

ROWAN UNIVERSITY • COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

# ACCESS SUCCESS & EQUITY

TURNING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Kimberly Nizolek, M'15, and Daniel Tarantula, M'15, graduate students in the Educational Specialist in School Psychology program, collaborate as representatives on the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP) Executive Board to organize and promote the Graduate and Undergraduate Students Organization (GUSTO) of NJASP.



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## Message From the Dean

The College of Education has much to celebrate this year, as you'll see in this annual report. What a busy, accomplished year it has been.

We kicked off the academic year with a successful accreditation review by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As we look to the future, this year's report highlights our ongoing work to deepen and extend support and resources to our students through the College of Education Student Advisory Council (COESAC) and the new Praxis Lab.

The College also launched the Center for Access, Success and Equity (CASE) in September, which will serve as a regional research and technical assistance center. Dr. Shelley Zion, a nationally recognized leader in community and school engagement, will join us in July, working with faculty, Ph.D. students and community members to develop initiatives that will address local and regional issues in public education with national implications.

We are also honored to share a story of generosity from alumna and local educational leader Riletta Cream. Her commitment to the City of Camden and its residents aligns with the College's efforts to reimagine urban education through a number of proposed programs and initiatives.

This year's report also highlights our outreach efforts to a valued P-12 partner, Bridgeton Public Schools, one of the college's three Professional Development Schools (PDSs). Through this collaboration, we can provide district-wide support in teacher leadership through grant funding. We also can connect their early-grades learners with the Rowan University CAVE at the South Jersey Technology Park, a virtual classroom where our Department of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education faculty are conducting research.

The College is proud of its deep roots in preparing high-quality educators for our community. As we move forward in the coming years, our regional and national prominence will grow as we take on some of the most vexing problems in public education. But to accomplish this, we need your support. Please join us as we live out our commitment to access, success and equity.

In Service,  
Dr. Monika Williams Shealey  
Dean




# ACCESS



Dean Monika Shealey (left) and Riletta Cream share a lifelong commitment to exceptional education.  
Left: As Camden High School principal, Cream championed students inside and outside the classroom.

## Alumna's Scholarship Fuels Future Educators

**R**iletta Cream, '48, recently made an investment that will produce a healthy return for South Jersey teachers.

The former Camden resident committed \$40,000 for an endowed scholarship fund for Camden students majoring in education in the College of Education.

"I graduated from Rowan when it was Glassboro State Teachers College," she said. Cream, who is impressed by the University's growth, recalls commuting to campus by train in the 1940s. "I had such a wonderful, wonderful experience there learning to be a teacher that I hoped that the same kind of teaching was going on at the College today. It's important that we have great teachers, not only in the state but in this country."

After graduation, she went on to teach in three elementary schools, served as supervisor for second and third grades and then was principal of Camden High School for 15 years. Later, she was elected as a Camden County freeholder for five consecutive three-year terms.

"I want students to understand that there are opportunities out there for them if they put their minds to it, listen to their parents and teachers, follow instructions and want to do something with their lives," said Cream, who now lives in Berlin.

Cream hopes the scholarships will help train future teachers from Camden so they can give back to their home community.

She also wants other Rowan alumni to take notice. "I want other educators to say, 'Mrs. Cream did it. Why don't I give something to Rowan University, the school that gave so much to me?'" she said.

