



*Committee to Advance our Common Purposes*  
*Annual Executive Summary*  
*June 29, 2007*  
*Meredith Davis, Associate Director*  
*Social Justice Education and Staff to the Committee*

Established in 1987, the *Committee to Advance our Common Purposes* (CACP) continues its mission of promoting a bias-free environment for the university. Administered by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, the *Committee to Advance our Common Purposes* implemented university-wide programs and initiatives in 2006-2007 to promote and celebrate the value of diversity and advance the goals of the university's Presidential commitment to diversity.

**Noteworthy accomplishments of the Committee to Advance Our Common**

**Purposes in 2006-2007 include:**

**Grants Program 2006- 2007**

- Forty Two proposals for programs that advance the goals of the Committee to Advance our Common Purposes were funded in 2006-2007:

***Jazz and Java***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Douglass Campus  
Douglass Black Students Congress

***Gender and Globalization***

Rutgers Newark  
Women Studies Department-Newark

***Writers at Rutgers***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
English Department

***Once on this Island***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Livingston Theater Company

***Being and Becoming: Perspectives on Global South Asia***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Women's and Gender Studies Department

***Peppermint Players***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority

***RU SAFER Spring Break***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Sexual Education Services

***The Women's Studies Symposium***

Rutgers Newark  
Women Studies Department-Newark

***Camden Model UN Conference***

Rutgers Camden  
Student Affairs

***Shakespeare in East Asia Conference***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Department of English

***"Build the Dream": Educational Banquet***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

***Health and Bodies, Race, Gender, Sexual Identity and Disability***

New Brunswick Campus  
Institute for Research on Women

***Human Rights House Documentation Project***

New Brunswick Campus  
Human Rights House

***Day in the Life of a College Student***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

***The “N” word***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

***RCC Dream Team Competition***

New Brunswick Campus  
Cantonese Club

***Dinner and Show: Here and Now Theatre***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Asian American Cultural Center

***Bronx Witch Project***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Lambda Theta Alpha Sorority

***Safe Zone Program***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Lambda Theta Alpha Sorority

***Gulf Coast poets Read for Katrina***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
English Department

***Latino Hip Hop and Reggaeton Today***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Center for Latino Arts and Culture

***Unity Week***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Black Student Union

***Marion Thomson Wright Public Lecture***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Institute for Ethnicity, Race, and the Modern Experience

***Ambassador Lecture***

Rutgers Newark  
Ambassador Program

***Alternative Spring Break***

Rutgers New Brunswick (in place of NCORE)  
Office of Social Justice Education

***Civil Rights Symposium***

Rutgers Newark  
Rutgers New Brunswick  
Office of Social Justice Education  
Center on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience

***Highlighting Asian Americans***

New Brunswick Campus  
Asian American Cultural Center

***EOPSA's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Multicultural Show***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
EOPSA

***Israel's Birthday Bonanza***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Black Student Union and Rutgers Hillell

***Day without Hate***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Rutgers Hillell

***Nuyorican Poets Café***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity

***The Prizm Project***

Rutgers New Brunswick  
Prizm Project Organization

***Rutgers Camden Environmental Racism Conference***

Camden Campus  
Social Justice Student Alliance

***People of the Book Award***

New Brunswick Campus  
Wesley Fellowship

- **The 2007 Rutgers Human Dignity Awards** were presented to five individuals/groups for extraordinary accomplishments in promoting diversity and inter-cultural alliance among members of the university community. President Richard McCormick presented the awards at a ceremony on April 19, 2007, to Allen

and Joan Bildner, The Rutgers Camden Center for the Arts, Institute for Jazz Studies, Tynesha McHarris, and Dr. Cheryl Wall.

- **Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Joan Bildner, Philanthropist and founders of The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life (located in Rutgers New Brunswick).** Allen and Joan Bildner have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to developing programs that further justice, equality and diversity at a variety of institutions. At Rutgers University, the Bildners founded the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.
- **Rutgers Camden Center for the Arts** Founded in 1976, Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts (RCCA) is a multi-venue arts institution located on the Camden, NJ waterfront which produces and presents year-round programs in the Visual Arts, Performing Arts, and Arts Education.
- **Institute for Jazz Studies, Rutgers Newark:** The Institute for Jazz Studies under the leadership Dan Morgenstern, Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, was honored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as Jazz Master for 2007. This award, given to those who have made exceptional contributions to the advancement of jazz, was presented in New York City on January 12, 2007.
- **Tynesha McHarris, Rutgers Newark:** Tynesha Mc Harris is a double major in Political Science and Sociology and a minor in Urban Studies and Community Development. She was instrumental in bringing the first "Freedom School" to Newark, a program started by the Children's Defense

Fund (CDF), the national advocacy voice for all children in American. The CDF Freedom School program is a national summer and after-school enrichment program designed to serve children in communities where "quality academic enrichment programs are rare, too costly, or absent." Tynesha brought this program to Newark where, in partnership with schools, churches, and colleges, it serves as a haven for more than 50 children to learn and believe in themselves.

