

# LEAP Pre College JOURNAL

An initiative of the Rutgers Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership



STUDENTS ATTENDING RUTGERS COURSES: Thomas Flores, Joshua Figueroa, Steven Phillips, Maria Ramos, Giovanna Rico

## LEAP students get a head start on college

Twenty-six students at LEAP Academy are studying in college classrooms this semester thanks to special dual-credit partnerships with Rutgers University and Rowan University. Beginning in September, qualified LEAP students in grades 11-12 enrolled in undergraduate courses at Rutgers and Rowan and are earning both high school and college credits.

"It's been a true blessing. It's helped me in ways I could not imagine," said Joshua Figueroa, a LEAP senior enrolled in two courses at Rutgers. "The classes are opening up my mind and I've learned a new work ethic and how competitive college can be."

Josh and five other LEAP seniors are enrolled in two Urban Studies courses at Rutgers-Camden this semester. The two courses, Approaches to Urban Studies and Power and Decision-making in Urban Communities, meet twice a week and offer insight into the issues and concerns of urban cities like Camden.

"I'm more aware of what's going on where we live—how a city works and develops," added Josh, who is applying to universities like Rutgers, Villanova, and Maryland for criminal justice.

See **HEAD START ON COLLEGE** on page 9

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# GREETINGS



From LEAP Founder, Board of Trustees Chairperson, and Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago



We want to congratulate all of our students, parents, faculty and staff for their great work they do every day at the LEAP Academy and through the Rutgers Centers of Excellence. As you all know, LEAP Academy is a Math, Science, and Technology School and as such we take a lot of pride in the work of our faculty and staff who are working very hard to promote excellence in these areas. We want to encourage everyone that this is a great time for our students, families, faculty and staff to continue to mobilize for excellence in mathematics and science education so that all of our students—not just a few—achieve much higher levels of math and science learning.

Over the coming decades, our young people will depend on the skills and knowledge developed from learning to analyze problems, imagine solutions, and bring productive new ideas into being. If we are going to transform our schools and systems of education in this country, we need to transform mathematics and

science education and deliver it equitably and with excellence to all our students. Knowledge and skills from science, technology, engineering and mathematics—the so-called “STEM” fields—are crucial to every endeavor of individual and community life. All of our LEAP students need to be educated to be “STEM capable”, no matter which field of study they choose to work in. We invite the faculty, parents, and students to join us in this important discussion as we continue to build excellence in our city.

From Chief Learning Officer of LEAP Academy University Charter School, Dr. Deanna Burney

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the family and friends of Julianna Perez, who recently enrolled in Brown University—the first graduate of LEAP to attend an Ivy League school. Where Julianna has gone, others will follow. No matter where our students attend college, they achieved their dreams through hard work, high expectations, and a community that supports their learning in and out of the classroom. Recently a group of students had the opportunity to visit schools in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Delaware, and I know they returned home energized by what they saw and experienced.

We are building an inclusive learning environment at LEAP with the involvement of educators, families, our community partners, and local institutions of higher education. And while our 100 percent college acceptance rate for the fifth year in a row reflects this, we want to increase learning opportunities for students in fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To that end, we are working toward expanding our course offerings and the capacity of the staff to deliver rich, engaging instruction in these subjects. I am excited for what the future holds for Julianna and all of those who will follow in her footsteps!



From Senior Program Administrator for the Office of Pre College Initiatives, Carmen Ubarry-Rivera



As the school year progresses, the Pre College Office is buzzing with enthusiasm and anticipation for the future. The Class of 2010 has been working diligently to enter a new phase of their academic careers, and through our mantra of hard work and commitment to excellence, placement in top tier colleges and universities is the goal for our students. The Pre College Team is especially excited about this graduating class because it is the first class to have journeyed through LEAP Academy from Kindergarten through 12th grade. One-third is the original cohort that helped open the doors of our beloved school back in 1997, and in the eyes of these Founding Scholars we see our hopes nurtured, our dreams realized, and our legacy sealed.

The work of the Pre College Office is one of the most important support services provided to our students at LEAP Academy. Providing career exploration, professional awareness, college preparedness and higher education placement to the children of Camden City is a fundamental tenet of the LEAP vision and arguably the single most powerful arsenal in the war against poverty. The challenges are daunting and the work at times seems insurmountable, yet the spirit and tenacity of our Founding Scholars and their parents lead us on.

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



## LEAP grad gets second chance at Ivy League dream

LEAP Class of 2007 graduate Julianna Perez knows how overwhelming it can be for high school students to make the transition into college. She learned it the hard way.

