

Edelmans' Support Continues to See Stars



The sky's not the limit when you listen to Dr. Eddie Guerra talk about the recent enhancements to the Edelman Planetarium. Just by listening to him you can feel his passion about the unlimited capabilities the Planetarium has to offer students of all ages and the public at large.

The true stars arrived in 2003, when Jean and Ric Edelman, Rowan University alumni, provided funding for the Observatory and Planetarium, a state-of-the-art full-dome theater. Dr. Guerra, an Associate Professor and Interim Chair for Rowan's Physics and Astronomy Department, boasted that one of the best reasons to have a Planetarium is to

generate a sense of excitement in children about science. "The public shows are one thing, and word of mouth is a big part of what we draw from, but it's the school shows, the K-12 children, that are the main mission and what Jean and Ric Edelman are also dedicated to as well," said Guerra. The Edelmanns continue to demonstrate this by continually funding the admission costs that allow teachers from all over the tri-state area to bring their students to the Planetarium for free. "They clearly envisioned what we saw and what the potential the Planetarium could be," said Guerra.

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Message from Dean Parviz Ansari

As 2011 ends, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new faculty who joined the College this fall. We are fortunate to have them here and look forward to their contribution to the future success of this institution. I would also like to welcome all the new students who have joined us this semester either as transfer students or freshmen. Our enrollment trends have been affected by the addition of the Medical School to Rowan University and our College is ready to take on new opportunities that have opened up for us in this regard.

While we acknowledge new beginnings, we must also endure endings with the retirement of some of the most beloved and respected faculty members who had taught at Rowan for over four decades: Dr. Jay Chaskes (Sociology), Dr. Richard Scott (Geography), Dr. Nathan Carb (English), Dr. David Applebaum

(History) and Dr. Lee Kress (History). The College, faculty and students suffered a significant loss this year with the untimely passing of admired professor, Dr. Anthony Robb (Foreign Languages and Literatures).

Following the new strategic direction of the College in Biomedical Sciences, the Departments of Psychology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics have embarked on new programmatic initiatives. They are developing the first-ever doctoral degree program in Psychology, the first-ever graduate programs in Sciences, and new degree programs in Biomathematics, Bioinformatics and Biophysics.

In addition, the College's strategic planning has entered the implementation phase; the College has founded its first ever Assessment Team to provide guidance and training to the Departments in their efforts to assess learning outcomes; the Graduate Council has begun to help the College plan

and strategize its development of graduate programs.

I am pleased to announce that the 2010-2011 Annual Report is now available to download at www.rowan.edu/las under "Publications." It highlights the accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students.

Have a wonderful new year and I wish you continued success in your endeavors.



Parviz Ansari, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



Dean's Distinguished Speakers Series 2011

The Dean's Distinguished Speakers Series continues to stimulate intellectual conversations on campus. This semester, the students, faculty and community had the opportunity to hear from three prominent speakers.

Pulitzer Prize-winner and New York Times best selling author, Junot Diaz visited Rowan in October to share with students an important lesson he learned. "Achieve the best experiences while you're in college. College years are the quickest years you will ever experience because you are never going to get this many young people in the same place in the same situation as you, trying to figure things out," Diaz said.

African history scholar Cheikh Anta Babou of the University of Pennsylvania was November's distinguished speaker. He discussed the process of cultural exchanges between African-Americans and Africans from the continent. A professor at University of Pennsylvania since 2002, he currently teaches African history and the history of Islam in Africa. His research focuses on mystical Islam in West Africa and Senegal and the new African diaspora.



Distinguished speaker and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Junot Diaz, signs his book to a delighted crowd of faculty and students.

Photograph taken by Whit Photographer, Robert Oszust

December's distinguished speaker was Richard Gebelein, Senior Counsel at Bifferato, LLC law firm in Wilmington, DE. Gebelein shared his experience as a Rule of Law Officer in Afghanistan where he helped improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Courts and Prosecution function in the war-torn country. In addition to this role, he served as a legal expert for the UNDP and most recently the Chief of Party for USAID Justice Sector Development

Project II in Bosnia. In his presentation, Judge Gebelein compared the successes and failures in setting up the rule of law in Afghanistan vs. Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We are excited to continue this series into 2012. Look for more speakers visiting campus, such as Drew Leder from Loyola College, Kartik Sheth from the National Radio Astronomy Observatory and Lori Tharps from Temple University.

