

LEAP College Access

JOURNAL

AN INITIATIVE OF THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR STRATEGIC URBAN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

KINDERGARTEN TO COLLEGE

LEAP'S FOUNDING SCHOLARS PREPARE TO GRADUATE



LEFT: A look back at some LEAP seniors in Kindergarten from 1997: (1) José Ortiz, (2) Brian Nieves, (3) Nadirah O'Neal, (4) Shanice Anderson, and (5) Julie Cruz. **RIGHT:** Thirteen years later, seniors José Ortiz, Josh Figueroa, Fedrix Flores, Gabriel Molina, Nadirah O'Neal, Xaviea Sanders, and Shanice Anderson are preparing for college. (Not pictured: Jamil Davis, Melissa Edmond, Eric Macias, Gabriel Molina, and Brian Nieves.)

When the Class of 2010 walks at graduation on June 30th it will be the culmination of years of hard work and success at LEAP Academy for its 56 seniors. But for twelve of these seniors who joined LEAP as part of the school's original kindergarten class, graduation will complete a journey 13 years in the making.

Since LEAP opened its doors in 1997 these twelve Founding Scholars have attended the school and in that time have become some of its most accomplished students. Together they make up a group that includes the class valedictorian, salutatorian, and seven National Honor Society members; they also account for nearly 50 percent of this year's 260 college and university acceptances.

After graduation, college will lead them onto twelve separate paths but each one can trace his/her beginning back to

kindergarten on a sunny day in September of 1997. And when they think back to their first days at LEAP they all remember the same thing: the modular trailers.

"I remember being in one big classroom, and gym class out on the blacktop," said Josh Figueroa, an NHS member and varsity baseball captain. "My favorite class was gym but I'd always get splinters on the wooden playground," added Shanice Anderson, field hockey captain and NHS member. "I remember laughing a lot, having fun and getting in trouble," said Melissa Edmond, class salutatorian and World Language Club president. "There was always something new to learn."

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for the sixth consecutive year

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GREETINGS

From Board of Governor's Distinguished Service Professor and Founder & Board Chair of LEAP Academy, Dr. Gloria Bonilla Santiago



What an exciting time for our senior class, who in a few short months will join the previous five graduating classes of LEAP Academy in pursuit of their college degrees. All 56 of our seniors have been accepted to college and have earned over half a million dollars in financial aid to attend some of the country's best universities and colleges. This achievement truly speaks for itself.

The Class of 2010 is truly a special group of students. Many of them have been with us since we opened the LEAP Academy in 1997 as the school's original kindergarten class. Now 13 years later, these students are fulfilling the goals we dreamed about for them so long ago as they prepare to graduate and enter college. Just as the school has grown and excelled in that time, these amazing children have matured into wonderful young men and women. They have managed to exceed all of our greatest expectations and we know they will continue to do so long after they leave this school.

My greatest hope is that LEAP's juniors and underclassmen can take advantage of the examples set forth by our seniors and alumni, as well as the support of faculty and staff in the Center for College Access, to continue LEAP's outstanding tradition of college placement, graduation, and career success.

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

Later this spring we will graduate twelve young adults who have spent their entire academic careers at LEAP, having started kindergarten in 1997. If you don't already know these founding scholars, you will after you read this semester's issue. Although it may have been hard to imagine thirteen years ago, each of these students followed a particular path, or trajectory to get where they are now. Along the way, they encountered peers and adults who, by way of some guidance, support, and advice, helped shape who they are today—and who they will become tomorrow.

The image of a learning trajectory or path is appropriate for adults as well. I don't know if a good teacher is born, not made. But I do know that none of us stop learning. I like to think of LEAP as a learning organization—focused on the needs of students, to be sure, but also a place where we have made significant investments in adult learning as well. When an educator comes to LEAP, they can expect to join a community of practitioners. Together we are working to create a collegial culture, a shared knowledge base, and a common lens for looking at instruction.



From Senior Administrator of the Center for College Access, Carmen Ubarry-Rivera

It is quite astonishing to see this school year close to ending. It seems like only yesterday that we stared into the eyes of our shining seniors and could see their dreams, hopes and aspirations as they prepared to embark on a new phase of their academic careers. As time moved on and they continued the college placement process they realized more and more how these few short months are the most significant time of their lives. Many were accepted into prestigious four-year universities and the colleges of their choice. Others have decided to enter community college and then transfer to a four-year school, and still others have yet to decide.