Two years ago, Julianna lived the dream of millions of high school seniors when she was admitted to Brown University and became the first LEAP Academy student ever accepted to an Ivy League college. A few months later she graduated LEAP at the top of her class—a valedictorian with a 4.0 grade-point-average and scholarships totaling almost \$20,000 to Brown—and made the move up to Providence, Rhode Island.

Two weeks later, though, “I was homesick and wanted to be closer to home,” said Julianna. “A lot of kids don’t expect to be homesick because they want more independence, but I wasn’t ready to go.”

Faced with the difficult choice to endure at Brown against her wishes or transfer to a local school but give up her Ivy League dream, ultimately, Julianna chose to leave Brown and transfer to Drexel University in Philadelphia, just minutes from her home in Camden.

“I’ve always wanted to learn but I was very stressed at the time and my heart wasn’t in it. I don’t know how well I would have done if I had stayed,” Julianna said.

The challenge that LEAP students like Julianna face when having to transition from LEAP Academy to college is something that the Pre College Office has dedicated itself to improving. Increased college experiences, earlier college awareness, and new alumni support programs, including the creation of an official Alumni Association that tracks their academic progress, are all addressing this challenge.

“It’s very difficult for our students to make the college transition,” said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera, Sr. Administrator for the Pre College Office. “We’re talking about distinct cultural clashes that urban high school students face upon attending college.”

“College is a completely different atmosphere,” Julianna added. “At college you are on your own, you have to work a lot harder to get high grades. At home you’re number one but at Brown there’s a whole bunch of number ones like you.”

For Julianna, the move from LEAP to Brown was especially complicated because of her family. “I’m very close to my family. It was difficult. Some wanted me to be close to them and some didn’t want me to leave Brown; I was pulled in both directions,” she said.

See **IVY LEAGUE DREAM** on page 7



## Five consecutive years of 100% college acceptance for LEAP grads

For the fifth time in as many years, 100 percent of LEAP Academy’s graduating class has been accepted to college.

Twelve years after they first walked through LEAP’s doors as first graders, the 44 seniors in LEAP’s Class of 2009 are now attending universities and colleges across the region this fall. In all, 67 percent are attending four-year schools and 33 percent are attending two-year programs.

“This is unprecedented in Camden City, if not the entire state of New Jersey. It speaks to the mission of LEAP Academy to improve educational opportunities for the children of Camden,” said Pre College Administrator Carmen Ubarry-Rivera. “I think it should serve as a reminder for our students that Latino and African-American children are more than capable of attaining a college education.”

Several distinguished graduates were awarded scholarships, including the Edward J. Bloustein Distinguished Scholars Award and the Akman Family Scholarship. Four alumni are also receiving the Alfredo Santiago Endowed Scholarship beginning this year: Iesha Tull, Ariel Figueroa, Robert Ransom, and Tyrell Johnson.

In all, LEAP graduates amassed over \$500,000 in scholarships and financial aid to attend colleges like Rutgers University, Rowan University, The College of New Jersey, and Howard University.

# PRE COLLEGE NEWS

## On-campus tours take LEAP students to Washington, Maryland, Delaware

For the first time the Pre College Office is offering LEAP Academy students the opportunity to participate in overnight, multi-campus tours at area colleges from New Jersey to Washington, D.C.

The visits, which are sponsored by the Pre College Office and LEAP Academy, include four different trips to 20 regional schools like Rutgers-New Brunswick, Temple, Princeton, and Georgetown. Three of these four trips even include visits to National College Fairs in Washington, Camden, and West Deptford, NJ.

"The college tours are meant to expose LEAP students to college life," said Khary Golden, a program associate with the Pre College Office. "They also help students reconnect with LEAP alumni in order to create a mental picture of where these seniors could be in only a year's time."

From September 29-30, the senior class joined more than 4,000 students from across the country at the DC National College Fair in Washington D.C. At the fair, seniors spoke with representatives from 250 schools.

As part of the two-day trip, students visited a total of six universities in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Delaware. Several stops on the tour were at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU), including Morgan State, Delaware State, and Howard universities.

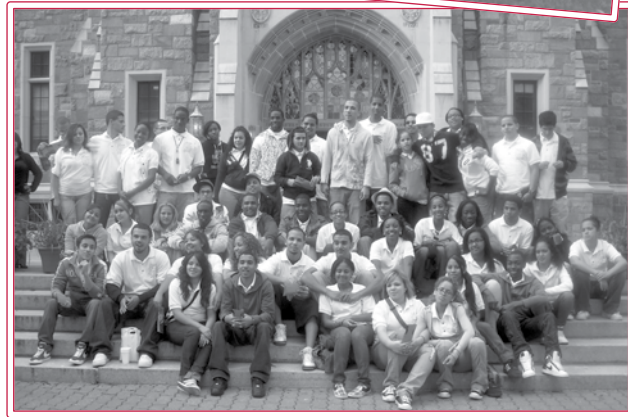
"The trip was awesome, it inspired me a lot," said senior Matthew Cottle, who picked up several applications at the college fair and is applying to Rutgers-New Brunswick, Howard, Delaware State, and six other schools. "It's great to be able to see these schools before applying. Some students learn too late that a school isn't right for them."

