, but the boys had friends who left with the army, and did not return.

"I don't know where some of them are right now," he said. "so, that kind of bad feeling you have when you think about the past — oh lord, what happened."

Yenda, who just finished his first year as a doctoral candidate in the Division of Global Affairs, grew up in Kolwezi, a small city with established copper and cobalt mining operations and one that escaped the worst of some of the violent conflicts that beset the country over the last two decades.

Still, Yenda says as a child under Mobutu's rule nothing ever seemed to change. The dictator embezzled billions of funds intended for



development. Although he opposes child soldiers on principle ("It's child abuse), Yenda cites their 1997 victory over Mobutu as a critical moment of personal inspiration —that people so young who had so little could change the trajectory of a huge country (the DRC is more than triple the size of Texas).

Stability remained elusive in the DRC during his teen years. He said his own future felt unpredictable, at the mercy of mercurial political conditions, so he didn't think much about it. This external turbulence was tempered by a stable home life and a positive outlook gleaned from both his parents and church. "I can't rely on politics, can't rely on these things, so something inside of me needs to develop, which is hope and determination," Yenda said. "I must also say, it wasn't easy."

Yenda attended a top-notch private high school before matriculating at the University of Lubumbashi,

where he completed his undergrad and received a post-grad degree (licentiate) in international relations, researching the potential for conflict in the Central African region related to Chinese and American oil interests.

In 2010 he moved to South Africa and embarked on a second post-grad certificate (honors) in development studies and then a master's in social development. In the interim, he also founded non-profit Lueur D'espoir (Glimmer of Hope) with his mother, who has been a nurse for 37 years. The organization works in women's empowerment, agriculture and children's education near his hometown. It's still active, and Yenda also partners with a non-profit organization based in Germany that works on similar issues.

His education started early; before he turned 18, Yenda witnessed one coup d'etat, then four years later a presidential assassination; he saw his country change its flag three times and change its constitution several more.

He arrived at NJIT in 2013 as a visiting scholar to collaborate on a research project and complete a paper about the social and health impacts of the mining industry on workers and communities, for which he did fieldwork in Kakanda, DRC.

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YVAN YENDA PROFILE cont.

His research interest is international development and conflict resolution in the African Great Lakes region (DRC, Uganda, Burundi, South Sudan, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Central African Republic).

“I always use the Congo as a case-study,” Yenda said, “but international development and conflict is an open field. Similar realities happen all over.”

After the 2013 visit, Yenda returned to Newark the following year as a visiting scholar in the Division of Global Affairs. He enrolled as a Ph.D. student the following year. Yenda says the Division of Global Affairs is a great platform for introducing students to many different opportunities. Part of his study has been figuring out which ones are best suited to his career aims.

Yenda says his academic career has been guided by the objective to work where he might have the biggest impact. His goal is to pursue academic work, community engagement, and policy change at the national and international level.

“I’m not waiting until I finish,” he said. “I have no control over tomorrow, better to see where to make impact right now.”

“I always use the Congo as a case-study... but international development and conflict is an open field. Similar realities happen all over.”



In March, Dean Kyle Farmbry, Associate Dean Kinna Perry and graduate students Rebecca Freier and Simone Martin traveled to East Africa to explore partnership opportunities for Graduate School students in Kiberia, Strathmore University in Kenya, Zanzibar University and University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania.



In June, a delegation of graduate students from Starthmore University had an opportunity to visit Rutgers Newark. Through these interactions, we look forward to building new opportunites for GSN students, faculty and alumni to engage with our partners institutions around the world.

2016 HOODING CEREMONY



Keynote Speaker: Lorenzo Davids



Class of 2016: Department of Biological Sciences.

Long journeys of hard work, dedication, and personal growth culminated on May 12th as 89 doctoral students and 17 MFA students were awarded their terminal degrees. Family, friends, partners and peers filled the Essex Room in Paul Robeson Campus Center to watch the hooding of the new graduates.

Not only did the day mark the students' achievements, it also positioned them to look towards the future and ask themselves: what will I do with the knowledge and training I've gained?

Keynote Speaker Lorenzo Davids called upon the class of 2016 to throw themselves on to the global stage and join the conversation for a better world. Davids is CEO of Community Chest of the Western Cape, a development organization that distributes funding to non-profit organizations in South Africa. He has decades of experience in trying to solve the stark inequities in that country left behind by apartheid systems.

"It begins when you recognize your place in history and respond to your position," he said. "Your name is inscribed on the brilliant opportunities of the future, which are now deeply disguised as insurmountable problems."

Many of the graduates were optimistic about their potential to make a difference in the world, like Soumya Das, who spent the last five and a half years working towards her Ph.D. in biology. "I have very high hopes because I already have a job," she said. Das recently landed a postdoctoral position at Stanford working in

coronary vessel development. "I think my future is pretty bright, so I'm super excited."

For other students, the graduation ceremony was a particularly poignant event. "I'm more overwhelmed than I thought I would have been," said Kevin Davis, who worked for 10 years to complete a Ph.D. in the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

"I was a young guy when I started. I'm really relieved it's over. But it's also exciting; it's an accomplishment that I needed to finish and I'm looking forward now to starting a new chapter in my life."

The Master of Fine Arts graduates were split between poets and fiction writers. All of them have completed creative manuscripts, and many hope to turn those into their first books. Poet Laura Villa Real is one of them. "I'm very excited, I've had the best publishing year ever. This program has been great for me," she said.

The hooding ceremony was capped with a well-attended formal reception, which celebrated the day with food, drink, and a live jazz band.

While the graduates started the day as students, they finished as RU-N alumni. And now they've embarked on their next journey to making a positive contribution to the world.

RESOURCES

1 Scholarships & Fellowships

The Graduate School is fortunate to award several scholarships each year such as: Inge R. Gambe Graduate Scholarship, GSN Dean's Scholarships, Hazel Vera Dean's Scholarship, and University Merit Graduate Scholarships. Fellowships include the Ralph Bunche Fellowship, Homeland Security Fellowship, Norman Samuels Fellowship and the Trustee's Fellowship. For more info, contact the GSN office.

2 Fulbright Fellowships

Fullbright Fellowship applications are now open. For more info, please contact Dr. Kinna Perry, Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

3 Professional Development Funds

Awarded to TAs and GAs. Rutgers provides generous, though highly competitive, funding for graduate students with assistance for research related travel, equipment, professional memberships and more. Application information and deadlines will be emailed by the Graduate School.



On March 29th, Dean Farmbry met with several Graduate School scholarship recipients.



The GSN staff & administration wish all our students and faculty a productive and fun summer!

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@RutgersGSN

175 UNIVERSITY AVE
CONKLIN HALL
STE 241, NEWARK, NJ
07102

(973) 353-5834

gsn.newark.rutgers.edu