As I reflect back to my years in high school, I see how fortunate our LEAP students are to have a support system in place such as the Center for College Access. In my interactions with others I often hear "I wish I had an office like this to go to when I was in high school." This speaks to the uniqueness and commitment of LEAP Academy to the lives and future of our families and city. In the days ahead there will be many tears of joy and sadness as the farewells begin, however because of the strong ties that bind us to our soon to be alumni I am assured that we have not seen the last of them.

Congratulation Class of 2010—Legends of LEAP!

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

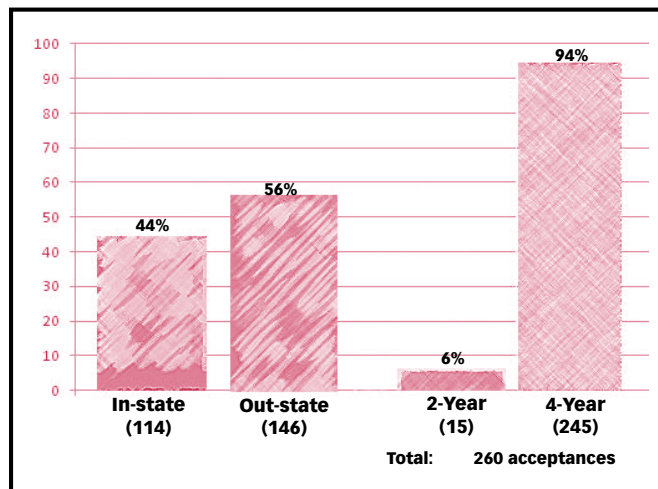


Six years of 100% college acceptance for LEAP

All 56 students in the Class of 2010 have been accepted to college for the Fall 2010 semester, the sixth consecutive year that LEAP has achieved 100 percent college admission.

In total, the seniors have been accepted to over 260 regional colleges and universities like Penn State, Rowan, Temple, Syracuse, Howard, and Rutgers University's three campuses. What's even more impressive is the fact that of these 56 students, 25 have been accepted to four or more colleges (45%) with one student (senior Steven Phillips) admitted to an amazing 40 schools.

In addition, over one-third of the class (19 students) was accepted into Rutgers University and, all told, the seniors have amassed over \$650,000 in scholarship money, not including funding through a dozen college EOF programs.



SGA reorganized, LEAP senior appointed to Board



The Center for College Access has undertaken a plan to reorganize the student leadership programs at LEAP to make them more inclusive and effective. A new student government constitution has been ratified that convenes all student leaders at one time, bringing the SGA officers together with all individual class officers from grades 9-12.

In addition, the most significant change has been the creation of the LEAP's first ever student representative seat on the Board of Trustees. LEAP senior Jonathan Gonzalez was appointed by the Board to be the official student body representative in March.

"It's a great sense of accomplishment that we were able to break down that wall and create a student position on the Board. Now our voice is heard that much more," said Jonathan, a National Honor Society member who plans to study Business Administration at the University of Rochester next year. He said that he and the SGA are already developing three proposals: introducing vending machines at LEAP, creating an outside café during warm weather, and creating a new bus stop in North Camden.

Once Jonathan graduates in June, a new elected student representative will take over the position on the Board, a succession that will repeat each school year.

Six seniors named Camden County's "Best of 2010"

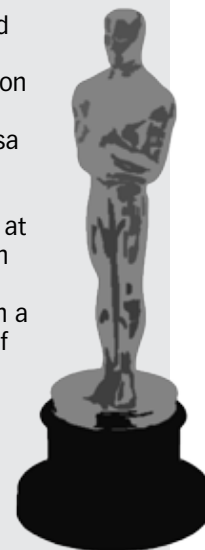


Six LEAP Academy students are among 192 seniors in Camden County to be chosen as "The Best of the Class of 2010" by the Camden County Freeholders and Constitutional Row Officers.

The following LEAP seniors were nominated by LEAP Academy faculty for one of six distinctions awarded by the Freeholders:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Leadership Award: | Melissa Edmond |
| Community Service Award: | Matthew Cottle |
| Performing Arts Award: | Shanice Anderson |
| Most Courageous Student: | Giovanna Rico |
| Most Improved Student: | Michael Espinosa |
| Best Overall Student: | Gabriel Molina |

On May 12th a special awards ceremony was held at Lucien's Manor in Berlin, NJ. At the ceremony each senior, along with the top six students from each high school in Camden County, was presented with a certificate and plaque by a member of the Board of Freeholders.



COLLEGE ACCESS NEWS

LEAP alumni give CCA's college prep efforts strong reviews

The Center for College Access received extremely positive reviews from LEAP Academy alumni for its work in preparing them for college, according to the results of a recent survey by the Rutgers CSUCL.