The trip also included visits to Georgetown, Maryland, and Johns Hopkins universities and additional stops at historical landmarks like the U.S. Capitol Building, Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. Each campus tour included meetings with university officials and Q&A sessions on admissions and financial aid.

"It was great to actually experience college environments rather than just reading about them. After seeing these schools, I now want to go to Delaware State or Howard," said Xavier Sanders, a senior who is hoping to study nursing or business.

As an added feature, the Pre College Office arranged for several LEAP alumni who are attending these colleges to accompany LEAP seniors on the campus tour and offer a more relatable point of view. The Delaware State visit, for example, included LEAP Class of 2009 alumni Tyrell Johnson.

Senior Shabria Blackson is applying to Delaware State and said seeing LEAP alumni at these colleges was "unbelievable." "When I saw our alumni there it motivated me because we all



came from the same school and if they can succeed then so can I," said Shabria, who hopes to study Sociology or Theater Arts.

This successful first trip sets the stage for three more college field trips, including a second senior class tour of eight colleges and universities in New Jersey on October 21-22. The trip covered Princeton, TCNJ, Rutgers-New Brunswick, and more, but LEAP Senior Micharis Vargas was focused on Farleigh Dickinson University. "This visit will help me decide if I want to attend Farleigh Dickinson," Micharis said—a decision she may not have been able to make otherwise. "I probably would have never been able to see the campus without this Pre College trip."

LEAP underclassmen will also benefit from these successful campus visits. This month, the Pre College Office will take 60 LEAP freshman to the Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair in Camden, where they will speak to representatives from 100 colleges. Later this year, the junior class will tour local Philadelphia campuses like Temple, Penn, and Villanova.

The campus visits and college fairs are creating a new energy in the school and the Pre College Office intends to build on it with increased college enrichment. "Students came back visibly changed from this experience," said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera. "They are excited; our entire shelf of college applications is gone. There's a new enthusiasm now—the energy is out of this world."

## LEAP students shine at National Hispanic Institute, Rutgers Biz-Ed

During the summer, 17 LEAP high school students attended National Hispanic Institute leadership programs across the country, where some earned awards for their outstanding performance in program competitions.

The NHI sponsors programs across the country that incorporate activities like debates and model congresses to educate high school Latino youth on civic and political issues. LEAP students have attended NHI programs since 2005 and this year they attended three events at area universities: Villanova, NYU, and Rochester.

Eleven LEAP sophomores participated in the NHI's Youth Leadership Conference at Villanova University. For five days, over 200 high schools students from across the nation (plus groups from Mexico and Panama) engaged in debates and competitive activities. Sophomore Leslie Cruz participated and said the program was a lot of fun. "The focus was U.S. Latino Identity and we discussed how young leaders like us can improve opportunities for the Latino community," she said.

Leslie was one of two LEAP students to earn an award at the event, as she and a partner made it all the way to the final round of one activity, finishing in second place out of over 100 teams. In addition, Leslie earned the "Most Improved Award" for her group and has already put Villanova at the top of her college application list, with Rutgers and TCNJ. "What I really like about it is that it doesn't end here, there's a part two," Leslie said.

For sophomores like Leslie, part two is one of the NHI's upperclassmen programs, like the Lorenzo De Zavales program at Rochester or the Collegiate World Series at NYU, which were attended by groups of two and four seniors, respectively.

Shaquille Sanchez attended the LDZ program and earned two awards his performance in competitions, including first place out of 150 students in a mock trial and "Most Outstanding Member of the Supreme Court." "I loved it," said Shaquille, who is applying to Rutgers, Boston University and Brown University. "It was a great way to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people and learn new skills."

While these students were involved in NHI programs, seniors Thomas Flores and Brian Nieves attended Rutgers-Camden's 9th Biz-Ed Leadership program, a two-week program hosted by the RU-C School of Business for aspiring business students from South Jersey.

"It was really great. It gave me an actual taste of the business world and now I know I want to study business," said Thomas, who is applying to Penn State, Maryland, Rutgers and other schools for business management or international business.

Students received insight from Rutgers faculty and administrators in marketing, finance, management, but opportunities outside the classroom, like field trips to the Courier Post and Camden Riversharks stadium, were even more valuable.

"We saw the business side of things, like how to run a newspaper and learned about advertising and promotions," Thomas said.

