

# BRIDGES

Public Service, Personal Responsibility

Volume 1 Issue 1

**“Consumed:”**  
Creating  
Community  
Conversation

Robeson Gallery  
Exhibit Tells  
Newark Stories  
Through Artifacts

PAGE 12

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NEWARK



# Building Community BRIDGES

BRIDGES MAGAZINE showcases community-engaged research, teaching, and practice across the Rutgers University–Newark campus and with area partners. It is published by the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) with support from the school's Office of Community Engagement and Office of Communications, and is sponsored by the RU-N Chancellor's Office.

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## BRIDGES MAGAZINE

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### Cover Photo

*Esther Baker, video still from “La Ville En Mouv’m ent” les arts dans la rue, Performance by Propelled Animals and Guests in Senegal, 2023, single channel production, 16 min 29 seconds. (photo courtesy of the artist)*

# LETTER FROM THE Chancellor of RU-N



**Dr. Tonya Smith-Jackson**  
Chancellor  
Rutgers University–Newark

In 2025, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA). What an amazing night of celebration. I met many proud Rutgers University–Newark (RU-N) SPAA alumni, whose success and impact were visible within seconds of my engagement with them. SPAA alumni continue to excel in all sectors—nonprofit, government, industry, education, healthcare, and many others. Public affairs and administration as a discipline and profession is alive and well, with no sign of a lessening of importance. In fact, as I pondered the next 50 years of SPAA during the celebration, I came to the realization that public affairs and administration will continue to be a driver of policy development, advocacy, communication, management and implementation of programs and services. Why? It's simple: the world continues to be faced with challenges that are either entirely unexpected, or while not unexpected, the timing and magnitude have caught us unprepared.

Take artificial intelligence as an example. While the foundations were laid in the 1950s in publications focused on machine intelligence, AI-powered technologies seeped into the general public sphere only in the 2000s when Netflix and Amazon

integrated certain forms of machine learning to facilitate the user experience. While these were more precursors to AI (e.g., recommender systems), the past 15 years have introduced products that allow the public to use AI-powered technologies to perform tasks, such as image generation, research, writing and conversational exchanges. While the proliferation of AI in products and systems yields obvious benefits, negative consequences cannot be avoided. Public discourse has escalated around the safety of AI-powered, self-driving vehicles, fairness of AI-driven financial and risk assessment software, dangers of use of AI to support medical and legal decision-making, academic integrity of students' use of AI in the teaching and learning environment, and even use of AI to replace human artists in the creation of music and visual arts.

To me, it is clear that we need SPAA to provide more opportunities for students to gain expertise in the knowledge and application of competencies in public affairs and administration, especially around AI. Public affairs and administration experts can help prevent harm by developing policies, practices, voluntary standards and statutory authorities to ensure AI benefits the public good. Certainly there

are professional societies such as IEEE and ACM that have established standards for ethics and practices to place guardrails around the use and development of AI-powered technologies to minimize disparate impacts and impose accountability of developers. To do this, we will need to build institutional capacity and literacy around AI in the curriculum and experiential learning opportunities. In my opinion, the greatest contribution of SPAA to address the rapidly increasing integration of AI into the public space is to engage public discourse around the public value of AI; not just the technical value.

There have been too many occasions in our history where the short-term technical and economic benefits of products or systems have over-shadowed critical thought around public value. Public value addresses the extent to which a product or system serves democratic values, equity and justice, human dignity and institutional legitimacy. In the teaching of innovation science, a common example to engage

students' understanding is the case of the Sami (in Finland) and the snowmobile. This story is well known and dates back to the 1960s. The Sami culture and social structure were heavily influenced by reindeer.

Hunting and tracking reindeer, using the migration patterns of reindeer to drive the rhythm of certain cultural practices, and reindeer engagement influenced cultural beliefs and patterns. The introduction of the snowmobile disrupted reindeer herding, introduced noise and stress to the extent of reducing reindeer fertility, and disrupted the communal divisions of labor among the Sami. Snowmobiles increased efficiency, but weakened intergenerational knowledge transfer, increased economic pressures on the Sami and reduced the cultural rhythms tied to land, silence and animal behavior.

Examples like this have convinced me that SPAA's next 50 years will be even more impactful as we continue to move forward as an AI-driven culture. SPAA is well positioned at Rutgers-Newark, an institution

that has proven its capabilities in community-engaged research and application. SPAA will be a leader in policy and public affairs in the framework of innovation science, where public and cultural implications can be examined critically, explained and even predicted using a lens based on lived experience as a trusted community partner, especially among cultures often marginalized or disrupted by irresponsible or short-sighted implementation of technologies.

There is no better place for this type of expertise to thrive given the intellectual and community-engaged expertise at RU-N. As we look to the next 50 years, the School of Public Affairs and Administration—together with the Institute for Data, Research and Innovation Science (IDRIS)—will harness this powerful combination of public purpose and data-driven innovation around AI to advance the public good, especially for communities too often left at the margins.



# LETTER FROM THE Dean of Rutgers SPAA



**Dr. Kaifeng Yang**  
Dean & Professor  
School of Public Affairs and  
Administration (SPAA)

Democracy is sustained not by grand gestures but by the everyday work of showing up—listening carefully, collaborating across differences, and remaining accountable to the communities we serve. As someone who wrote a dissertation on citizen participation 26 years ago, I have long understood engagement to be both a practice and a promise: a commitment to co-creating public value with residents, partners, and institutions who share our city and our future.

At Rutgers University, that commitment is woven into our identity. Every day, our faculty, students, staff, and community collaborators work at the nexus of scholarship and service—improving local capacity, widening access to knowledge, and advancing equitable opportunities for civic participation. Yet for all the extraordinary work happening across university, we have lacked a shared platform to illuminate, connect, and amplify these efforts.

BRIDGES is designed to do just that.

This magazine will showcase the breadth and depth of community-engaged research, teaching, and practice across campus. It will lift up community voices as co-educators and co-producers

of knowledge. It will help us grow new partnerships, strengthen existing ones, and translate the lessons of engagement into richer learning experiences for our students—preparing them not only to succeed professionally, but to serve as active, thoughtful, and responsible citizens.

I am deeply grateful to all who support and advance this work—including our Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson and our Provost Jeffrey Robinson, whose leadership affirms Rutgers' longstanding commitment to public service and partnership. I also thank the many colleagues, students, and community members whose efforts make this magazine possible.

As we launch the inaugural issue, I invite contributions from every corner of our campus and our community. We welcome stories, data, insights, reflections, and collaborative projects that reflect the spirit of public service and personal responsibility. BRIDGES will thrive when it carries the voices, experiences, and aspirations of our entire community.

Thank you for joining us in this work. I look forward to the connections—and the futures—we will build together.