CLAS Summer Grant Awards

In support of faculty scholarship, Dean Ansari continued the college-wide competitive grant program awarding a total of \$30,000 to eight faculty members. The goal of the grant program is to enhance the ability of faculty to submit to external granting agencies.



Pictured Left to Right: Dr. Hong Ling; Dr. Timothy Vaden; Dr. Jim Haugh; Ali Houshmand, Interim President; Parviz Ansari, Dean of CLAS; James Newell, Interim Provost; Dr. Lawrence Markowitz; Dr. Zena Meadowsong; and Dr. MaryLou Kerwin. **Not Pictured:** Dr. Jeffrey Hettinger and Dr. Chanelle Rose.

Building Future Scientists One Block at a Time

In its 5th year of friendly competition, the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) arrived on Rowan's campus in December. "This program is designed to get 9- to 14-year-olds excited about STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Teams of up to 10 students who are usually affiliated with a school or a group work for a couple of months on two parallel activities before they come to us," said Dr. Jennifer Kay, Associate Professor for the Department of Computer Sciences at Rowan University who also co-chairs this event with Dr. Hong Zhang from the College of Engineering. "I am particularly interested in getting kids from grade school all the way through college interested in computer science. The ultimate goal isn't to get every student to major in these fields, though I'm happy when they do, but rather to give everyone, regardless of major, a basic level of computational literacy essential to understanding the underpinnings of what drives much of the culture and environment that these kids will encounter when they graduate from high school and college."

There are two interesting parts to this international competition that attracts students from all over the world. First step is the research project that is based on a theme that changes each year. This year's theme was food safety. Students begin to explore an actual problem that affects people in their community that scientists and engineers are trying to solve. They learn about the problem, come up with their own solutions to the problem, and report their solutions back to the community.

Next, the students build a robot loosely related to the theme of the year out of LEGO components, write a computer

program in one of two specialized languages to move autonomously, not utilizing a remote control. Then the games begin on a themed playing field to score points. It's what happens next that the kids look forward to the most - the robot game. "It's the most visual part of the competition," said Dr. Kay.

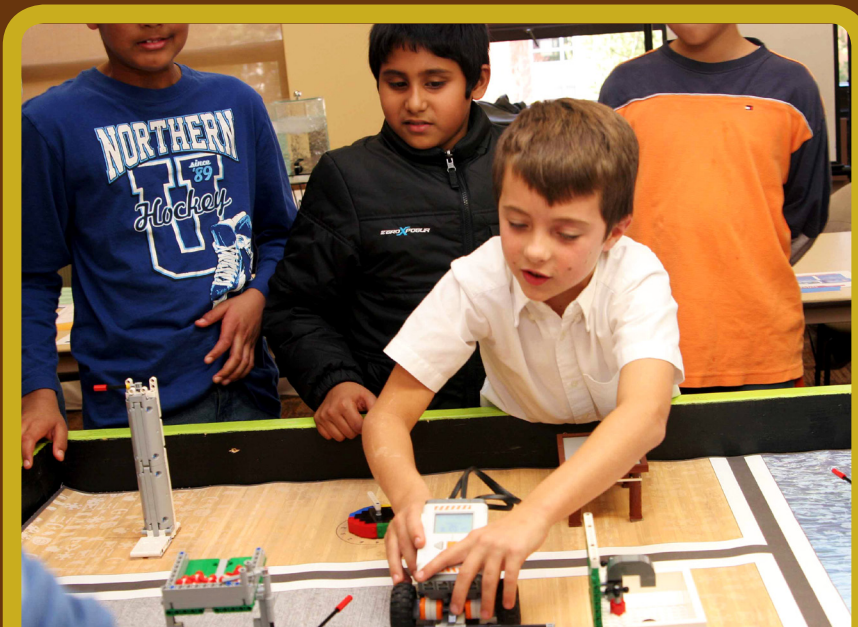
"More than 75 Rowan students volunteer yearly for the tournament and really look forward to working with the children," Kay said. More than 20 volunteers are recruited from the Rowan faculty in addition to numerous outside companies to judge the students in three categories - the technical design including hardware and software, the research project, and league's core values. These values are based on how well they work together as a team and how they support each other whether it is a teammate or competitor. Winning teams at this event go on to a tri-state regional at the University of Delaware.