"The payback on these leadership programs priceless," said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera. "Our students came back with more self-esteem, more enthusiasm, and a more complete high school experience. Plus it opens up great contacts with top colleges."

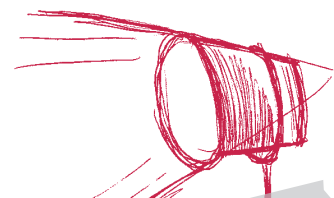


Nine LEAP students who participated in NHI summer programs:  
Front: Kadajah Mustafa, Leslie Cruz, Diane Casiano, Richelle Reddick, Cassandra Arreola; Back: Eric Tull, Dominic Ransom, Shaquille Sanchez, Abigail Ortolaza.



Seniors Brian Nieves (top) and Thomas Flores (bottom) participated in Rutgers' Biz-Ed program this summer

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## LEAP grads return to help create Alumni Association

LEAP Academy students are gaining an added perspective during the college application process this year, thanks to the efforts of several LEAP alumni who have returned to Camden.

The Pre College Office has officially started a LEAP Alumni Association in order to provide alumni support by tracking college progress, offering tutor and mentor opportunities, and offering internship and work-study placements at the Pre College Office.

"This is unique to LEAP Academy. Students have attended LEAP for so long and our families are so connected that it is inevitable for the school to continue relations with our alumni," said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera, emphasizing that many alumni still have siblings and parents involved at LEAP.

"I always knew I wanted to come back," said Class of 2006 graduate Erica Figueroa, a senior at Villanova University. "I'm providing them with my experience and guiding them to make sure they get the same opportunities as I did." "We're giving back to LEAP and helping the community," said 2005 graduate Tarik Bronson, who also graduated with a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Drew University in May.

Erika and Tarik have both returned to LEAP to help build the association and are working in the Pre College Office. Tarik has compiled an alumni database that includes current contact information, colleges, majors, grade-point-averages, plus expected graduation dates for all 250 LEAP graduates. "The association gives an academic basis for what works and what does not work for students," said Tarik. "We learn better approaches on how to prepare them for college."

The Alumni Association also uses social media sites like Facebook. Currently, the online group has 102 alumni members. Erika, who is studying Sociology and will graduate Villanova in May 2010, said that the Facebook group helps to keep alumni in touch. "We want this to be an active organization, complete with membership cards."



Just as important as the alumni benefits is reconnecting them with the school in order to offer current LEAP students the wisdom of their college experiences. Both Tarik and Erika attended LEAP since it opened in 1997 and agreed that placing alumni at the school will help current seniors. "It shows them that they can achieve it, too. We came from the same place, so no matter what, they can go just as far," said Tarik.

Erika's role advising students is especially important for her because her younger brother Joshua is a current senior at LEAP. "It's really rewarding to see that I can help him and that I'm a good resource for him," she said of Joshua, who is applying to Rutgers, Villanova, and several other schools. "I try to push him to go farther because he's got great potential. I don't want to see him settle because he's good enough to go to any college."

Going forward, the Pre College Office expects to bring alumni back to the school for special events, to speak to upperclassmen about college, and also receive leadership and job-readiness training. The Office even hopes to create an alumni scholarship fund that will help at least one student per year receive financial aid for college.

"The program creates a sense of 'coming back in order to move forward' for alumni," Ms. Rivera said. "The Alumni association 'closes the circle' on LEAP's mission: to raise leaders in the community and give back to the city and the school. Alumni like Erika and Tarik, who are here already, are living that mission."

ready for a chance to return to Brown. "Being in college classes at Drexel got me ready for Brown," she said. "The classes got me better acclimated to college life; I just needed to reassure myself."

This fall, Julianna transferred back to Brown and thanks to the university's Study-Away program, which leaves the door open for former students to return, she was able to transfer 70 credits back with her and now plans to graduate in January 2012.

Meanwhile, her first semester at Brown is underway and she is studying subjects like Abnormal Psychology and Introduction to African Studies, making the most of her second chance. "I'm definitely grateful to be back," she said.

## LEAP alumnae ready to graduate from Rutgers–New Brunswick



LEAP alumnae and Rutgers senior Marteha Stewart in Rome, Italy during her semester in Rutgers' Study Abroad program

In only six months, LEAP 2005 graduate Marteha Stewart will be a college graduate. A Rutgers graduate. It deserves repeating because for the last five years at college and another eight before that at LEAP Academy, Marteha has worked towards a college degree, one that is now finally in sight.

"It's amazing," said Marteha, who will graduate from Rutgers–New Brunswick with a BFA in Visual Arts and a minor in Art History. "It's been a long time coming. I love Rutgers, but it's time for me to move on with my life."