# Opening Doors to Democracy

## Rutgers-Newark and Braven Send Students to Capitol Hill

By Carrie Stetler (Assistant Director of Media Relations, RU-N)

Unless you're a Capitol Hill insider, you probably don't know that behind every elected official there's a legislative staff helping to shape policies that affect every American.

But becoming a staffer is often reserved for people with connections, Ivy League educations, and the resources to serve unpaid internships in one of the nation's most expensive cities.

A program created in partnership with Rutgers-Newark's Sheila Y. Oliver Center for Politics and Race in America (CPRA) and Braven, a nonprofit career accelerator for college students, has enabled more students to seize those opportunities.

For the second year, a group of Rutgers-Newark students spent nine weeks interning in congressional offices in Washington, D.C.

At an event co-sponsored by the CPRA and the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA), interns described learning firsthand how democracy works—and who gets to take part in it. The experience convinced them that their voices, and their knowledge, matter in a place where few share backgrounds like their own.

This year's interns were Edwin Pineada-Cortes, Karen Perez, Esron Holder, Jacinay Coleman-Shelton, Alexis Castro,



(photo: Fred Stucker)

**"I thought I knew how the federal government worked—but it's not until you're in it that you really learn. [...] Knowledge is power. If we don't know what's going on, how can we change it?"**

**Karen Perez**  
BA Student  
Rutgers SPAA



RU-N students share their internship stories. (photo: Fred Stucker)

and Moujan Moghimi. As part of their job, they wrote memos, went to policy briefings, and gave tours. But among their most important roles were fielding calls from constituents and writing recommendations for bills.

Because many of the interns were raised in immigrant families and have lived in urban neighborhoods, they could connect with constituents like themselves in a way that others could not, they said.

Pinea-da-Cortes, a political science major, handled calls on immigration and health-care, providing a perspective that's often missing on the Hill.

"This fueled my desire to go into public service," he said. "There are people who really need help. If I'm not going to do it, someone's got to."

For decades, Congressional internships have gone disproportionately to students

from elite universities. Fifty percent of paid interns attend private universities, although those schools enroll just 25 percent of U.S. students. But the role can open the door to a wealth of opportunities for interns and ensure that more Americans are represented.

"It matters who gets to intern," said James Jones, director of the CPRA and author of *The Last Plantation*, a book about exclusion on Capitol Hill, where Black interns and other interns of color have been a rarity.

"Internships are the entry point into political careers and into the roles where real policy work happens. If we don't diversify those ranks, we limit whose perspectives shape our laws," he said.

Jones was once an intern on Capitol Hill himself. "I realized the people behind the scenes, the staffers and interns, are the ones driving action. So if those people don't look like the country they serve, the

implications are huge," he said.

The CPRA-Braven Congressional Internship Program provides full financial support, including housing and travel stipends, to remove barriers that too often block talented students from low-income or first-generation backgrounds.

"Expanding access to meaningful opportunities is not just what we do—it's who we are," said Samantha Crockett, Braven's Newark Executive Director. "What makes this program unique is that every piece of it is designed to remove barriers—financial, social, and informational—that keep certain students from careers in public policy. When programs are designed with everyone in mind, we reshape what leadership looks like," she said.

For Democratic State Senator Renee Burgess, New Jersey's first African-American senator from Irvington and a member of several key state committees, supporting

the initiative was a "no-brainer." After meeting with Rutgers-Newark leaders and Braven representatives, she helped secure \$250,000 in state funding to support the Capitol Hill internships.

"I was once that person who needed someone to give me a hand, that extra push and confidence," Burgess said. "Now I can use my voice not just for one ZIP code but for everybody. When I heard what they were doing for these students, it wasn't hard to say yes."

For the fellows, the experience was both professional training ground and personal awakening.

Castro, a senior studying communication and journalism and the son of Ecuadorian immigrants, interned with Representative Lois Frankel of Florida and often responded to constituent calls.

"Serving in a congressional office was astonishing," he said. "It showed me that empathy is just as important as influence. This experience has been the most important thing in my life so far."

Perez, a SPAA major, worked on higher-education policy and said it transformed her understanding of government. "I thought I knew how the federal government worked—but it's not until you're in it that you really learn," she said. "I was reading the reconciliation bill on higher education and realized how few of my peers even knew what it was. Knowledge is power. If

we don't know what's going on, how can we change it?"

The experience inspired Perez to pursue a career in higher education policy, and she is now an intern with the New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education.

Holder, a Rutgers Business School student and Caribbean immigrant, faced challenges as one of the few Black men interning on the Hill. "There were moments when I felt out of place," he said. "But this program helped me step out of my comfort zone and

realize my voice and experiences add a lot to the table."

At the close of the ceremony, Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson reflected on the program's mission.

"We need more people educated in areas like policy, public affairs, and law so our lenses are represented. Politics is about people and power, and many don't get access to the social capital or networks that open those doors. This program changes that," she said.

For Dean Kaifeng Yang of SPAA, the students' transformation reflects exactly what

public service education should do.

When he arrived from China as an international student at Rutgers-Newark in 1999, he barely spoke English. He once walked into a city council meeting, nervous but curious, and tried to ask questions on the way out. "They looked at me, annoyed," he recalled. "The sound of the elevator door closing as I left stayed with me for 35 years. I felt powerless. But that's when I realized democracy can feel intimidating if you don't speak its language."

Yang went on to write his dissertation on citizen participation and led the initiative to make RU-N a member university of the national leadership training program, Next Generation Service Corps, which trains students in leadership, civic engagement, and evidence-based policy.

"Public service is not only about passion—it requires skill, confidence, and collaboration," he said. "Engagement can be taught. We want every student on this campus to be an informed citizen who knows how to ask the questions that open doors, not close them."

## Braven

Braven's mission is to empower college students by equipping them with skills, networks, experiences, and confidence to secure strong first jobs. In collaboration with forward-thinking higher-education partners, volunteers, and employers, Braven supports these young individuals on their journey towards meaningful careers and lives of impact. Visit <https://braven.org> for more information.

# Reducing Tobacco Use, Together

## Newark Communities and Researchers Co-Create Change

From The Center For Health Excellence and Community Empowerment (CHECE), RU-N

The results of a two-year, community-engaged research collaboration aimed at reducing the harmful impact of menthol and flavored tobacco products (FTPs) were unveiled at “Breathe Easy: Educating, Empowering & Uniting Communities Against Menthol,” a public summit held on Oct. 17 in Union, NJ.

The initiative—The Intergenerational Fight Against Menthol (IFAM)—is led by the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies (INTS) and the Center for Health Excellence and Community Empowerment (CHECE) at Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) in collaboration with five community-based organizations in Greater Newark. Funded by a grant from Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health (REACH), the project highlights

how equitable partnerships between universities and communities can effectively address long-standing public health inequities.