In addition to the many things involved to support this goal, Dr. Kay received a grant recently from Google through their CS4HS (Computer Science for High School) program. This initiative promotes computer science and computational thinking in high school and middle school curriculum, and enables universities like Rowan to develop 2-3 day workshops for local high school

There are 52 Lego bricks for every person on the planet!

and middle school teachers and incorporate informational talks by industry leaders, and discussions on new and emerging ways to introduce computer science topics at the high school and middle school level.

"The truth is," said Kay, "we have one ultimate goal... getting the kids interested and excited about STEM subjects. We want them to be excited about the prospect of doing more of this when they leave our tournament."



Students support their teammates in a friendly challenge of robot games during the FIRST LEGO League held in December.

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Guerra was the director for the first months when the Planetarium opened in 2004. His main role was to build the structure and see it through. "The hardest thing to do was to give it away, but the timing of it was very interesting. My first son, Alex, was born two weeks before the grand opening in 2004. So my newborn son and Planetarium 1.0 were practically born at the same time." He then handed the reigns over to Keith Johnson, who Guerra proudly described as a planetarium expert. "He is definitely a professional." As director of the Planetarium, Johnson created a space for the university as a whole by offering musical performances like experimental jazz mixed with improvised lighting effects. Many of the original shows were created in collaboration with students and faculty from radio, TV and film right here on campus. "This is a great

Over 30,000 students and teachers have visited the Planetarium since it opened in 2004.

benefit to having the Planetarium on campus. It's not just for astronomy classes," said Guerra.

Through the continued support of the Edelmans, the University is now able to offer Planetarium 2.0, as Guerra refers to it. It's the newest digital system that was installed this spring and was rededicated at an event held in November that included special guests, Jean and Ric Edelman. This digital system will enhance the school shows, make it more interesting and will better explain the scientific concepts. "It is as good as any Planetarium out there because of its all dome capability," Guerra said. It does everything it did before but now it's amplified. The stars spin around and do more, they show a lot more stuff for school kids. Both systems offer classic astronomy like what's in the night sky, but now it can immediately go into a black hole show narrated by actor Liam Neeson, and you will be fully engrossed in video and the full-dome experience. "Academically speaking, having the observatory and planetarium on campus at your disposal is a great centerpiece and teaching tool especially for astronomy classes."

"Certainly other universities have planetariums, but very few have installations of this caliber," bragged Guerra. "It's the only one with this system that includes full-dome capability." In fact, "there are more than 1,300 planetariums in the US and about the same number in the rest of the world, however, the Edelman Planetarium is the only one in South Jersey," said Johnson. "It offers the same realm as the Fels Planetarium at the Franklin Institute but it's on this side of the bridge. Cost of our admission is pretty much less than the bridge toll," said Guerra.

Guerra points out that although the Observatory is more of an instructional tool, it is also something to boast about. Recently, physics and astronomy student Adam Diekewicz imaged a galaxy that was 500 million light years away by using the 16" telescope and will present along with Guerra at the American Astronomical Society convention held in Austin, Texas in January. The Observatory certainly complements the Planetarium's open houses that are held throughout the semester. Astronomically meaningful events like the Opposition of Mars are scoped out in advance and incorporated into open houses to share with the public.

The Edelmans allow the College to educate the children, entertain the public, get students and faculty at Rowan involved and let's not forget the obvious...teach astronomy class like never before. Guerra wouldn't change it for all the stars in the sky.



Planetarium director Keith Johnson (right) and Craig Amore, a technician from Spitz, Inc. of Chadds Ford, PA, discuss the newest digital system that was installed last spring.

Professor Writing History

When Dianne Ashton finished the manuscript for her upcoming book on Hanukkah, she went looking for a new challenge. She found one—and also made some history in the process.