In May 2010, Marteha will become the first college graduate in her immediate family and said, "It feels good to have my family support me and have my niece and nephew look up to me. My niece already talks about going to college and she's only seven years old."

Since 2005 she has been an art student at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers–New Brunswick. Said her experience at Rutgers has been memorable. "It has been great. It's close to home but far enough for me to exercise my independence," she said, noting the tuition and financial aid benefits of staying in-state for college.

Rutgers offers important prospects for artists like Marteha as well. She had the unique opportunity live in Italy for a semester

as part of the University's Study Abroad Program, where she had the chance to see some of the world's greatest art and architecture in Rome. "The close proximity to New York also puts me in the center of the art world, which is vital to my major and future career goals. I get to meet people from all over the world."

When she applied to colleges five years ago, Rutgers was not her top choice, "But now I see that it is the perfect fit for me. I don't think there is another school that could supply so many of my needs as a student. Rutgers–New Brunswick has allotted me the perfect balance of academic and social experiences," Marteha said. "Sincerely, I love my school!"

As she prepares to graduate, Marteha, who is a recipient of the Rutgers/LEAP Alfredo Santiago Scholarship, remembers how her time at LEAP and the Pre College Office prepared her for college. "Pre College advisors offered specific schools for me to look into and pushed me to apply to some places that I never would have on my own," she said, and also credited on-campus visits for giving her insight on what college life would be like.

She encourages current LEAP students to have a good idea of what they plan to study in college when they apply, to make sure they choose the school that is best for them. Unfortunately, changing her major to Visual Arts cost Marteha some completed credits and she doesn't want that to happen to other students. "They don't have to be set in stone, but just make sure that you at least have an idea regarding your future goals, this way you don't have to waste any additional time or resources."

Now only months away from a college degree, she knows it has been her motivation that has kept her from falling into some of the bad habits that derail so many other young people living in Camden City. "I refuse to let that be me. I have an expectation for my future, so I plan on doing everything that makes that expectation a reality," said Marteha, who plans to pursue an MFA at Temple University's Tyler School of Art or at the Art Institutes in Philadelphia. She also hopes to become an art instructor or work as a museum curator.

"College has proven to be a vital piece of the puzzle that ties together all of my dreams. I have been successful at Rutgers because my future depends on it."

"Everything worked out great; I'm really happy now, I'm meeting great people; I'm just really lucky."

While she spends much of her time looking ahead to her Bachelor's degree and a future Master's, Ph.D., and career as a teacher or counselor, Julianna sometimes catches herself looking back on her first try at Brown.

"I have mixed feelings about my decision to leave," she said. If she could go back to give herself some advice, Julianna said she would tell herself to stay and give Brown more of a chance—a semester or maybe a year—but added, "I don't necessarily regret it because I'm at Brown now."

Like her time studying at Drexel, she believes recent Pre College initiatives that place LEAP students into college classrooms and on college campuses will prepare them for the transition. "Taking college classes now and taking overnight trips to campuses will help students experience not only the academics but the social atmosphere of college also," she said.

She hopes other LEAP students can learn as much from her experience as she has. "Students should know that it's going to be tough, you will have obstacles being on your own and being independent," Julianna said. "But it will get better. Stay focused as best you can, be social and open to new things and you will be successful."



## Pre College workshops prepare seniors for transition to college

The Pre College Office has begun a series of workshops for the senior class that will cover every aspect of the college application and preparation process in an effort to help the Class of 2009 make a successful transition into college.

Staff members will lead and deliver a series of seven workshops to the entire senior class that cover important college topics like interviewing, applications, and available on-campus resources.

An Interview skills and Professional etiquette workshop will set the stage for seniors by developing their communication skills not only for college interviews, but future job interviews as well.

Next, an SAT and ACT exam workshop will inform seniors of the importance of standardized tests to their intended colleges and, if needed, prepare them to improve their scores on a retest. With all seniors nearly finished with their applications already, a College applications workshop will briefly cover the process and ensure all seniors have the supplementary materials for their applications.

A Scholarship workshop will utilize The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute's "Latino College Dollars" directory and The Pell



Institute's "Black College Dollars" directory, which list over 1,000 available scholarships, to help seniors translate their academic achievements into funding for college. The Pre College Office has mandated that all seniors apply to a minimum of five scholarships. A Financial aid workshop will advise students and parents on ways to find funding, including the FAFSA process.

A final pair of College readiness workshops will focus on the steps seniors need to follow after being accepted and choosing a college. Topics like on-campus housing, dining plans, books, class schedules, and on-campus support services like tutoring will be covered, followed by successful study habits and relationship-building.