The alumni survey, developed in partnership between LEAP and the CSUCL, assessed the CCA's alumni outreach and pre-college services while also tracking alumni progress and engagement with the school. One-third of the school's alumni offered detailed feedback and 78 percent believed that they were provided with adequate college guidance by LEAP and the Center for College Access.

Through the efforts of the CCA, 87 percent of LEAP students were accepted to two or more colleges, with four in five students (79%) admitted to their 'first choice' school. Once at college, 80 percent felt that LEAP had prepared them for important academic areas such as reading level, written assignments, science, computer literacy, and positive decision-making.

In what is the most important measurement of the CCA's success, the survey revealed that 90 percent of alumni are either enrolled in college (81%) or have already graduated (9%). Furthermore, 65 percent of students who have completed at least one year of college reported that their first year GPA was 3.0 or higher.

The survey also highlighted the necessity for LEAP to continue its outreach and support. Three out of four alumni (74%) expressed interest in receiving post-graduate and career guidance from LEAP and the CCA. "With almost 90 percent of alumni staying in touch with fellow graduates and more than half keeping in touch with the school, there are vast opportunities for the College Access Center to engage these students and continue building their potentials for success," said CCA senior administrator Carmen Ubarry-Rivera.

Students continue college courses at Rutgers and Rowan

When LEAP senior José Napoleón walks into his first college classroom at Temple University this Fall, he will do so six credits ahead of most of his fellow students thanks to LEAP Academy's dual-credit partnerships with Rutgers-Camden and Rowan universities.

José is one of 30 LEAP students to take college courses this year at either Rutgers or Rowan and will be able to transfer these credits to his future college in September. "It's given me a good understanding of what college classes are like, because it's completely different than high school," said José.

Last Fall, 26 LEAP students completed courses at Rutgers and Rowan. The partnerships have continued this Spring, as 10 are enrolled in courses at Rutgers and another three at Rowan. For José, a 'B+' in Human Biology at Rowan last semester has improved to an 'A' in Algebra II this semester.

Although he's the only high school student in the class, he regularly gives classmates extra help. "I've always had a knack for science and math—it's everything I want to do in life. So it feels good to know I can help others understand it," he said.

José's work at LEAP earned him admission and a \$20,000 per year financial aid package from Temple University, where he plans to study Biology and enter the teacher preparation program. After graduation he wants to teach high school biology and then attend medical school in the hope of becoming an anesthesiologist.

"Hopefully [the dual-credit partnership] will continue because it's one of the best opportunities out there for high school students," José said.



The Road Less Traveled

by Khary Golden

Over the whirlwind of the past nine months, the Rutgers/LEAP Center for College Access has accomplished things that many of the children and families in Camden would think was part of the curriculum at a prestigious private school in neighboring Cherry Hill or Haddonfield.

Once again, the College Access Center has been able to add to LEAP Academy's legacy of 100 percent graduation and college acceptance. However, the Class of 2010 has outperformed its predecessors and is on track to send a record number of graduates to Rutgers University. The seniors have also raised the bar on the quantity and quality of college acceptances, with the majority planning to attend four-year schools such as Syracuse, Villanova, or American universities.

Yet there is another side to the unprecedented success of these "Legends of LEAP", as some are weighing the option of attending Camden County College to take advantage of its EOF program and to transfer to Rutgers after two years. Although these students may not have experienced the comfort of knowing they will find a home at Rutgers or another four-year school in the fall, they need look no further than three former LEAP students for inspiration and encouragement.

Nickkie Burgos spent two years at Camden County College where she carried on LEAP Academy's tradition of high academic standards with a 3.6 GPA. With the help of the College Access Center, Nickkie was able to make a seamless transition into Rutgers where she will pursue her Bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Likewise, class of 2005 graduate Angel Rivera was able to

utilize the programs and services offered through the Camden County College EOF program to earn an Associate's degree and next spring he will continue his education at Rowan University and major in ESL education.

Most recently, Ilia Napoleon, a standout student from the class of 2008, has taken advantage of the NJ Stars Program at Camden County College and is now deciding between transferring to Rutgers or Rowan next spring.

In an environment where high achievement and making a successful transition from high school to higher education is the norm, failing to amass a lengthy list of college and university acceptances can cause a great deal of unease for a graduating LEAP senior. For these students, sitting in class next to or conversing in the cafeteria with a classmate who has a clear vision of their future as a Rutgers student can be a very stressful situation.

Nevertheless, each day former LEAP Academy students are proving that attending Camden County College does not necessarily mean they have to lower their expectations of long-term professional success. Furthermore, CCC can prove to be the best financial decision as well, as students can save thousands of dollars fulfilling core credit requirements at a fraction of the cost of four-year schools.