“Menthol and flavored tobacco products remain a major public health threat,” said Kevin Schroth, JD, associate professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health. “They disproportionately harm communities of color and young people and have stalled progress in reducing tobacco-related disease and death.”

While non-menthol cigarette smoking has declined, menthol’s market share has grown from 30% to 37%, and flavored cigar sales have sharply increased—largely due to targeted industry marketing in Black and low-income communities.

IFAM was created to combat these inequities by connecting scientific research with community expertise. The initiative engaged residents through focus groups, surveys, advocacy trainings, and culturally relevant education to strengthen local capacity for tobacco prevention and cessation.

“Our work centers the lived experiences of Greater Newark residents,” said Dr. Diane Hill, CHECE co-director and faculty at Rutgers SPAA. “When communities co-create solutions with researchers, we build lasting trust and sustainable change.”

Partner organizations included Communities in Cooperation, Inc., East Orange Senior Services, New Hope Now Community Development Corporation, Programs

for Parents, and the Township of Hillside Senior Center—each serving populations heavily impacted by menthol and flavored tobacco use.

At the summit, REACH Executive Director, Diane B. Hagerman joined CHECE’s Advocates for Healthy Living board members and Community Scientists, Dr. Mary Dawkins, Director of the Township of Hillside Senior Center and Francis J. Dixon, Executive Director of New Hope Now Community Development Corp., for a panel discussion titled, “Community Perspective, A New Paradigm for Empowering Communities.”

Hagerman discussed REACH’s mission to advance health equity and how strategies driven by community-academic partnerships can enhance local capacity and im-

prove outcomes. Dawkins and Dixon spoke about the power of research partnerships in sustaining community programs and how their training as Community Scientists strengthened their ability to engage meaningfully with the populations they serve. Panelists also shared insights on maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between community partners and researchers.

Schroth and Dr. Ollie Ganz, assistant professor, Rutgers School of Public Health, concluded the event with an overview of the history and implications of tobacco marketing in the U.S. and shared findings from the IFAM research.

IFAM’s approach—guided by CHECE’s Transdisciplinary Intergenerational

“When communities co-create solutions with researchers, we build lasting trust and sustainable change.”

**Dr. Diane Hill**  
Co-Director  
Center for Health Excellence and Community Empowerment (CHECE)

Community Engagement Model (TICEM)—demonstrates how research, policy, and community leadership can align to confront longstanding health disparities.



Dr. Diane Hill, second from left, speaks at the summit. (photo courtesy of CHECE)

### Center for Health Excellence and Community Empowerment (CHECE)

CHECE’s mission is to support public, nonprofit, and private sector entities to effectively engage underrepresented urban constituencies in health research, scholarship, policy and decision-making, service delivery, community engagement, and assessment.

Visit <https://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/chece> for more information.

# “Consumed:” Creating Community Conversation

## Robeson Gallery Exhibit Tells Newark Stories Through Artifacts

By Briana Huett (Director, Office of Community Engagement, School of Public Affairs and Administration, RU-N)

On view in the Paul Robeson Campus Center Gallery (PRG) through March 26, 2026, “Consumed” is part of the Invisible City (Newark) Series that is based on a set of 25,000 artifacts excavated during construction projects downtown, including what is now the Rutgers Newark Honors Living and Learning Community (HLLC) building.

Inspired by Life Magazine’s 1955 article “Throwaway Living,” “Consumed” presents a response 70 years in the making. Curator and Professor Kevin Lyons stated, “This exhibition grew from years of research I have conducted on waste, circularity, and the hidden journeys of the materials we discard. As the founder of the Rutgers Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency, I work every day with students, local communities, and industry partners to trace how products move—from extraction to design, manufacturing, consumption, and finally to the forgotten last stages of the supply chain: waste, reuse, and regeneration. My academic world and artistic world have always been deeply connected; ‘Consumed’

is where they finally meet in public.”

The exhibition features artwork from 15 artists who represent six states, utilizing sculpture, textiles, video, photography, painting, and other mediums to explore important conversations surrounding material consumption. True to form, the works use a wide range of everyday materials—from cardboard, discarded shopping bags, glass bottles, recycled plastic, and packing tape to fabric, tree branches, and found objects.

Two such works—“Watcher of the Plastic Mountains” and “The Sediment of Learning”—were created by Professor Lyons himself. Used first as teaching tools to help his students visualize the scale and permanence of modern waste systems, Lyons realized a much wider discussion about the emotional, visual, and human dimensions of the materials we generate and discard was needed. “This was a story about consumption, responsibility, and resilience,” stated Lyons, “and artists around the world

“What happens to the materials we no longer want—and what do they say about who we are?”

**Dr. Kevin Lyons**  
*Associate Professor of Professional Practice  
Rutgers University—Newark*

were telling that same story through their own mediums. ‘Consumed’ asks viewers to face the artifacts of everyday life and to rethink the systems that created them.”

To PRG Director and Chief Curator, Anonda Bell, the decision to use the RU-N campus gallery for this larger discussion was easy. “It has been a part of the Galleries’ 45-year-old mission to embody Paul Robeson’s life-long commitment to unfettered artistic freedom, cultural democracy, and transnationalism. Simply put, we are trying to talk



*Esther Baker, video still from “La Ville En Mouv’ment” les arts dans la rue, Performance by Propelled Animals and Guests in Senegal, 2023, single channel production, 16 min 29 seconds. (photo courtesy of the artist)*



*Tamara Fleming, Consumed: Throwaway Life, 2025, digital photo H 30" x W 40". (photo courtesy of the artist)*

to as many people as can, to get as many conversations going as possible, and to learn more about ourselves and the world around us via that diversity of perspectives. We believe that doesn't just mean your typical gallery-going crowd, although we love those people and are indebted to them."

PRG Programs Associate, Caren King Choi

agrees. "Art exhibitions are fantastic for stirring up conversation, especially when they tackle topics that are universally relevant. PRG has historically chosen exhibition themes to be specific enough to focus the conversation, but broad enough to invite many perspectives. For example, this show, 'Consumed', uses plastic and trash as a segue to discuss environmen-

tal health, ingenuity, waste, fast fashion, convenience, consumption, permanence vs ephemerality, value, death, and beauty. Everyone, from preschoolers to seniors, can have something to say and something to learn from any of those topics."

To Choi, the exhibition offers something else, too: hope. "One of the artists in this exhibition, Anne Percoco, took plastic food wrappers and turned them into something functional, a weather shield, for a family in need. People create problems but people can also find ways to address them. That goes for everyone, the artist making the work and the person who sees it and goes home and can't stop thinking about it."