- **Dr. Cheryl Wall, SAS English Department, Rutgers, New Brunswick:** Dr. Wall is the former chair of the department; Professor Wall remains active in university affairs. In 2003, she was co-principal with Mary Hartman of the Institute for Women's Leadership on "Reaffirming Action: Designs for Diversity in Higher Education." She was named a Board of Governors Professor of English in December 2006. She currently serves as the Co-Chair for the Task Force for Undergraduate Education, Rutgers, New Brunswick.

- **Working Group on Student Diversity Equity and Excellence:**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is among the nation's premier public research universities. Unfortunately, like its peer institutions, the university faces numerous challenges in ensuring that educational opportunities and outcomes are equitable for all students.

During the fall 2006 semester, President McCormick charged the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes with establishing a working group that would begin to look at the educational outcomes for all undergraduate students, with a particular focus on

historically underrepresented populations. The President also asked that Common Purposes mark the 40th anniversary of the Newark riots in July of 1967.

In this spirit, the Working Group for Student Diversity, Equity and Excellence was established to respond to the first charge and conducted its research and produced the following report.

The enrollment, retention and graduation of historically underrepresented students on predominantly white colleges and university campuses is a national concern (Aragon and Perez, 2006; Tinto, 1993; Torres, Hamilton and Cooper, 2003; Hurtado, et al, 1999). For public, flagship research universities, the inequities in the enrollment and graduation outcomes for historically underrepresented minority and lower income students, in comparison to their more affluent and White classmates, is one that continues to grow despite the increased amount of these students' participation in postsecondary education and high student academic aspirations (Gerald and Haycock, 2006; Noel-Levitz, 2007). A diverse campus that includes structural diversity (e.g. students and faculty/staff); opportunities for cross-racial interaction and curricular and pedagogical approaches that are inclusive of all students helps enhance and institution's campus climate and subsequently can impact its ability to successfully graduate students (Hurtado, et al, 1999). Individuals who are educated in diverse settings are more likely to work and live in diverse settings after they graduate. Those who study and discuss race and ethnicity in their academic courses and interact with diverse peers in college are better prepared for life in an increasingly diverse society. However, these types of productive learning

environments cannot be created unless there is a diverse student body (Hurtado, et al, 2003).

The Working Group then sought to investigate how Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, could address the academic success of all students while focusing specifically on the experiences of underrepresented populations.

### **Working Group Members**

Membership for the working group was selected from with the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes Steering Committee at the September 2006 Steering Committee Meeting. These individuals represented various perspectives across the university.

- Ji Baek- Asian American Cultural Center
- Chris Catching, Multicultural Student Engagement, *Chair*
- Diane Harris, Undergraduate Admissions
- Meredith Davis-Johnson- Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities
- Triveni Kuchi, University Libraries
- Richard White- Career Services
- James H. Whitney III, Educational Opportunity Program
- Cheryl F. Wilson, Student Activities, Douglass College

### **Working Group Process**

The Working Group met throughout the 2006-07 academic year. At the first meeting in November 2006, the group decided to approach the research in the following manner:

#### **A) Guiding Questions:**

- 1) What is the most recent 6-year graduation rate for undergraduate students at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey?
- 2) How do Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey's campuses 6-year graduation rates compare with its peer AAU public research universities?

- 3) What peer institutions significantly exceed Rutgers in its overall 6-year graduation rates for all undergraduates?
- 4) Which institutions significantly exceed Rutgers in their 6-year graduation rates of students of color?
- 5) What factors helped these institutions engage, retain and graduate students of color on their campus?

## **Limitations**

The study is meant to provide the impetus for an initial discussion of ways that Rutgers can address educational equity and outcome deficits on its campuses. Deeper analysis of student educational outcomes as it relates to specific institutional offices, programs and initiatives are needed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between institutional structures and resources focused on campus diversity and equity and student persistence.