Nickkie has her sights set on law school and becoming an attorney and Ilia will embark on a career path in criminal justice, while Angel has already begun his professional career as a substitute teacher at LEAP Academy.

These three students, and others just like them, have proven that with relentless focus, self-motivation, and a singular purpose, Camden County College can be a starting point on their path to Rutgers University and beyond.

New class of Rutgers Future Scholars announced



Rutgers Future Scholars, Class of 2014 - (BACK ROW): Heidy Estevez, Elias Duran, Tania Roman, Destiny Bingham, Sonjanit DeFrank; **(FRONT ROW):** Adianna Vadell, Roberto Cruz, Jessie Lopez, Dean Rosario, and Yaniera King

The Rutgers Future Scholars program has chosen its newest cohort of students for 2010, including 10 seventh graders from LEAP Academy's Class of 2014. These current 7th grade students will receive SAT training, career counseling, and on-campus experiences aimed at preparing them for college, beginning this summer and continuing through their senior year.

This marks the third group of LEAP students initiated into the Future Scholars program and if successfully completed, these students who gain admission to Rutgers University will receive four years of free tuition through grants and scholarships.

Eligible students must reside near one of Rutgers' current campuses (Camden, Newark, New Brunswick or Piscataway), have a minimum GPA of 3.0, and be a first generation college student in need of financial support for college.

In July these future scholars will join 40 other students in the program from Camden City to begin a summer orientation program at Rutgers-Camden where they will tour the campus and meet with students and faculty. Later this month they will be recognized by LEAP and the Center for College Access during its Spring Pinning Ceremony on May 27th.



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Senior Steven Phillips chooses Rutgers over 39 other colleges

They say the hardest part of being accepted to forty colleges is turning down thirty-nine—at least according to Steven Phillips. In a matter of only five months the LEAP Academy senior has exceeded everyone’s loftiest expectations by receiving admission letters from an incredible 40 colleges and universities.

“I wanted to see if I could do it,” Steven said. “I wanted the satisfaction of that accomplishment.” Steven has always been a standout student since he came to LEAP in 8th grade—a National Honor Society member, 3.7 GPA, World Language Club vice president, and a former officer in the SGA—but even he wasn’t prepared for his admissions success.



Yet even with 40 colleges to choose from like Howard, Syracuse, and Hampton, he ended up choosing the one school he has wanted to attend all along. “I’ve always thought I would end up at Rutgers,” said Steven, who will enroll at Rutgers–New Brunswick this fall to study Communications.

Steven will enter Rutgers’ Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program this summer but when he heads to New Brunswick it won’t be his first time in a college classroom. He has already completed nine credits at Rutgers–Camden thanks to the dual-credit partnership between LEAP and the university.

“I feel like this is where I belong,” said Steven, who hopes to enter the Rutgers School of Journalism’s five-year Master’s program in communications and information studies, followed by a career in broadcast journalism or public relations.

Though some have questioned why he applied to so many schools, Steven hopes his success can raise the bar for future LEAP students. “It’s not only an accomplishment for me, but it can be an inspiration to other students and give them confidence to apply to college,” he said.

The underlying theme of Steven’s accomplishment is the fact that college admission, alone, is no longer the goal; each year students set their sights on more acceptances, more financial aid, and higher prestige schools. In fact, at least one LEAP junior has already told Steven he will eclipse his 40-college mark next year.

Mariah Castillo heading to Rutgers–Camden School of Nursing

As recently as September, LEAP Academy senior Mariah Castillo didn’t plan to attend college. Mariah, like several thousand seniors across the country each year, had developed a genuine interest in serving in the military, and planned to enlist in the Air Force after graduation.

“I’ve always been interested in the military,” Mariah said. “It seemed like my best bet and I thought I had all the qualities to contribute to it.” She had put off filling out any college applications but at the suggestion of a friend and with the encouragement of the College Access Center Mariah chose to submit a few applications “just to give myself some options,” she said.

A few weeks later she got her first acceptance letters and it completely changed her perspective. “It was a wake up call—I thought ‘I can really do this,’” she said and began submitting more applications. In all, Mariah was admitted to 11 colleges and universities, but her familiarity with the Rutgers–Camden campus led her to enroll in its School of Nursing.



That familiarity came from spending time on campus as one of 16 LEAP students who took college classes at Rutgers–Camden this year. “I got a feel for what college will be like. I feel like I have a head start on other freshman.”