## **“Consumed”**

On View: Through March 26, 2026

Location: Paul Robeson Campus Center Gallery, Rutgers University–Newark

Exhibit Curator: Kevin Lyons, PhD

More Information:

<https://paulrobeson galleries.rutgers.edu/exhibition/consumed>

“Consumed” serves as one exhibition within a suite of programs as part of the larger Sci-Art initiative, which seeks to put the “A” back in “STEAM” and connects creative thinkers across disciplines to engage in hands-on learning. Engaging local artist educators who are experienced in working with many different groups, PRG provides workshops that include an exhibition tour, interactive discussion, and guided art project, with the materials and topics of conversation reflecting the specific group in mind.

In Visual Vistas, for example, Pre-K and Kindergarten students enjoy circle time and an imagination-expanding tour of the art gallery. Two of PRG’s longstanding

artist educators and early childhood education specialists, Ahmondylla Best and Omisanya Karade, bring music, syllable clapping, rhyming, and other engaging educational tools in this popular workshop. Other workshops include Looking Lens, where elementary school students become detectives by examining artworks to uncover clues that reveal the meaning behind art, and Art in Society, which invites middle and high school students to practice critical thinking and visual literacy as they learn to “read” art, a skill that transfers directly to navigating today’s media-saturated world.

And for communities with limited arts access, PRG brings the conversation directly

to them. Through its outreach program, Art Moves, PRG bridges the mobility gap by holding workshops at individual community organization sites such as the Essex County Juvenile Detention Center and the Nellie Grier Senior Center.

In its 15-year history of educational programs, PRG has worked with many community groups, including the Essex County College Childhood Development Center, St. Luke’s AME Church Senior Program, the Sarah Ward Nursery at NJIT, the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, The Arc of Essex County, the Wellness, Arts, and Education (WAE) Center, Branch Brook Elementary School, Arts High, NJ Regional Day School, and Hawkins Street School.



*Anne Percoco, Weather Shield for Migrant Dwelling, 2025, plastic food wrappers, packing tape, tree branches, cardboard, dimensions variable. (photo courtesy of the artist)*



Lorraine Cruz, *Future Fossils*, 2025, dried mycelium and beef gelatin bioplastic sculptures, dimensions variable. (photo courtesy of the artist)



Kelly Vetter, *Death of a Starling*, 2022, recycled plastic, glue, foam, wire, mannequin hand, 9"x6"x5". (photo courtesy of the artist)

For those interested in scheduling their group for an artist talk, performance, concert, poetry reading, workshop, gallery tour, and more, they can contact Caren King Choi (carking@newark.rutgers.edu). This exhibition is kindly curated and supported by Professor Kevin Lyons and The Rutgers Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency, part of the Rutgers Business School. The Paul Robeson Galleries are supported, in part, by a grant from the City of Newark (Creative Catalyst Fund), and by private donations. They are also supported by Express Newark, Robeson Campus Center, and the Cultural Programming Committee, Rutgers University–Newark.

# Express Newark Exhibition Showcases Design Consortium Campaign for Newark Parks

By Lawrence Lerner (Assistant Director of Editorial/Media, School of Arts and Sciences, RU-N)



This past spring, graphic design students from Rutgers University–Newark got hands-on experience creating a new visual-identity campaign for the Newark City Parks Foundation (NCPF), which is already in use and present around the city.

The project emerged from a partnership between the Foundation and the Design Consortium, a student/faculty-run creative studio at Express Newark led by RU-N graphic design Professors Ned Drew, Jennifer Bernstein and Chantal Fischzang, which engages students to develop strategies and execute and deliver real design solutions for organizations and other individuals and entities throughout the city of Newark.

Express Newark opened an exhibition on the creation of the new visual identity titled, “Reimagining and Uniting Newark’s Downtown Parks. A Collaboration: Design Consortium & Newark City Parks Founda-



**“Our parks exhibition highlights our program’s academic-community model of publicly engaged scholarship.”**

**Chantal Fischzang**  
Associate Professor  
of Graphic Design  
Rutgers University–Newark

tion,” which runs through July 23, 2026, in Express Newark’s second-floor hallway and is free and open to the public.

The exhibition, created by graphic design seniors Camila Zarzuela and Liam Gunning and overseen by Fischzang and Visiting Professor Rebecca Pauline Jampol (SASN ’08), is part of a celebration of Express Newark’s fall exhibitions and residencies.

“Our parks exhibition highlights our program’s academic-community model of publicly engaged scholarship,” said Fischzang. “Focusing on the power of collaboration, it illustrates how curriculum can drive community-based design, generating meaningful, research-informed systems that serve the public with clarity and care.”

The new visual-identity campaign emerged from a spring 2025 Design Consortium studio course taught by Jampol, a fixture in the Newark art scene who is Co-Director of Newark’s Project for Empty Space.

The students in that course delivered a redesigned NCPF website, an updated community calendar, and physical applications such as streetlight banners, feather flags, and branded graphics at the parks and Foundation’s headquarters—all part of a cohesive visual system that features a new logomark, supporting typeface, color palette, and graphic extensions tailored for both digital and print platforms.

“At the heart of the new logo is a modernized, rounded tree silhouette—an evolution of the original mark—integrated with the stylized cartographic forms of the parks, representing unity, accessibility, and the blend of nature and city life,” said Fischzang.

Students who took part in the course and exhibition came away with a new appreciation for what it means to conceptualize, collaborate and bring to fruition a major community design project.

Gunning, who worked on the visual-identity campaign and was one of two seniors who designed and mounted the exhibition, said the project required balancing creativity with real world expectations of an already existing brand, and along the way, he realized how important research and collaboration are in shaping design decisions.

“Our site visits, historical research and concept illustrations became the backbone of the identity,” Gunning said. “The most challenging part was refining work to meet both professional standards and community expectations, but that challenge was also what made the experience all the more rewarding. It pushed us to think about design not just as something that is simply aesthetic, but as something that connects to people’s everyday experiences and civic pride.”

Zarzuela, who designed the exhibition with Gunning, was equally effusive about

working on the campaign and seeing it presented to the public at Express Newark, along with the support they received from their mentors.

“Putting the exhibition together was an invaluable experience,” said Zarzuela. “We had weekly meetings with our professors, and Express Newark Co-Director Nick Kline and Parks Foundation Director Marcy DePina, to bring the exhibition to where it is now, and Professor Keary Rosen and Alessandra Puglisi, from the Form Design Studio, played an integral part by helping us with all of the acrylic installations. I feel super excited and honored to commemorate the work our class did for the Park Foundation’s team.”