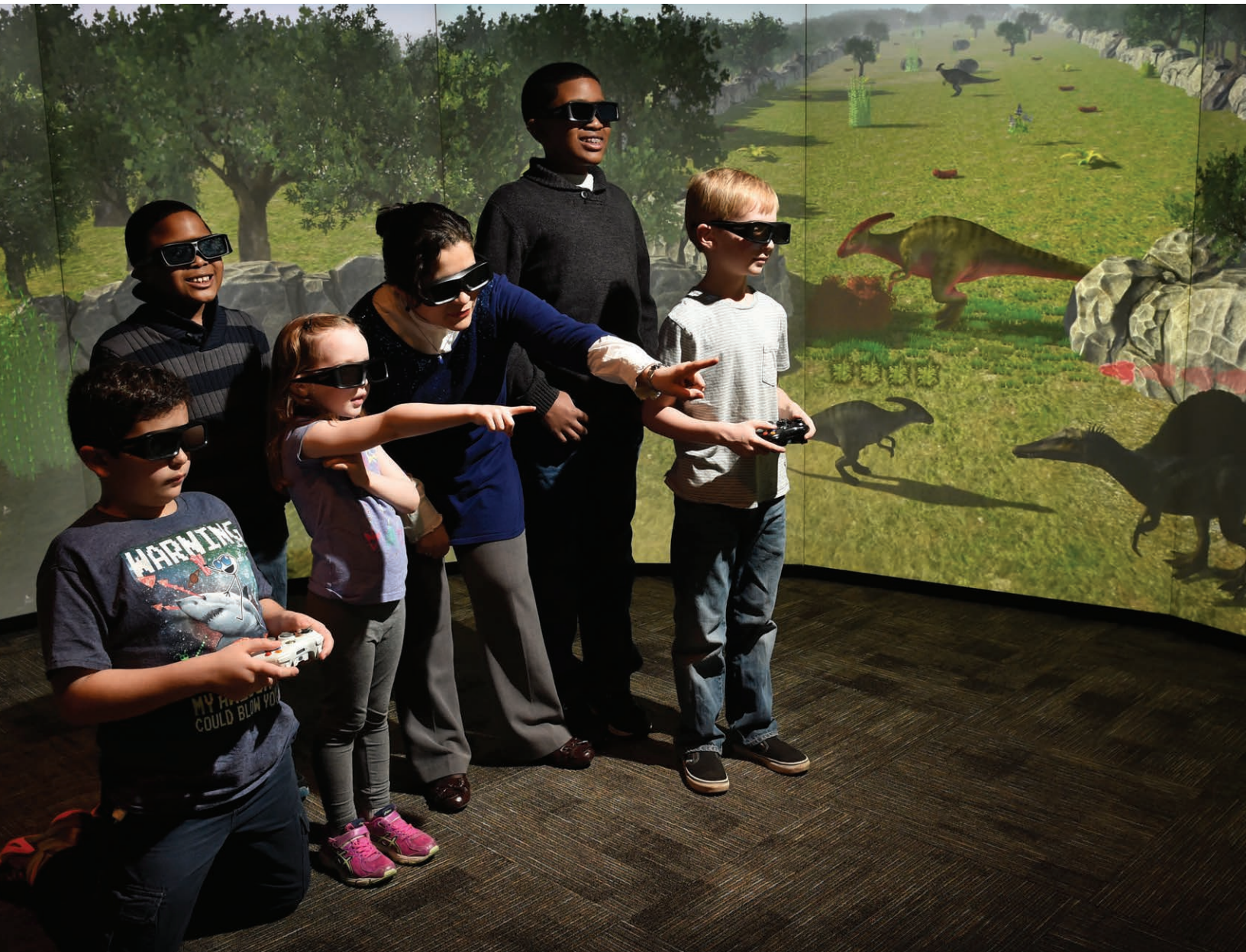


Cream taught in three elementary schools, served as a supervisor for second and third grades and then was Camden High School principal for 15 years.



For 15 years, Cream served the residents of Camden County as a freeholder.

# ACCESS



Three-dimensional dinosaurs in Rowan University's CAVE invite students to learn more about science and literacy through a program developed by Dr. Zeynep Isik-Ercan (center).

## Innovations Inspire Understanding

This spring, first-graders from Bridgeton Public Schools came nose-to-nose with massive 3D dinosaurs. Little did they know that their pre-historic journey was part of a research project designed to inspire them far into the future.

Through an integrated science and literacy unit, the pint-sized paleontologists engaged with a 3D technology software module on dinosaurs and 3D technology at Rowan University's CAVE at the South Jersey Technology Park in Mantua Township. They also participated in computer coding, digital storytelling and dinosaur construction while they read and wrote about them in the classroom.

"In this one-month project, we planned to increase their motivation and attitudes toward reading and learning, as well as their engagement with science," said Dr. Zeynep Isik-Ercan, associate professor, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education.