Mariah plans to live on campus, a move she thinks will help her focus remain completely on school as she pursues the same profession she had hoped to in the military: nursing. “My family was supporting me in either choice but my mom was proud I chose college.” Perhaps because when Mariah officially attends Rutgers in September she will become the first person in her family to attend college, a day that is fast approaching.

“Wow, this is real,” she said. “The nerves are kicking in but I feel prepared, I can do this. I know I need to go into this headstrong because I want to be the one [in my family] to finish.”

16 seniors to enroll at Rutgers University

Nearly one-third of the Class of 2010 has committed to attend Rutgers University for the fall 2010 semester. In all, a record 16 out of 55 LEAP seniors (29%) will enroll in one of Rutgers' three campuses in September.

This year's total marks the largest number of LEAP seniors ever to enroll at Rutgers and more than triples the amount of students who enrolled there in 2009 (five). Of the 16, the majority (13) will attend the Rutgers-Camden campus while two head to New Brunswick and one to Newark.

"I've always wanted to attend Rutgers-Camden, it's my first choice," said senior Angel Cintron, who took courses this year at the university. He plans to study broadcast communications at Rutgers, where his sister Shantina is a senior. "I wanted to follow in my sister's footsteps and make my family proud," he said.

Senior Sandilee Ramos will also enroll at Rutgers-Camden. She hopes to become either an attorney or a writer. "I've grown up in Camden. It's close to home and I'm very familiar with the campus," Sandilee said. "Plus it has a great law program."

"[Rutgers] is one of the top two schools in New Jersey," said senior Jozian Molina, who will attend the Camden campus to major in liberal arts. "It's local and a small campus so it's really convenient for me. I feel at home here." After Rutgers, Jozian will go on to graduate school at Temple for a Master's in Speech pathology.

Though 16 will enroll, a total of 19 seniors were accepted to Rutgers this year, another high mark for LEAP Academy. Three admitted students—Melissa Edmond (Howard Univ.), Gabriel Molina (Villanova), and Thomas Flores (Valley Forge Military College)—have chosen to attend other colleges, but each



Seniors attending Rutgers: Tiara Miller, Shanice Anderson (Newark), Mariah Castillo, Jozian Molina, Sandilee Ramos, Xavier Rodriguez, and Michael Espinosa. **Not Pictured:** Angel Cintron, Joshua Figueroa, Tiara Miller, Londell Morgan, Brian Nieves (New Brunswick), Steven Phillips (New Brunswick), Giovana Rico, Mercedes Rolon, Denzel Satterfield, Tashell Woodson

strongly considered Rutgers.

The record number of enrollments spotlights the continuing benefits and success of the Rutgers-LEAP partnership, one that has grown each year since the school was founded and now includes the Center for College Access, dual-credit courses at Rutgers for LEAP seniors, and six current LEAP Board of Trustees members from Rutgers, including Dr. Santiago and Chancellor Wendell Pritchett.

More importantly for these students, attending Rutgers now means they have the chance to apply for the Alfredo Santiago Scholarship, which offers financial aid to LEAP graduates attending Rutgers. Since 2005, 25 LEAP alumni have received the scholarship but with so many talented seniors heading to Rutgers this year that number is guaranteed to increase.

WISDOM from Seniors

LEAP Academy seniors share some advice with LEAP underclassmen on senior year and the college application process.



"Get things done on time. Don't procrastinate, because procrastination doesn't get you the things you really want in life."
—Tiara Miller



"Make sure you maintain good grades, so you have the best chance to get into the school of your dreams."
—Matthew Cottle



"The college application process may seem hard, but it's just the beginning. Deciding where you want to go can be the hardest part."
—Sandilee Ramos



"Start researching colleges and career paths in your junior year. It will save you a lot of time and energy during your senior year."
—Angel Cintron



"Stay focused on your goals and never give up. And when you do lose focus, remember your visions of future success."
—Josh Figueroa



"Make sure you have a plan starting in your freshman year, to get the best grades possible. Because by senior year, it may be too late."
—Melissa Edmond

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Alumnus brings university science lab back to LEAP

For LEAP Class of 2008 graduate Vernard Lindsay, science is a path that he has followed ever since graduating LEAP. Now a sophomore at Widener University studying Biochemistry, Vernard was recently admitted to the university's Honors program. Scheduled to graduate in 2012 with a Bachelor's of Science, he is on a pre-med track and hopes to one day become a doctor or chemistry professor.

But when it comes to minority students taking an interest in science and chemistry, Vernard thinks he is the exception, not the norm. "There aren't many minorities studying chemistry or biochemistry," Vernard said. "There's a misconception out there that these subjects aren't interesting or perhaps too demanding."

That perception, he said, needs to change.