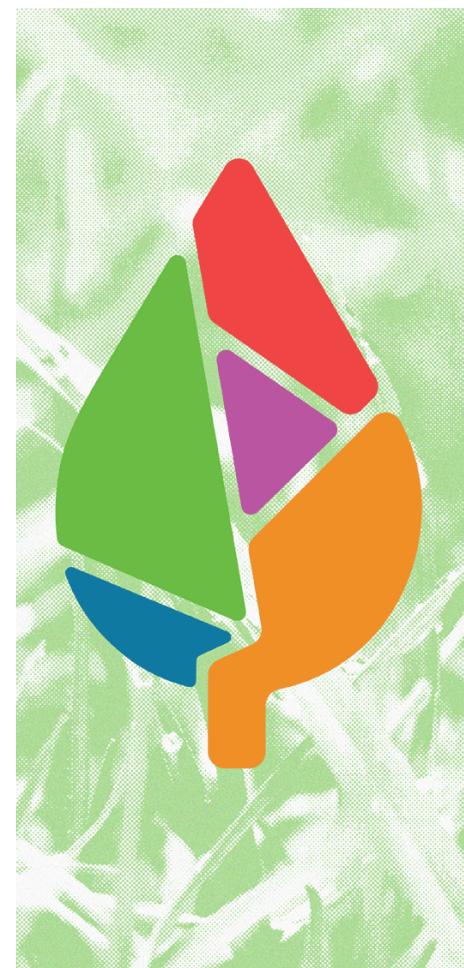
The celebration of Express Newark’s fall exhibitions and residencies was a multi-part affair. In addition to the Design Consortium exhibit, it included a ceremony to welcome and honor new RU-N Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson, along with Pure Joy, a large group show in the 3rd-floor Paul Robeson Gallery that was part of the 2025 Newark Arts Festival, a four-day extravaganza (Oct. 8-12) showcasing the work of local artists

at various venues and drawing tens of thousands of attendees from across the tri-state area.

Pure Joy featured more than 70 visual artists responding to the festival call to explore joy as a creative force. The exhibition featured a wide range of works, including bold paintings, film, and mixed-media pieces that celebrate joy as a vehicle of cultural and community resilience.

The two exhibitions intersected with the introduction of Marcy DePina, Executive Director of the Newark City Parks Foundation (NCPF) and President of the board of Newark Arts, the nonprofit that produces the Newark Arts Festival. DePina led the Parks Foundation’s collaboration with RU-N’s Design Consortium and was an ideal partner for the visual-identity redesign project.

“Marcy and her team shared their stories, time and feedback, and welcomed the creative energy of our program into their work,” said Fischzang. “We deeply appreciated their tireless efforts to make Newark’s parks vibrant, restful and joyful spaces for



the community. In turn, they embraced the students’ visual interpretations as a meaningful extension of their mission. When it comes to publicly engaged scholarship and showcasing our academic-community collaborations, this is a wonderful example of it.”

## **“Reimagining and Uniting Newark’s Downtown Parks” A Collaboration: Design Consortium & Newark City Parks Foundation**

On View: Through July 23, 2026

Location: Express Newark Lobby

Exhibition Design: Curator: Camilla M. Zarzuela and Liam L. Gunning with support from Visiting Professor Rebecca Pauline Jampol and Professor Chantal Fischzang

More Information: <https://expressnewark.org/exhibitions>

# Compassion Challenge Raises 786 Pounds of Donations for RU-N Pantry

By Lawrence Lerner (Assistant Director of Editorial/Media, School of Arts And Sciences, RU-N)

Winter holidays can be a fraught time for RU-N students and their families, some of whom are struggling to keep food on the table as younger siblings are home from school, foregoing free lunches while depending on parents to keep them fed. The recent federal government shutdown, and interruption and restriction of SNAP benefits, only exacerbated the situation.

Anticipating the growing seasonal need, Rutgers University–Newark leadership and the Student Government Association decided to act by issuing the Fall 2025 Compassion Challenge. The goal: to collect 500 pounds of donations to fill the shelves at Pantry +, the campus food pantry, between November 19 and December 15.

The RU-N community rallied, as it always does, exceeding the lofty target set by leadership and contributing 786 pounds of donations by the deadline.

“At every instance we get reminders of what makes Rutgers-Newark such an amazing place,” said SASN Dean Jacqueline

line Mattis, who helped lead the initiative with Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson and several other deans. “We are a beautiful alchemy of thoughtful compassionate leadership; a community of staff, faculty, students, and alumni with a let’s-do-this attitude; and a collective insistence that caring for each other is just the front edge of our humanity. The existence of food deserts is a scar on our humanity. The fact that anyone, anywhere could be without access to something as basic as food tells us that we are living in a world where our collective moral core is broken.”

Along with Mattis and RU-N Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson, this fall’s Compassion Challenge was led by Dean Kaifeng Yang, of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, Dean Johanna Bond of Rutgers Law School, Dean Nancy La Vigne of the School of Criminal Justice, Dean Lei Lei of Rutgers Business School, and Interim Dean Gregg Van Ryzin of the Graduate School-Newark.

Bryan Barros, Program Coordinator and Interim Manager at Pantry+, expressed

gratitude and admiration for the RU-N campus community.

“Moments like this prove what makes Rutgers-Newark special,” Barros said. “The generosity shown in this challenge speaks not only to how we support each other in times of need but to a campus culture rooted in compassion, care and community. Our office is deeply thankful to be part of an institution that shows up for its students in such meaningful ways.”

The pantry, which is part of the Health & Wellness office of RU-N’s Division of Student Affairs, was founded at the Paul Robeson Campus Center (PRCC) in 2017 and subsequently moved into the larger space it currently occupies in PRCC’s Room 226. Since its inception, Pantry+ has been a bulwark against economic downturns and nagging food insecurity, providing free, healthy groceries and other basic necessities to any student or staff member who is having difficulty affording or accessing them.



From left, student Pantry + workers Sarielys Rodriguez, Yolenni Torres, and former coordinator Asjal Nasir.

Along the way, the pantry has been refining and expanding its operations, catering to the RU-N community in new and effective ways. In October 2024, Pantry+ began offering a new outdoor refrigerated locker system, which gives students 24-hour access to their Pantry+ orders. The lockers were made possible by a \$100K gift from Maria (SASN ‘85, RSBG ‘99) and Lou DaSilva.

Donors can contribute by sending food directly to PantryRUN from vendors like Target, Amazon or Wal-Mart; by dropping off food donations during open hours or coordinating drop-offs via email with pantry staff; or by making a financial contribution through the Rutgers University Foundation.

Pantry+ is open five days a week during the school year. Visitors can order once a

week, or in certain circumstances when students are going through extra-challenging circumstances, Barros and his staff will work with them to cover their needs.

Mattis summed up the effort with kind words for leadership and the Pantry+ staff.

“Our Chancellor and the full complement of Deans ignited this moment and, as usual, our folks showed up for each other,” said Mattis. “And none of this is possible without colleagues who keep the Pantry running and who prioritize making sure that everyone in our community has access to the most fundamental aspects of living—food.”

## RU-N PANTRY+

### Pantry Hours:

Mon: 11am–3pm / Tue: noon–4pm / Wed: 1–6pm / Th: 1–6pm / Fri: 10am–noon

Before donating, please check the list of items the pantry needs most.