Isik-Ercan is collaborating with Dr. Corine Meredith Brown, coordinator of the Elementary Education program, and Nicole Kammer, Early Childhood Education instructor, along with George Lecakes, director of the Rowan Virtual Reality Laboratory, and his students.

"I think it's powerful to bring constructivist approaches in early childhood, science and technology together," she said. "The social justice call is to engage all young children in best practices in the field, such as interdisciplinary projects, and empower children to be agents of their learning through play, feel competent in being a scientist and maybe choose those careers in the future."



Virtual reality technology motivates students to learn.

# SUCCESS

COESAC members spearhead initiatives to help education majors succeed. Front, from left, Cody Fauver and Ellen Bonitatibus. Back, from left, Amanda Leonard, Michael Bornstein, Deanna Kollar and Ashley DeBella-McNemer. (Not pictured: Olivia Langerhans, Gabrielle Ciarlante, Meghan Pattinson, Sarah Barner and Gina Bibbo)





## Student Advisory Council Builds Bridges to the Future

**E**llen Bonitatibus, '16, an elementary education and liberal studies major from Williamstown, is driven to become the best educator she can be – and help her College of Education peers do the same.

One way she's making this happen is through the College of Education Student Advisory Council (COESAC), which launched during the fall semester. Bringing together representatives of student organizations and programs, COESAC provides support, professional development, networking opportunities and a voice for education majors.

"We want to make the process of becoming an educator seamless and make everyone as successful as possible," said Bonitatibus, who is also president of Rowan's chapter of the New Jersey Student Education Association.

"I believe COESAC will have a tremendous impact on the College in different ways," said Rihab Saadeddine, assistant dean. "The most important role is to bring all of these organizations together so we can consolidate resources." For example, members of various student groups will join together for College projects, rather than duplicating their efforts by hosting separate events.

Already, COESAC surveyed education majors, gathering feedback that will be used to develop future programming for students.

As a member of COESAC, Olivia Langerhans, '16, an elementary education and literacy studies major from Moorestown, looks forward to creating a unique system that will help education majors navigate the complexities ahead. "I hope this advisory council is accessible to all and can provide answers to even the most simple questions or concerns," she said.



The Eta Psi Chapter of the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society for Education is just one of the student organizations represented in COESAC.

# SUCCESS



## Program Develops Support for New Teachers

From left, Dr. Brianne Morettini, assistant professor, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education; Dr. Katie McGinn Luet, assistant professor, Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Education; Vernon-Dotson; and Merriweather are collaborating to develop an ongoing support system for new teachers.

**F**rom the moment fledgling teachers crack open their classroom doors, they may be surprised by a rush of unexpected challenges.

More experienced colleagues can offer guidance, but there is seldom a systematic process to support new teachers for the long haul.

To help seasoned educators and their junior counterparts, the College received a \$200,000 grant for a new training program, "Building Teacher Leadership Capacity to Support Beginning Teachers." The grant was designed to develop a mentorship program that meets the needs of beginning teachers and is built on the continuous learning of the mentor.

For this program, the College has partnered with Bridgeton Public Schools to help administrators and faculty design a comprehensive support system for teacher candidates and teachers within their first three years.

"It's about preparing everyone together instead of having separate programs that are not intertwined," said Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson, associate dean for educator preparation.

Twenty-five Bridgeton teachers have committed to become teacher mentors and teacher leaders during the next year. The program will focus on building capacity, asset mapping and defining the needs of beginning teachers. In addition, community action boards will help identify resources that will encourage newcomers to remain within that community.

Dr. Celeste Merriweather, the Bridgeton district's director of grants and funded programs, welcomes the many benefits the program will provide.

"When we have great mentors, they produce great mentees," she said. "That is a direct benefit to the district because, as a result, we have even more skilled and knowledgeable teachers.

"We hope that this grant will help mentor teachers turn on that light and ignite a fire in our mentees that will spark them to be great teachers," she continued.

"It also will be a benefit to mentors because they will learn new information, and we expect their skills to grow as well," she said.