Several workshops will involve LEAP alumni returning to the school to offer a firsthand look at successful habits for seniors as they transition to college.

Through these workshops, students will have all the information they need to choose the college that's right for them and to be prepared to attend that college next fall.

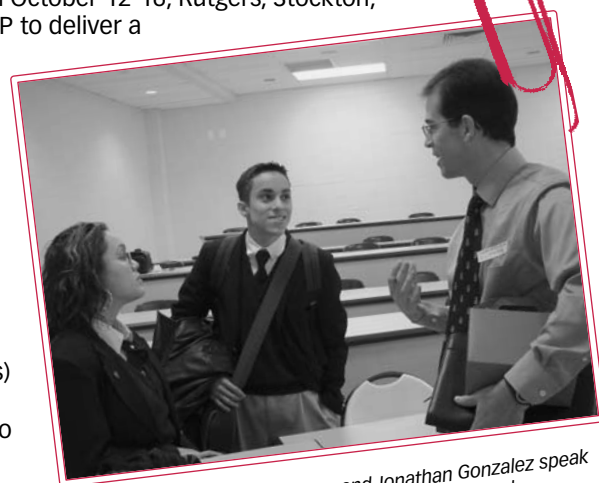
## College Visit Week brings universities to LEAP

The Pre College Office's first "College Visit Week" brought several area universities to LEAP Academy, when high school students received detailed information on admissions and financial aid. From October 12-16, Rutgers, Stockton, Delaware State, and Carnegie Mellon universities sent representatives to LEAP to deliver a series of informational sessions for students in the high school's lecture hall.

An additional visit on October 20 by Brown University gave LEAP seniors a comprehensive look at all of the opportunities an Ivy League campus has to offer. For 60 minutes, students asked Brown Admissions Officer Peter Newcomb questions about admissions requirements, on-campus housing, and available student organizations and support services.

Newcomb told students that 60% of Brown students receive some form of financial aid and that financial circumstances do not factor into admissions. He added that students and parents from low-income homes (\$60,000 or less) pay no tuition contributions and do not need to take out loans either. "Our financial aid packages are great because they allow more students to come to Brown than would be able to without," Newcomb said.

He stressed that college visits to high schools like LEAP Academy "are great for me to learn about schools and get a sense of what the students are like." "Diversity is really important to Brown; we value it during the admissions process," Newcomb said.



LEAP seniors Jozian Molina and Jonathan Gonzalez speak to Brown University rep Peter Newcomb

## Office promotes improved college awareness at Elementary school

As part of a new emphasis on early college and career awareness, the Pre College Office is beginning focused career programming for elementary school students in grades K-6. Pre College staff members will soon begin working in elementary classrooms with LEAP's youngest students in order to heighten their future aspirations and chances for success.

A new program called Career Carousel will focus on 'Exploration' for grades K-3 and 'Awareness' for Grades 4-6. The Office will talk directly to young students about college and jobs and begin achievement profiles for students that track grades and identify their academic strengths and achievements. These cumulative profiles will later assist the Office in helping LEAP students choose a future academic major, college, or career.

The Pre College Office is also scheduling financial seminars for LEAP elementary parents that will discuss ways for them to save money for their children's college educations. LEAP alumnae Erika Figueroa, a senior at Villanova, is interning two days a week with the Pre College Office and is being placed at the elementary school to oversee the implementation of the K-6 programs.

## HEAD START ON COLLEGE FROM PAGE 1

More importantly, however, these courses provide high school students with real college experience and challenge them with advanced coursework.

LEAP senior Angel Cintron explained, simply, "I'm experiencing college." "I'm learning teachers' expectations and how to write college-level essays; plus my professor is really insightful," he said, adding that several out of classroom activities like city and waterfront tours to see development projects are especially helpful.

"It's been a really great experience. The classes are very interesting and I'm learning a lot about my own city," said senior Maria Ramos, who is taking classes at Rutgers and hopes to study in the university's Nursing program. "I'm learning how college works and also making friends with some of my classmates."

Meanwhile, 20 LEAP students are taking math and science courses at Rowan University's Camden campus. During the summer, these students and their parents attended a special orientation program at Rowan, where they met current undergraduates, toured the campus and classrooms, and registered for classes like Algebra or Biology.

"It's exciting. It's going to be a big help because not a lot of students get this opportunity," said LEAP senior José Napoleon, who is studying Human Biology at Rowan. "Being one of the first students to participate is a privilege and it shows LEAP cares about its students. It's an incentive to pursue my education."

The program is not exclusive to seniors, though. Elvira Santa is one of five LEAP Academy juniors taking classes at Rowan and called these classes the first big step in her college career. "I think we're getting even more of a head start than the seniors," said Elvira, who is studying Human Biology and is hoping to apply to Rowan or Rutgers as a pre-med student next year. "I like my classes, they're very challenging and they will help me with my future major."