So on May 4th, Vernard and a team of chemistry professors from Widener came to LEAP Academy to host a science "slime lab" for 7th grade students. For almost an hour, professors worked with LEAP students on chemistry solutions and other activities to the enjoyment of all those who participated.

The lab was part of a larger Widener University project to bring science education and experiences to inner city schools. "The goal is to contest the idea that science can be intimidating, especially chemistry," Vernard said. "It would be nice if some of these students now became science majors."

This event comes at a time when LEAP and the CSUCL are developing plans to create a S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) high school, something Vernard said is long overdue in Camden City.

"We need more minorities studying and teaching science. S.T.E.M. will help students explore their full academic potential," he said. "I don't want students to simply go to college, I want them to become doctors and take on more challenging work."



2005 graduate returns to teach at LEAP

Five years after graduating LEAP Academy, Class of 2005 alumni Angel Rivera has come back to LEAP to teach in the same classrooms he once sat in as a high school senior. Since December of last year Angel has worked as a substitute teacher at the school, teaching Spanish and coaching the 7th and 8th grade boys' basketball team.

He could substitute teach anywhere but said he felt great to be able to do it at LEAP and give back to the school. "It's really rewarding. I like teaching and it's a very good feeling for me to be able to give back," Angel said. "The school helped me so much so I knew I had to work here before anywhere else."

In 2009 he completed his Associate's degree in business administration at Camden County College as part of school's EOF program. In his time there he kept in regular contact with the College Access Center and once spoke with a group of LEAP students who were brought to tour the campus. Now back at LEAP, he said the school has changed since his time as a student. "LEAP has grown and it keeps growing with even more programs and sports," he said. "It's a vast improvement."

"It's really important for a school to continue teaching children to get ready for college," Angel said. "They taught us to be prompt and on time with our college documents, and gave us real world college experience with teachers and college campuses."

Next spring he will enroll at Rowan University and pursue a Bachelor's degree and certification for ESL education, then continue a teaching career in Camden City. "I was born and raised here in Camden so I understand where these students are coming from," he said, which helps him relate to them as a former student. "It's important that students have an outlet. Anything they need, I'm here to speak about it."

LEAP alum Angel Roman graduates Honors College at Rutgers-Camden



On May 24th, LEAP Class of 2005 alumnus Angel Roman graduated from the Rutgers–Camden Honors College, becoming the first person in his family to complete a college degree. Angel, the salutatorian of LEAP’s first-ever graduating class, earned his Bachelor’s degree by majoring in both Psychology and Music.

He said his success at Rutgers was the result of hard work. “It doesn’t matter where you go to school, what your background is, or what you like to do. As long as you are committed and dedicated to bettering yourself, you can always achieve what you want,” Angel said.

Like many LEAP Academy students, Angel was the first person in his family to attend college and said they have been anticipating graduation as much as he has. “It makes my family extremely proud, but they would not have expected anything less—and I don’t think that they should have.”

Angel was as successful at Rutgers as he was at LEAP Academy, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, the chess club, and school Jazz Band. Angel said that being part of the first LEAP Class to graduate was overwhelming but the College Access Center helped prepare him for the transition. “LEAP helped me realize that college would be asking for more out of me than I had ever given.”

Angel has two younger brothers in college who have also graduated from LEAP and he hopes that the success of all LEAP graduates can be a positive influence on them and other LEAP students and alumni. “I think it might encourage others to know that we were capable of graduating and going on to do bigger and better things,” Angel said.

Angel finished with a 3.3 GPA and now plans to pursue a career as a therapist or research psychologist but hopes to someday compose music for movies or video game soundtracks, a passion he developed as treasurer of a Rutgers student club called Game Day Live.

But now that he has graduated he knows it is still not the end of his education. “My education is not over; learning is a life-long goal,” he said, and plans to go on to graduate school for a Ph.D. in Psychology. “The key is to remain focused and dedicated, because that is what separates success from failure.”



LEAP Alumni news

Brian Phillips (Class of 2005) will graduate from Rutgers–New Brunswick’s Cook College in May.

Ioaki Sanchez (Class of 2006) will graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Rutgers–New Brunswick in 2011. He plans to enter law school and the Teach For America program.

Elvin Porrata (Class of 2005) graduated from Rider University in 2009 and is working as a preschool teacher in Camden City.

Vernard Lindsay (Class of 2008) has been admitted to the Honors Chemistry program at Widener University.

Angel Roman (Class of 2005) graduated from Rutgers–Camden in May 2010. He recently completed a musical composition as part of his senior thesis.