## Promoting Success From the Start

The College's five new faculty members are priming future teachers for success long before they reach the classroom:

- Dr. Elif Balin, assistant professor in the Counseling in Educational Settings program, Educational Services and Leadership Department.
- Dr. Yu-Chun Kuo, assistant professor of instructional technology, Department of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math Education.
- Dr. Catherine Michener, assistant professor in the Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Education Department with a focus on bilingualism and language minority students in K-12 schools.



New faculty members joined the College of Education in September. From left, Dr. Kenzo Sung, Dr. Catherine Michener, Dr. Yu-Chun Kuo, Dr. Elif Balin and Maryl Randel.

- Maryl Randel, instructor, Departments of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education and Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Education.
- Dr. Kenzo Sung, assistant professor in the Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Education Department.

# EQUITY

## Praxis Lab Helps Students Prepare for Success

For the last 10 years, Diane Doorman, instructor in the Department of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education, has voluntarily coached students for the Praxis Core, the standardized assessment education majors must pass for entrance to the professional level of the program, and the Praxis II Elementary Multiple Subjects test required for clinical practice.

Even more students may be able to strengthen their test-taking muscles as the College



In the new Praxis Lab, Diane Doorman equips greater numbers of students for Praxis success.

pilots its new Praxis Lab, which is available for any education major for Praxis Core and for elementary education majors for the Praxis II Elementary Multiple Subjects test.

Doorman determines students' strengths and weaknesses, identifying areas where they need to focus so she can develop a specialized training regimen tailored to each student's needs.

"The lab supplies content, tutoring and test-taking strategies," Doorman said. "We can put students through a practice test on the computer. We have web links, videos and

even smartphone applications that can help prepare students for the content areas that are on the Praxis Core and Praxis II Elementary Multiple Subjects tests."

Administrators hope this resource prompts students to prepare early for the Praxis.

"Some students wait until the last minute to take it, and if they don't pass it, they're not able to move forward," said Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson, associate dean for educator preparation.

"We would love all of them to come in before they take the test."

During the last decade of coaching, Doorman also has been an enthusiastic cheerleader for students. "If the students listen and they're willing to commit themselves, there's a good chance we can help them," she said.

## Center Translates Research Into Practice

For more than 90 years, the College of Education has been at the forefront in preparing exceptional educators. Breaking new ground last fall, the College launched the Center for Access, Success and Equity (CASE), the mechanism that will transform its vision for the future into reality.

CASE will take a three-pronged approach to translating research into practice and dissolving obstacles to access, success and equity in P-20 education. “The three areas are research, professional services and policy engagement,” said Dr. Kara Ieva, interim executive director and associate professor in the Counseling in Educational Settings program.

Addressing the research component, CASE will provide and engage in grants and research aimed at eliminating barriers and encouraging retention. Students in the College’s new Ph.D. in Education program also will participate in that research and partner with school districts and colleges within the University.

Offering professional services, CASE will evaluate grants and provide broad-scale professional development for P-12 districts. “We are committing to spending all year with them, going through the planning and implementation phases and using metrics to measure the effects of professional development that we provide,” Ieva said.

This work will flow into policy engagement. The College has responded to critical issues facing public and teacher education, such as availability of grant funding to support innovation, requirements for certification of teacher candidates and college affordability. CASE’s policy engagement is informed by the research and practice efforts of faculty, graduate students and community constituents. CASE will be a resource to policymakers in the state and region in addressing persistent issues that impact access, success and equity.

Shortly after launch, CASE hosted a series of community roundtables and collected input from higher education and K-12 administrators, staff, teachers and students; families; and business, nonprofit and religious leaders. These responses will be used to develop a strategic plan.

CASE’s impact will echo far beyond the campus where the College began nearly a century ago. “While we are starting regionally, working within South Jersey, the hope is that we become a national resource center,” Ieva said.



Dr. Shelley Zion, the new CASE executive director, will join the College of Education on July 1. She is executive director of the Center for Advancing Practice, Education and Research, School of Education and Human Development, University of Colorado, Denver.

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- 49 graduate and undergraduate programs in education
- 59 journal articles published by faculty in 2014-2015
- \$937,829 in grant funding received in 2014-2015 (\$887,829 external and \$50,000 internal)
- 551 educators certified in 2015
- 30,645 alumni
- 413 school partners in 2015
- 7 professional development schools in New Jersey



### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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