To coordinate donation drop-offs with PantryRUN staff, email:

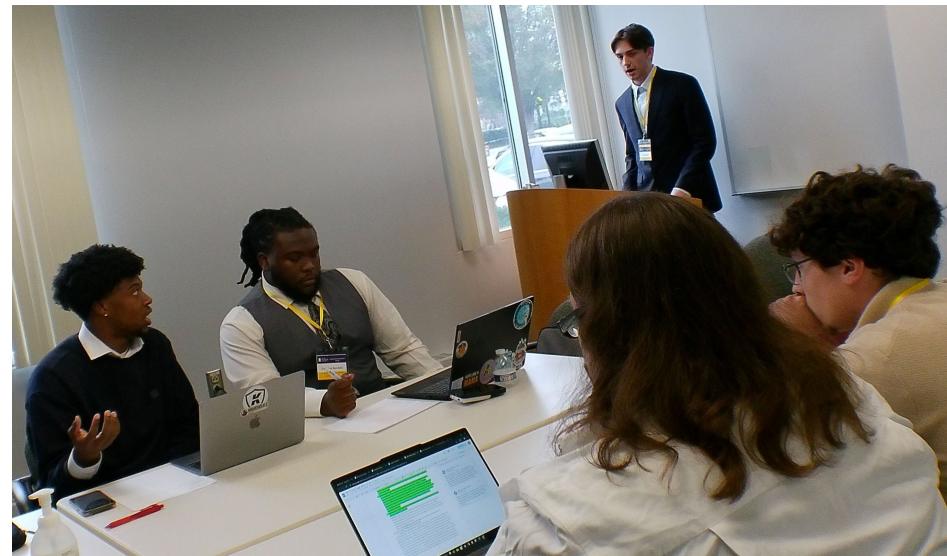
[pantry\\_run@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:pantry_run@newark.rutgers.edu)

For more information, visit: <https://go.rutgers.edu/pantry-run>

# AROUND Rutgers-Newark

## Rutgers University–Newark Debate Team Hosts Social Justice Debates at SPAA

From The Rutgers University–Newark Debate Team



The Rutgers University-Newark Debate Team at the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) proudly hosted the Social Justice Debates on October 11 and 12 on the RU-N campus, bringing together students, faculty, and community members for a spirited exchange of ideas between SPAA and the Center for Legal Justice.

 **READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/sj-debates-25>

## TikTok Influencer and Rutgers Alum Nicolas Nuvan Shares His Motto: Curiosity is Love

By Carrie Stetler (Assistant Director of Media Relations, RU-N)

TikTok influencer Nicolas Nuvan, a Rutgers alum known for his on-the-street interviews with everyday Black and brown people—encounters that often revolve around food—revealed how and why he forms connections wherever he goes at an Express Newark event.

 **READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/nuvan>



(photo: Fred Stucker)

## SPAA Alumni Participate in Weekend of Service

From The School of Public Affairs and Administration Alumni Network (SPAAAN)



From left, Newark City Council President Larry Crump (whose mother, Mildred Crump, was a Newark City Council member and SPAA alumna); Tayden Judge (MPA'16); James Blaney (EMPA'10); and Aaron Gibbs, Associate Dean, Rutgers SPAA.

SPAA alumni and friends spent a meaningful weekend celebrating service on October 18 and 19. It started with a morning of giving back at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey in Hillside, NJ on Saturday, where volunteers helped fight food insecurity in our state by sorting and packing essentials for families in need. The weekend closed out with heart and hope at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk on Sunday morning in Newark, NJ. Together, alumni walked in unity, in memory, and in support—raising awareness and standing strong for those affected by breast cancer.

 **READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/spaa-wos-2025>

## JBJ Soul Kitchen Celebrates 5 Years of Fighting Food Insecurity and Building Community

By Carrie Stetler (Assistant Director of Media Relations, RU-N)

Rutgers University–Newark celebrated five-years of fighting food insecurity with JBJ Soul Kitchen restaurant, which has served more than 14,000 meals to students, faculty and community members since it opened on campus.

To mark the milestone, RU-N and the JBJ Soul Foundation hosted a special lunch for university guests at the restaurant, located in the Paul Robeson Campus Center.

**THE JBJ SOUL FOUNDATION**  
**JBJ SOUL KITCHEN**  
*Community Restaurant*

At JBJ Soul Kitchen, each meal provides dignity along with delicious, healthy food. The restaurant's pay-it-forward model allows guests to make a suggested donation or use a donated meal plan swipe, ensur-

ing that all diners can enjoy a three-course, chef-prepared meal regardless of means.

 **READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/jbj-5yr>

# AROUND Rutgers-Newark

## At Rutgers-Newark Homecoming, An Epic Celebration of Raider Spirit and Swagger

By Carrie Stetler (Assistant Director of Media Relations, RU-N)



(photo: John O'Boyle)

Rutgers-Newark's first homecoming in more than a decade drew a vibrant crowd of students, community members and alumni—from the Class of '68 through the Class of '25—at an event that celebrated school spirit and swagger.

The day drew a crowd of nearly 1,000,

including a mix of alumni, students, RU-N community members and city residents. It featured step and stroll performances by Rutgers-Newark sororities and fraternities, a show of spirit by the Scarlet Raiders cheer team, campus tours, and family activities like face painting, mini-golf, and a petting zoo. An array of food trucks were

on hand, in addition to performances by rappers Rowdy Rebel and Kalihi.

Homecoming culminated with a 5-1 win for the Scarlet Raiders Men's Soccer team.

**READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/homecoming-2025>

## 50 Years of Public Service Excellence: Rutgers SPAA Celebrates Milestone Anniversary

From The School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA)

SPAA alumni, faculty, staff, and students representing five decades gathered to celebrate, reconnect, and look ahead at a reception in honor of SPAA's 50 years of preparing public service leaders for excellence—2025 marked five decades since the first Master of Public Administration students started at Rutgers-Newark. Distinguished speakers representing the school's past, present, and future—capped off by a keynote address from NJ Lieutenant Governor-Elect Dr. Dale Caldwell—spoke to SPAA's ongoing impact, and the school's legacy of service was commemorated through a video presentation.

The reception was the culmination of a year-long celebration during which Rutgers SPAA hosted a series of commemorative events designed to bring together



From left, Marc Holzer, Shante Palmer, Joseph Buga, Kaifeng Yang, Charles Menifield, Chancellor Tanya Smith-Jackson, Roberto Muniz, NJ Lt. Gov.-Elect Dale Caldwell, Diane Hill, James Blaney Jr. (photo: Fred Stucker)

students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the surrounding communities to mark this milestone occasion.

**READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/50th-celebration>

## SPAA Reflects on 50 Years of Community Impact

From The School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA)

As part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA)'s master's program, the school's newly launched Office of Community Engagement (OCE) hosted an exhibit to recognize some of the incredible work completed by RU-N students in partnership with the Newark community, as well

as the different curricular, co-curricular, and research opportunities for learning community-centered approaches that are available to RU-N students. Community members, alumni, and current students were in attendance.



(photo: Emily Jiang)

**READ MORE**  
<https://go.rutgers.edu/50yr-impact>

# COMMUNITY Partner News

## Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation Hosts Second Annual Legacy Brunch Celebrating Women's Leadership

From The Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation

Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation (formerly Sheila Y. Oliver Civic Association) hosted the second annual Sheila Y. Oliver Legacy Brunch on Saturday, July 26, 2025, at the Valley Regency in Clifton, New Jersey. Over 350 guests across government, business, and community organizing came together to honor the extraordinary life and legacy of the late Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver and celebrate influential New Jersey women leaders.

Proceeds from the event directly supported Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation's mission to empower underserved communities and cultivate the next generation of women leaders in government, public policy, and community organizing.

### Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation

The Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)(3) charitable organization, committed to empowering underserved communities to achieve both economic and social success, as well as educating and developing young women of color who are interested in government, public policy, and community organizing. Visit <http://www.sheilaoliver.com> for more information.

"Each of today's nine awardees is being recognized for leading with the kind of integrity, compassion, and tenacity that Sheila so deeply admired and modeled every day," said Governor Phil Murphy. "Your work carries forward her mission to deliver lasting progress, and it proves that Sheila's legacy isn't behind us—it's alive and well in the work still shaping New Jersey today."

Actress, singer, and comedian Tisha Campbell delivered a powerful keynote address that drew on her New Jersey roots.

"I am a proud daughter of Newark," said Campbell. "I grew up in a time where our city was a completely underserved city. But

our amazing city, with its amazing people, had a secret weapon. We had leaders like Sheila Oliver who fought tirelessly for us. She was a true trailblazer for us, whose courage, vision, and commitment to public service inspired her constituents and communities."

Essex County Commissioner A'Dorian Murray-Thomas kept the program moving with grace and enthusiasm as Mistress of Ceremonies.

The following honorees were awarded for their extraordinary work in their communities, carrying forward Sheila Y. Oliver's legacy of compassionate action:

- Assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter (D-35) | New Jersey General Assembly
- Linda J. Schwimmer, JD | President and CEO, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute
- Estina Baker | Democratic Strategist
- Tai Cooper | Chief Community Development Officer, NJEDA
- Dr. Barbara Gaba | President, Atlantic Cape Community College



Honorees pose for a photo with foundation leadership. (photo: Tamara Fleming)

- Dr. Pamela B. Jones | CEO, Communities In Cooperation, Inc.
- Sara Peña | Director of External Affairs, PSEG
- Dr. Cynthia Samuel | School Health Consultant, National Association of School Nurses
- Monica Slater Stokes | Managing Director, Corporate and Government Affairs, United Airlines

During the program, the organization announced its official rebrand to Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation, reflecting its evolution and long-term vision.

"This rebrand reflects who we are today—a growing, evolving force for civic engagement, community empowerment, and leadership development," said Renee

Oliver, President of the Sheila Y. Oliver Foundation and the niece of Sheila Y. Oliver. "This event is about looking back on Sheila Y. Oliver's extraordinary impact and imagining the future we can build together, in her honor."

The event also featured live entertainment, a tribute video honoring Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver's legacy, and recognition of the 2025 Rutgers University–Newark Sheila Y. Oliver Center for Politics and Race in America student interns and the 2025 Lincoln University Sheila Oliver Memorial Scholarship recipient.

The honorary committee included Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, former Governor Jon Corzine, Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, New Jersey Democratic

State Committee Chairman LeRoy Jones Jr., and numerous New Jersey state legislative, municipal, and county elected officials. The event provided networking and fellowship opportunities, fostering a spirit of purpose and empowerment.

Event sponsors included: United Airlines; PSEG; New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus Foundation; New Jersey Redevelopment Authority; Faye Flavaz; Healthcare Foundation of The Oranges; Johnson & Johnson; New Jersey Economic Development Authority; North Jersey Federal Credit Union; Princeton Strategic Communications; Parker Health Group; Rutgers University–Newark, Sheila Y. Oliver Center for Politics and Race in America.

### Share Your Story

To highlight your activities in BRIDGES Magazine, contact the Office of Community Engagement in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University–Newark at [spaa.oce@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:spaa.oce@newark.rutgers.edu)



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Publications & Policies

*Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, Vol. 18, Issue 2

## Together We Do More: How Community Partners and Restrictive Education Settings Can Partner to Improve Facility Climate & Culture for Staff & Youth

Staff and personnel who work in restrictive education settings—those outside the purview of traditional K-12 settings and the community—must contend with multiple, simultaneous challenges. They must meet the needs of school-age youth served in these settings while also creating safe, supportive, and engaging learning spaces as well as a positive facility culture and climate for rehabilitation and habilitation.

To mitigate challenges and address programming needs, restrictive education setting personnel (e.g., agency-/facility-lev-

## Federal Policy

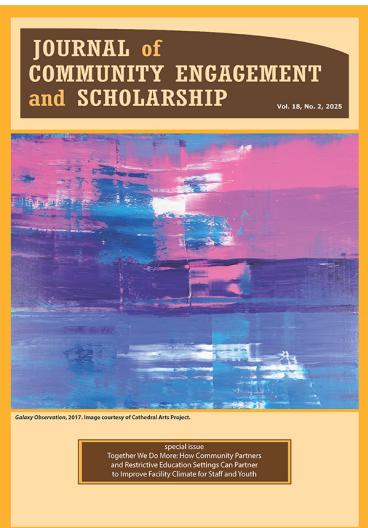
**Medicaid Community Engagement Guidance, CMS Informational Bulletin**

On December 8, 2025, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued additional guidance outlining how states should implement community engagement requirements created by the Working Families Tax Cut (WFTC) legislation (Public Law 119-21).

The bulletin indicated that by January 1, 2027, certain non-disabled, non-pregnant adults (ages 19-64) receiving Medicaid

el staff, teachers, counselors) often seek out and form partnerships with external community entities whose expertise and resources complement, enhance, and/or extend current practices and efforts or meet a need identified via youth intake data, agency/facility priorities, and/or new science.

This special issue highlights a variety of community-based programs and partnerships with and between juvenile agencies/facilities, with a focus on how such partnerships work to promote and strengthen



positive, nurturing, and therapeutic facility  
cultures and climate.