Ilia Napoleón (Class of 2008) will transfer from Camden County College to Rutgers–Camden for the Fall 2010 semester to study Psychology.

Marteha Stewart (Class of 2005) graduated from the Rutgers Mason School of the Arts in May of this year. Her work was featured in an art show at Rutgers in April.

Jonathan Perez (Class of 2008) was recently admitted into the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at Rutgers–Camden.

Silvia Vasquez (Class of 2005) graduated Villanova in May 2009 with a B.S. in Engineering and is currently teaching at LEAP Academy.



10 students accepted into National Honor Society

Ten LEAP Academy students were inducted into the National Honor Society during the school's 7th Annual NHS Induction Ceremony on April 26th.

The following students, in honor of their academic excellence, service, and leadership, received membership pins and joined 52 of their classmates already in the NHS:

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| Julie Cruz (Grade 11) | Stephanie Cruz (11) |
| Aja Feliciano (9) | Tyrell Jackson (11) |
| Keyandria Jenkins (11) | Cheylali Medina (9) |
| Sandilee Ramos (12) | Felisha Robinson (11) |
| Natalie Rodriquez (11) | Ariane Rodriguez (10) |



Student leaders recognized at Center's first LEAP Pinning Ceremony

The College Access Center's first Semi-Annual Pinning Ceremony highlighted the achievement of LEAP students involved in school leadership initiatives. A total of 56 LEAP students from grades 9-12 were awarded certificates for their involvement in the Student Government Association and school Senate, Teen PEP, and the National Hispanic Institute.

LEAP and Camden County College prepare seniors with intro-level courses

For the first time, a partnership with Camden County College is allowing LEAP seniors to take introductory-level college courses to prepare for next fall. The non-credit courses in math and language arts are being administered on-site at LEAP Academy in order to prepare students for their college placement exams this summer.

Twelve students are enrolled in these courses, which will help them improve test scores and avoid taking remedial courses at their future colleges.

The partnership comes at a time when, nationally, more students are entering college unprepared in reading and math. In fact, the US Department of Education says one-third of all college freshmen have taken at least one remedial college course, according to an article by USA Today.

Furthermore, students who need remedial classes at college are more likely to drop out, with only 17 percent completing a bachelor's degree, according to a 2004 study by the US Department of Education. Through this partnership, the Center for College Access is ensuring not only that LEAP seniors are ready for their college coursework, but ready to excel.

LEAP College Fair brings 25 colleges to LEAP

The College Access Center's annual LEAP Academy Citywide College Fair gave students from LEAP and other Camden high schools the opportunity to speak to admissions representatives from 25 national colleges and universities. Students had the chance to explore academic majors at 25 schools such as **Rutgers University, Yale, Temple, Villanova, Rowan, Howard, and The College of New Jersey.**



CBS Vice President offers career advices to LEAP juniors

Rebecca Borden, an attorney and the Vice President of the CBS Corporation, was a special guest speaker at LEAP Academy on March 26th when she offered advice to juniors about their future career options. Borden spoke about her work with CBS, the company's films and television programs, and her work as an intellectual property attorney, which has taken her all over the world.





FOUNDING SCHOLARS from cover page

LEAP has changed a lot since then as the trailers were replaced by a new elementary school building then a new high school. But one thing the founding scholars say has stayed the same is the support they have received from the community of students, teachers, and parents.

"The small school community offered a great support structure. Teachers already know our names and learning styles and advisors look out for you," said Julie Cruz. Julie is enrolling in Camden County College's EOF program for two years then plans to transfer into the Rutgers School of Nursing.

"It feels great walking into LEAP every day, you feel welcome when you come here," said Brian Nieves, who is currently on the waiting list for Brown University. At the moment Brian has chosen to attend Rutgers-New Brunswick, where he will study political science then attend law school, but still hopes to hear good news from Brown.

But what sets these students apart from the other 45 seniors is that the only school they have ever called home is LEAP Academy, a fact that had a tremendous impact on their lives. "I think it made me who I am. I was able to build relationships with teachers which helped me to learn," said Shanice, who will enroll in the Rutgers-Newark School of Nursing then pursue a doctorate. "I would not be the person I am today," Josh said. "I've gotten the best education possible. Without LEAP I wouldn't be choosing between such great colleges," said Brian.

They agreed it was a great accomplishment to complete their entire K-12 education at LEAP and also be a part of a charter school. "It feels great to have been at one school and gotten one educational experience," said Julie. "We've had so many opportunities here, I'm grateful because other students never experience what we have," said Melissa, who plans to enter the pre-pharmacy program at Howard University.