This fall, Ashton, a professor of Religion Studies at Rowan University, became the first female editor in the 118-year history of *American Jewish History*, the premier journal in the study of Jewish history in America.

Ashton took over as editor in September, succeeding Eric Goldstein of Emory University, who held the post for five years. She did so not knowing she was the first female editor of the journal, which presents research in the field of American Jewish life.

“When I accepted the editor’s position, I didn’t realize I was the first woman,” says Ashton, a Rowan professor since 1988 and the founding director of the University’s American Studies program. She teaches in the Philosophy and Religion Department in Rowan’s College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

Published quarterly, *American Jewish History* was founded in 1893 as the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. The American Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1892 and holds more than 20 million documents and 50,000 books, along with photos, art, and artifacts produced by Jews in North America since 1654.

In 2009, her book, *Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality, A Source Book* (2nd edition), was published by Brandeis University Press. Next fall, her newest book, *Hanukkah in America*, will be published by New York University Press.

The book will explore how a holiday that historically hasn’t been a hugely important day on the Jewish calendar has gained in popularity since the late 19th century. Former chair of Rowan’s Department of Philosophy and Religion, Ashton also is the author of *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (1997, Wayne State University Press) and dozens of articles, essays and book reviews.

Article by Barbara Baals, Office of Media and Public Relations, Rowan University. Used with permission.

“For me, the editor’s position is the next big challenge,” says Ashton, a Cherry Hill resident. “I learned so much about writing and editing from the last two books. I’ve gained such an appreciation for a well-written paragraph, a well-written sentence.

“I love to bring out material on Jewish life in the United States that has not been looked at,” Ashton says. “Our goal as scholars should be to move the field forward.”

Professor, Colleague and Friend: A Treasure Lost

It was with heavy heart in October that we said goodbye to a great professor, colleague, mentor and friend, Dr. Anthony Robb. His passion for teaching and just enjoying life in general was infectious to those in his presence.

In addition to earning a M.A. from Villanova University and a Ph.D. from Temple University, it was on the grounds of his first alma mater, Glassboro State College (aka Rowan University) that he returned and became a well-regarded educator for Rowan’s Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. “In the Department, we still cannot believe he’s gone. Tony was a cultivated presence who will be missed. He played the piano, wrote poetry, traveled around the country and spoke several languages,” said colleague, friend and neighbor Mickey Smith, a professor in the Department he and Robb taught. “He was hardworking and demanded that his students work hard.”

Dr. Robb may have received his foreign language credentials at the universities he attended in the United States, but it was where he took his skills next that didn’t surprise his colleagues. Dr. Robb jumped to a new level to hone his Spanish speaking competencies when he moved and began teaching in Costa Rica and Spain. His colleagues wouldn’t expect any less from him.

An author of three books, several book chapters and journal articles on Spanish Realism, Caribbean and Central America poetry, and Latin American Literature, Robb continually challenged his students to do their best. This is now the legacy he leaves behind and what will be missed most about Dr. Anthony Robb.



The Right Career Paths Lead to Health Professions Office

The Health Professions Office gained a leader in Tomas Varela, Jr., who recently joined Rowan as the Health Professions Advisor for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. A Temple graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and a Master of Public Health from The George Washington University, Varela is very familiar with the Delaware Valley and is delighted to be back, this time in a role that helps guide students seeking careers in numerous health-related professions. In this position, Varela has many exciting goals to accomplish. One of his priorities is to make students aware of the resources and opportunities available to help direct them through what some perceive to be an overwhelming process. With the admittance of the 50 students in the inaugural class this August for the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, there are more opportunities afforded to students looking to join the health care field.

Some of the programs recently unveiled by the Health Professions Office include workshops sponsored by student groups and weekly lecture series to help promote the identification of different types of schools available and the requirements needed to apply. Plans are in place next semester to address the issues in healthcare by attracting diverse speakers and topics to include urban communities and women's health services.