## Book

# **AI and Civic Engagement: 75+ Cross-Curricular Activities to Empower Your Students**

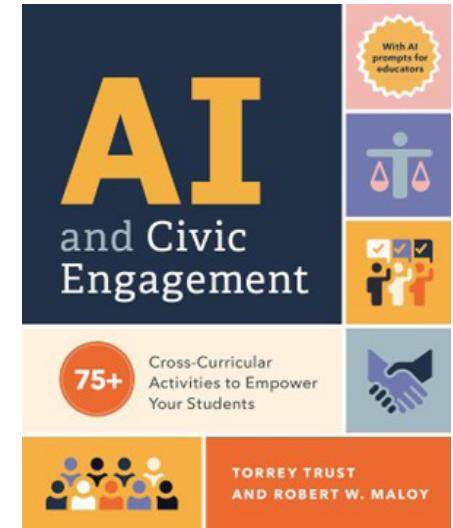
By Torrey Trust and Robert W. Maloy; ISBN: 9798888370605

Aimed at elementary and secondary teachers across various disciplines including the social sciences, STEM fields, and English language arts, this November 2025 release seeks to help educators integrate generative AI technologies into their teaching with activities and prompts designed to engage students in civic learning to become adaptable, critical thinkers in a time of ongoing change.

This practical guide features 28 learning plans that connect with the ISTE Student

Standards – each with multiple interactive activities and example prompts – to support students in engaging with GenAI tools as active citizens and critical investigators of the capacities and risks of these technologies.

Instructors will also find 75 interactive activities, and 90 example GenAI prompts to foster meaningful, exciting and engaged learning on public policy issues relevant to today's students.



## Open Access Book

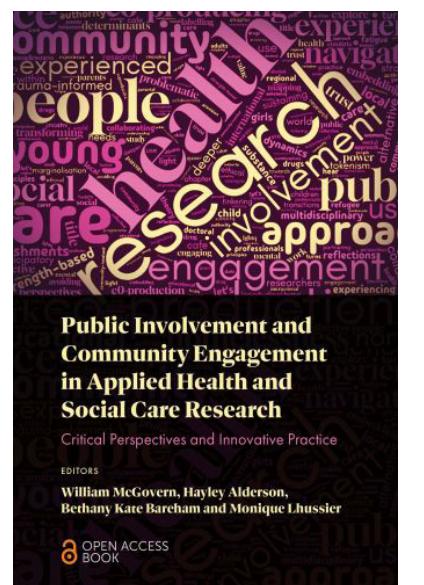
# ***Public Involvement and Community Engagement in Applied Health and Social Care Research: Critical Perspectives and Innovative Practice***

Edited by William McGovern, Hayley Alderson, Bethany Kate Bareham, and Monique Lhussier

This edited collection brings academics, researchers, practitioners, and the public from a range of subjects and disciplines together to provide insight into critical concerns and innovative practices on the process of developing and delivering Public Involvement and Community Engagement (PICE) work in a range of research settings.

Delivering powerful reflections and insights from professional groups, marginalized communities and people with lived experience as research partners and participants, each chapter presents from “real life”

illustrative practice examples, and each engages in a sympathetic critical appraisal of a concern or innovation. Chapters also provide methodological, theoretical and practice-based insight into the process of PICE work, and each explore the implications and lessons that can be learned in and across different subject and discipline areas. This collection calls for intuitive and informed professional practice that creates space for individuals to reflect on their own work and how they consider, conceptualize, learn, maneuver, and position themselves in relation to “doing PICE work”.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Publications & Policies

## Book

### ***Public Administration, Civic Engagement, and Spanish-Speaking Communities***

Edited by José Luis Irizarry; ISBN: 9781805925194

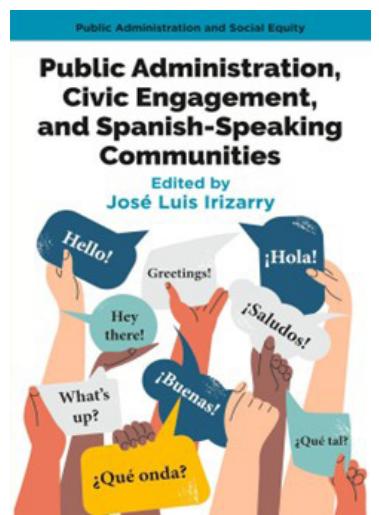
*Public Administration, Civic Engagement, and Spanish-Speaking Communities* builds on the first bilingual (Spanish–English) special session at the National Academy of Public Administration's 2022 Social Equity Leadership Conference. Expanding on the themes of that groundbreaking conversation, this interdisciplinary volume addresses the urgent need to center multilingual voices in the pursuit of social equity in public administration. It examines the lived experiences and systemic challenges faced by Spanish-speaking communities in the United States—from language and cultural barriers to generational divides and unequal access to technology—while

also highlighting innovative approaches to inclusive service delivery and democratic participation.

With 31 contributors representing diverse identities and disciplines, this volume models walking the social equity talk. Most chapters are coauthored by teams of scholars, students, and practitioners at different career levels, bringing forward the voices of Spanish-speaking communities alongside allies and social equity champions.

Designed for faculty, students, researchers, and practitioners alike, the book offers both breadth and depth: each chapter can

be read on its own, yet together they create a comprehensive portrait of civic engagement, governance, and social equity in Spanish-speaking contexts.



## Federal Policy

### ***OMB Memorandum M-25-07: Federal Framework for Public Participation and Community Engagement***

On January 15th, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Memorandum M-25-07 to formalize the new Federal Framework for Public Participation and Community Engagement (PPCE), which aims to make government more inclusive, transparent, and responsive by broadening

engagement with the public, especially underserved communities, through principles, leading practices, and a new toolkit.

This framework aims to move beyond traditional methods to embed meaningful input into policymaking, ensuring diverse

perspectives strengthen federal decisions and build public trust, with agencies encouraged to implement new roles and strategies for ongoing, effective engagement.

## New Minors at Rutgers SPAA Help RU-N Students Engage in the Community and Public Services

As our most pressing public problems are becoming increasingly harder to address, our next generation of public leaders are expected to have specialized knowledge and experience that they can use to provide innovative solutions. how to work across spheres and disciplines to make lasting, meaningful change. Additionally, they need a structured framework to understand how societal problems are identified, debated, and resolved through governmental and institutional action.

At RU-N, we are dedicated to preparing students to be this next generation. Whether working in the public, private, or non-profit sector, we need our students to understand To meet this need, SPAA has created two new minors available to all RU-N students: the Minor and Certificate in Public Leadership and the Minor in Public Policy.

### Public Leadership



18  
Credits



9  
Credits

**Minor**

**Certificate**

**Including:**  
Cross-Sector Leadership  
Community Impact Lab  
Internship in public, private, or nonprofit sector

### Public Policy



18  
Credits

**Including:**  
Understanding Public Administration and the Public Sector  
Introduction to the Public Policy Process  
Introduction to Policy Analysis  
Evidence-Based Policymaking

### Majors & Minors at Rutgers SPAA

For more information, visit: <https://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/ug-programs>



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