STUDENTS ATTENDING ROWAN COURSES: *Front Row:* Alexandra Miranda, Mariah Castillo, Jozian Molina, Shabria Blackson, Amarillis Casiano, Shanice Anderson, Jonathan Gonzalez; *Back Row:* Melissa Edmond, Gabriel Molina, Jose Napoleon, Lexus Robert-Williams, Jocelyn Rosa, Xavier Rodriguez, Tashell Woodson, and Shaquille Sanchez.

Students agreed that beginning college six credits ahead of their peers is wonderful, but more valuable is the practical experience they are gaining inside college classrooms and discovering the vibrant pace of college campuses.

"These partnerships are creating a more comprehensive high school experience for LEAP students," said Carmen Ubarry-Rivera, Senior Administrator for the Pre College Office, which is supervising the programs. "These on-site college classes will introduce students to the rigor of college academics and better prepare them for the transition into higher education."

The Pre College Office hopes to continue the classroom opportunities with Rutgers and Rowan next semester and next year, and is working to create a richer menu of available courses for future students.

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## Senior Jozian Molina making the most of her College opportunities



For the last six years, senior Jozian Molina has been preparing for college. Ever since she entered LEAP Academy in sixth grade, she has been introduced to college awareness activities by the Pre College Office.

But since her senior year began in September, Jozian's exposure to college experiences has increased and she said she is benefitting from new energy in the Office. "They are really connecting with us now. The tours, visiting multiple

campuses—they're really going above and beyond," Jozian said.

A National Honor Society member maintaining a 3.4 grade-point-average, Jozian is also involved in LEAP activities like the World Language Club, yearbook, field hockey and tennis. She has already applied to Rutgers, Rowan, Stockton, and Temple universities and plans to study speech pathology.

"I want to work with children with speech impediments," she said, in a hospital or non-profit setting. Jozian explained that part of her mother's job as a social worker involved working with a speech pathologist at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Camden.

## Senior Matthew Cottle motivated by college visits

The Pre College Office has sponsored two college trips this semester in order to give LEAP seniors a better idea of college. College tours included a dozen schools from New Jersey to Washington, D.C. No matter which student in the class you ask, all will have something positive to talk about from the trip, but maybe none more than senior Matthew Cottle.

"The trip was awesome, it inspired me a lot," said Matthew. "It's great to be able to see these schools before applying. Some students learn too late that a school isn't right for them."

Matthew has applied to Rutgers, Howard, Seton Hall, Farleigh Dickinson, and Maryland and plans to double-major in English and Education then follow a career as a high school teacher. "I'm applying to colleges that I think I will fit in with," he said, including Rutgers New Brunswick. "I think I'd fit perfect there."

But Matthew's top choice is Howard University, where he has wanted to attend since eighth grade. He got the opportunity to

Jozian began volunteering at the hospital several years ago and found it extremely interesting.

Jozian is one of 20 LEAP seniors taking college courses at Rowan this semester thanks to a partnership with the university. She is studying Human Biology two days a week and said it has been a great opportunity. "The classes are definitely molding a college mindset for me. They're actually giving me an opportunity to learn and experience interesting courses," said Jozian. "I really do love it."

Notably, she said the opportunity to take the classes has been eye-opening for her classmates. "It's giving us confidence. I see that college is not all that overwhelming," she said. "We don't feel like underdogs; we're just as intellectual as others in class."

Financial aid workshops from the Pre College Office, along with her part-time job at AMC Cherry Hill on weekends, have also made clear to her the value of saving money for college. Jozian already plans to complete her core class requirements commuting to Rutgers or Rowan then make the on-campus move to Temple's or Stockton's speech pathology programs. Staying in-state for two years will save her thousands of dollars in tuition and room and board costs, she said.

She said she's just hoping she will be accepted to all four colleges she has applied to, and she is confident she'll be ready once she does. "I'm thrilled to know that I'll be in college soon," Jozian said. "LEAP prepared me for what's in store at college, I'm good to go."



visit the campus on September 28 and said it was especially eye-opening because of a meeting with LEAP alumni and Howard freshman Robert Ransom.

"Rob extremely motivated me," Matthew said of Robert, who accompanied the seniors on their campus tour and offered a fresh perspective. "Since the competition is so fierce, he told me to keep up my

grades and fill out early applications because the quicker I get them in the better chances I'll have. He motivated me to do it now rather than wait."

Matthew credits the Pre College Office for offering such unique opportunities. "It's prepared me since Day One," Matthew said. "The Office always helps us out with anything we need. Thanks to them I'm maintaining A's and seeing where I belong in life."