Why medicine? Varela hopes this question will be answered before students begin their studies to better align the students' goal and outcomes. But if not medicine, then what? "One challenge that students face is not fully understanding the process," said Varela. "We want to channel their excitement and be proactive with action plans. If you have an interest in the medical field,

becoming a physician is not the only option. There are interesting fields in dentistry, nursing and physical therapy to name a few." The goal for Varela is to help students identify career paths and lead the way to their appropriate interests.

Seven of the 20 fastest-growing occupations in the United States are health care-related



"I have a Master's in Public Health so I see the benefits of helping students. I want them to understand that it goes beyond the prestige and finances of a physician, it's about serving and helping the community. The end result is ultimately looking to serve and heal no matter what health career choice."

Is Medical School For You?

“What’s the deal with Med school?”

That’s the question Dr. Scott Leggoe presented to his audience. Dr. Leggoe is a third-year family medicine resident at UMDNJ-School of Medicine and Rowan alumni. He shared his take on life as a medical student which included how to finance a medical school education and his insight on doing well academically at Rowan. As a doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO), he explained the difference between allopathic (MD) and osteopathic medicine in addition to other medical definitions in terms that were easy to understand, which was a task considering how complicated medical terms in Latin can be.

The forum was presented by the Office of Health Professions through the leadership of Tomas Varela, Health Professions Advisor for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The goal of both Leggoe and Varela was to provide as much information to the students interested in pursuing health-related careers.

Guiding them through the decision making process was a good start. Why medical school? Are you going into it for the right reasons, and what will you need to know along the way to be successful? But what if medical school is not right for you? He shared endless health career alternatives that help and serve people, including nursing, pharmaceutical sales, paramedics to name just a few. Leggoe was also instructional in the formation of the pre-SOMA (Student Osteopathic Medical Association) on

Rowan’s campus that connects pre-med students to osteopathic physicians and other medical students offering support and mentoring opportunities.

Leggoe went on to share an interesting fact many may not know explaining that a student only needs three successful college years in ANY field to be accepted into medical school. For example, Leggoe noted that one of his first medical school classmates was a dance major and the other was a 50-year old med student.



UMDNJ family medicine resident, Dr. Scott Leggoe, gives an enlightening presentation to students interested in a medical career.

Is Modern Medicine *Too Materialistic?*

Drew Leder, Ph.D., M.D. – Loyola College, Maryland
Monday February 6, 2012 at 6:30pm
Location: TBA

Join the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies as they host Dr. Drew Leder who will lead a timely discussion of issues in the world of medicine, in this the fourth installment of the CLAS Dean’s Distinguished Speakers Series.

Modern medicine is often accused by diverse critics of being too materialistic, and therefore insufficiently holistic and effective. Yet this critique can be misleading, dependent upon the ambiguous meanings of materialism. The term can refer to the

prevalence of financial concerns in driving medical practice. Alternatively, it can refer to mechanistic materialism, the patient viewed as a body-machine. In each case, we will show that this represents not authentic materialism at play, but a focus upon high-level abstractions. Bottom-line financial or diagnostic numbers can distract us from the embodied needs of the sick person. In this sense, medical practice is not materialist enough.

Through a series of clinical examples, Dr.

Leder will explore how an authentic materialism would look in medical practice. Examples include the hospital and nursing home redesigned as enriched, healing environments and having medical devices presented in new ways that facilitate the patient’s physical and emotional acceptance.

Drew Leder has an M.D. from Yale University School of Medicine, and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the State University of New York, Stony Brook.



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High Noon Under the Clock: Hamilton and Washington Together Again

In September, the clock rolled back over two centuries, if only for a few hours. The Political Science and Economics Department showcased former presidents, George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, in historic fashion as the live actors greeted students, faculty and staff on the Rowan campus to celebrate the signing of the US Constitution on September 17, 1787. Rowan’s National Constitution Day is an annual event that is federally mandated by the Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement in recognition of this historic moment.

The presidents jumped off the face of currency into the smart phones as they posed for photo opportunities. “We talked about the art of curtsying to solving the national debt,” said one student.

After this day’s event which was co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and FoCal (Friends of the Campbell Library), students followed the gentleman as they continued their debates during two other sessions held at the Edelman Planetarium, joining more than 100 students.



CLAS News

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