- In response to the President's second charge the Institute for the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and the Modern World and the Office of Social Justice Education (Student Affairs) co-sponsored with the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, **“Ordinary People: Extraordinary Times,”** a two-day symposium which marked the fortieth anniversary of the Newark riots, in July of 1967, in the aftermath of which major social change occurred at Rutgers University. The symposium was also a complement to the newly established course (SAS/English and Women's Studies Departments) on the civil rights movement, “Extraordinary People, Extraordinary Courage: the Politics of Gender and the Black Freedom Movement.” The class

examined memoirs, biographies, novels, poetry and oral history from World War II to the early 1970s. The public Symposium started on the Newark campus on March 6 with a lecture by Ms. Judy Richardson, Civil Rights activist and one of the producers of the PBS series Eyes on the Prize. "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Times: A Symposium on the 1960's Black Freedom Movement" took place on the New Brunswick/Piscataway Campus on March 7 and included scholars, activists, and Rutgers alumnae who shared their experiences and scholarship on this important time in our history as a nation, as a state, and as a University. Professor Clement A. Price moderated the four hour symposium presented. This began what we decided would be a two year commemoration of the interracial tensions and resolutions in the state of New Jersey (1967- 1969).

- **Co-sponsorship of the Marion Thompson Wright Lecture, “Time Longer Than A Rope: Historical Memory and the Black Atlantic** examined what scholars, students and citizens can learn from the new scholarship on what is remembered in the black experience, and what is forgotten within the Black Atlantic. The expression “**time longer than rope**” is a West Indian slave proverb, the rope being the symbol of slavery. It signifies the slaves’ ability to endure beyond the bondage of enslavement. This one-day program acknowledged the centrality of memory in understanding the complexity of African American life after the Civil War, the role of memory in societies on the African continent and those in the Americas, the influence of memory on the construction of the black past, commemoration, identity, and the use of memory in contemporary scholarship on the Black Atlantic.

- **Co- sponsorship of the Ambassadors Program Rutgers Newark:** The Ambassador Program provides key opportunities to showcase our students to Newark youth and to market the advantages of attending Rutgers Newark. The Ambassadors come from similar backgrounds as NPS students: low income, many first generation college students, diverse in race, nationality, and culture. The Ambassador Program will also serve as pipeline information on the pre-college programs at R-N serving Newark and surrounding communities. A Focus Group meeting and reception for students and guidance staff will be planned at the end of each year to evaluate this measure and its continuation.
- **Co-sponsorship of “Common Ground”: Rutgers Camden Environmental Racism Conference:** The “Common Ground” conference is for anyone invested in Camden city --personal, professional, academic or otherwise. This conference is intended to look at environmental justice in the city of Camden, its effects, and how to make the city a healthier place to live. Environmental racism is defined by the Environmental Justice Community of Concern as: “A neighborhood or community composed predominantly of persons of color or a substantial proportion of persons below the poverty line that is subjected to a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and/or experiences a significantly reduced quality of life relative to surrounding or comparative communities”. The conference focus is to create a space where the attendees can learn about environmental injustice and identify the avenues, people and organizations that can help us in this struggle.
- **Erena Rae Bias Prevention Artistic Competition:** The Committee to Advance our Common Purposes and the New Brunswick-Piscataway Campus-wide Bias Prevention

Poster Contest expanded upon the very successful “ Help Stop the Hate” Poster Competition initiated at Rutgers College in 1991. This year the contest was named in honor of Erena Rae, former chair Dr. Gustav Friedrich’s wife who passed last summer. She was a printmaker and contributed to the New Brunswick and Highland Park community. The purpose of the contest was to encourage students to be creative in addressing racial, gender, religious, sexual, prejudice, and bigotry, this year’s campus-wide contest engaged the whole community in bias prevention and multicultural awareness. The artistic work emphasized a strong anti-bias/multicultural stance. Each winner received a \$500 cash prize and their work will be used in bias prevention advertisements. This year’s winners were:

- **Nakeya Brown:** Rutgers New Brunswick/ Piscataway
  - **Human Development Project:** New Brunswick/ Piscataway
  - **John Mathis:** Newark Campus
- **Committee to Advance our Common Purposes (CACP) bi-annual newsletter** provides the university community with updates regarding the diverse activities undertaken by the CACP. The newsletters serve as an informational resource to promote and encourage the on-going activities of the CACP.