"It was unique to be a part of the charter school experience," said Josh, who is attending Rutgers-Camden to study criminal justice. "We started with a small group and a big vision and it grew into a great school. It's really an inspiration for me to believe in my own ideas."

Meanwhile, the remaining seven founding scholars who are part of LEAP's original kindergarten class have also been successful. Fedrix Flores and Eric Macias will attend Rowan; Nadirah O'Neal, Penn State; Xaveia Sanders, Burlington Co. College, José Ortiz, Rutgers-Camden; Jamil Davis, Albright College; and class valedictorian Gabriel Molina will enroll at Villanova University.

But even as graduation and the end of their time at LEAP approaches, these seniors are looking forward to the future college experience that awaits them.

"It's going to be hard but I'm ready," Julie said. "I'm looking forward to meeting new people," said Brian. "Our work here is done, I'm ready to take the next step," Melissa said. "I can't wait. People here have watched me grow up and they are really happy for me now. It means everything," added Shanice.

"I've been amazed with my senior year," said Josh. "I'm going to miss it but I'm ready to go. LEAP prepared me for what I'm going to do. This is where my life really begins."



CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP: A look back at some LEAP seniors in Kindergarten from 1997: (1) Federix Flores, (2) Josh Figueroa, (3) Jamil Davis, (4) Gabriel Molina

(2) Senior Gabriel Molina at Kindergarten graduation in June 1998 and as a Senior in 2010; (3) Fedrix Flores with his Kindergarten diploma; (4) Melissa Edmond as a senior in 2010 and with her mother, LEAP Board member Odessa Edmond-Ingram at kindergarten graduation in 1998

A LOOK AHEAD

Gov. Christie will keynote LEAP's 2010 Graduation Ceremony

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has been slated as the keynote speaker for LEAP Academy's 2010 High School Graduation Ceremony on Wednesday, June 30, 2010 at 6:00pm.

The 2010 ceremony will take place at the Gordon Theater on the Rutgers-Camden campus, where 56 seniors in the Class of 2010 will become LEAP's sixth class to graduate and begin their undergraduate college pursuits.

A week prior to graduation, the CCA will host a special "Senior Send-off" on June 22nd that will celebrate the Class of 2010's accomplishments in academics, athletics, and student groups such as SGA and National Honor Society. The event will also spotlight each senior's chosen college.

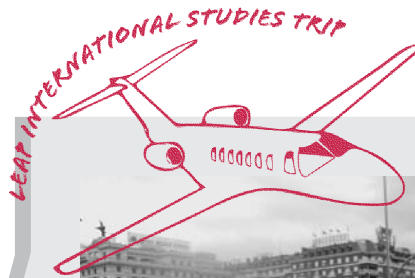
- ✓ LEAP Senior Send-off: **Tuesday, June 22nd, 6:00**
- ✓ LEAP 2010 Graduation: **Wednesday, June 30th, 6:00**

Underclassmen prepare for 2010 Summer programs

Even before the senior class graduates, the underclassmen they are leaving behind will already have begun their work to follow the seniors on to college. Beginning as early as June, 10th and 11th grade students at LEAP will begin several summer educational programs.

Nine LEAP students have already committed to two National Hispanic Institute programs this summer, one at the University of Rochester in New York (two students) and a second at Colorado State University (seven students).

Meanwhile, several students have applied to other summer programs, such as the New Jersey Governor's Schools for the Environment (Stockton), Engineering (Rutgers), and Science (Drew); Rutgers-Camden's "Biz-Ed" program; the Rutgers Douglass Science Institute; the UMDNJ Science Enrichment Program; and Morehouse College's "Project Identity".



Students travel to Spain on International Studies trip

Ten LEAP Academy students and two teachers spent a week in Spain last month as part of LEAP's new International Studies program. From April 2-9, LEAP teachers Ana Garcia and Yvette Hernandez visited Madrid and Barcelona with LEAP students Julie Cruz, Michael Espinosa, Tomas Flores, Gabriel Molina, José Napoleon, Stephanie Nunez, Stephen Phillips, Mercedes Rolon, Jocelyn Rosa, and Dayron Torres.

The eight-day trip was divided between Madrid and Barcelona, with day-trips to Zaragoza, Segovia, and Girona. Students had the chance to tour and photograph each city's historic architectural and cultural centers and enjoy food from Spanish marketplaces.

"This trip was a great experience for our students, who were able to see and put in practice what they learned in class," said LEAP Spanish teacher Ana Garcia. "It was a great success and the students said 'the class was a lot of work, but it was worth it.'"

The trip was arranged and financed by LEAP Academy as part of the school's new International Studies course last year that introduced them to the history and culture of Spain.

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