"I hope every school in America has a Pre College Office like this."

# Att<sup>no</sup> Seniors and Juniors

All LEAP Seniors and Juniors who have yet to take the SAT exams or want to take them a second time should register as soon as possible for one of these upcoming exam dates:

✓ **SATs**  
Test Date  
Dec 5, 2009  
Jan 23, 2010  
Mar 3, 2010  
May 1, 2010  
Jun 5, 2010

Registration Deadline  
Regular Late (w/fee)  
Oct 30 Nov 13  
Dec 15 Dec 30  
Feb 4 Feb 18  
Mar 29 Apr 8  
Apr 29 May 13



## ✓ Financial Aid Opportunities

### SCHOLARSHIPS

This year the Pre College Office is requiring all seniors to apply to a minimum of five scholarships. Seniors may choose from a list of over 1,000 scholarships compiled by the Office that are specifically targeted to Latino and African-American students.

### FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a government-funded financial aid system that gives out more than \$80 billion annually to students for college. Students can apply online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

### PELL GRANTS

Pell Grants are need-based grants offered by the U.S. Department of Education whereby eligible low-income students are provided with financial aid determined by their FAFSA applications.

### PERKINS LOANS

Perkins Loans are low-interest federal loans made available to eligible low-income students. Like Pell grants, they are offered by the U.S. Department of Education and determined by the FAFSA application.

### ALFREDO SANTIAGO SCHOLARSHIP (RUTGERS)

The Rutgers/LEAP Alfredo Santiago Endowed Scholarship supports eligible LEAP Academy graduates attending Rutgers University. All students planning to enroll at Rutgers will have the opportunity to apply for the scholarship in the spring.

### AKMAN FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

The Akman Family Scholarship is open to all LEAP Academy seniors enrolling in a four-year college. Applications begin in the spring.

### UNIVERSITY AID

All students should contact the financial aid offices of any universities they may attend for information on scholarships, grants, and work-study possibilities.

\*\*\*For more information on FAFSA and other financial aid opportunities and eligibility, or for help with scholarship applications, stop in the Pre College Office.

## ✓ Deadlines for Regional colleges and universities

### NOVEMBER

30th – Penn State Univ. (\*Priority Date)

### DECEMBER

1st – Rutgers Univ. (\*Priority Date)  
15th – Princeton University

### JANUARY 2010

1st – Univ. of Pennsylvania  
7th – Villanova University  
15th – Rider University

### FEBRUARY

1st – St. Joseph's University  
15th – The College of New Jersey  
Drew University

### MARCH

1st – Temple University  
Seton Hall Univ.  
Rowan University  
Drexel University  
La Salle University  
14th – Bloomfield College

### MAY

1st – Stockton College

More information on college admissions deadlines is available in the Pre College Office.

# A LOOK AHEAD

## LEAP Citywide College Fair: November 11th

The Pre College Office is inviting juniors and seniors from high schools in Camden City to LEAP Academy on November 11th when 30 national colleges and universities visit for its annual College Fair.

Students from across Camden will join 350 LEAP students in grades 7-12 at the Fair, when they will have the opportunity to explore potential colleges and academic majors by speaking to college representatives.

Parents will also have the chance to join their students at the event and have important questions answered about admissions, financial aid, and campus life.

The event will be held from 5:00-7:00pm in the LEAP High School gymnasium.

Among the dozens of colleges and universities sending representatives are Rowan, Temple, TCNJ, Duke, Delaware State, Howard, Widener, Rutgers University, and more.

Contact Carmen Ubarry-Rivera at (856) 614-5088 for a full list of participating colleges.



## Upcoming Pre College Events

November 11 –  
**Camden City College Fair at LEAP**  
4:00pm to 7:00pm

November 20 –  
**Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair**  
LEAP's 120 ninth and tenth grade students will attend a college fair on November 20 at the Susquehanna Bank Center in Camden. The fair will include over 100 colleges and universities across the country.

## *A Decade of Cultivating Excellence And Discovering Greatness*

### 10th Annual Rutgers/LEAP Gala: December 4th

On Friday, December 4th the entire Rutgers/LEAP community will gather for the 10th Annual Alfredo Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fundraising Gala. The Gala will be held from 6-11pm at the Adventure Aquarium in Camden, NJ.

Since 2005, the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship has helped 25 LEAP Academy graduates pursue a college degree. This year the Gala will honor PSE&G President and COO Frank LaRossa and New Jersey State Senator Dana Redd.

For information on purchasing tickets or advertisements, or for scholarship donations, please contact Randy Miller at (856) 225-2922 or RRmiller@camden.rutgers.edu.



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