STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Senior Anthony Bonini

Wide-Open Journey into the Liberal Arts

Anthony Bonini explores eclectic options in academics and community service

One of the first things that drew Anthony Bonini to Rutgers was its size.

An energetic student with broad intellectual interests, Bonini earned nearly two dozen AP credits at Indian Hills High School in Bergen County. Anthropology fascinated him, but so did mathematics and chemistry.

"I knew that no matter what I decided to study, or switch to, I'd find it at Rutgers," he says.

Bonini graduates in June from the **School of Arts and Sciences** after an eclectic and intensive education in the liberal arts, the kind of all-encompassing experience that testifies to both the size and scope of Rutgers.

> "I knew that no matter what I decided to study, I'd find it at Rutgers."

Bonini ventured overseas twice for Study Abroad, including a six-week stint in Africa where he studied advanced methods of paleoarchaeology, focusing on fossils millions of years old.

"You push yourself to your limit," he says of his work at the Koobi Fora Field School in Kenya. "There's no internet, little cell service, and you're with people you don't know. You exercise your self-discipline."

Back in New Brunswick, Bonini embarked on a wide-ranging intellectual journey, majoring in anthropology and mathematics, and minoring in classics. He also served as an Aresty research assistant, working with Department of Anthropology Chair Craig Feibel, who investigates the geological context for evolution.

"The opportunity to work in his lab was awesome," Bonini says.

His education continued outside the classroom, with the discovery that Rutgers' size also creates extraordinary possibilities for building community.

As an Arts and Sciences Honors Program Peer Mentor in Residence, Bonini worked to build community spirit among students in Lynton Towers, including designing a mock zombie apocalypse survival guide. He also served as vice president of the Catholic Student Association, taking Alternative Spring Break trips to Tampa where he and others prepared and served meals at a soup kitchen and a tent city.

"It's very easy to make Rutgers small," he says. "Whenever I walk down College Avenue, I always run into someone I know."

All his Rutgers experiences—the academic, the social, and the community service—helped Bonini realize that what he ultimately wanted to do was to teach. He's exploring options for graduate teaching fellowships, and is interested in becoming a teacher at schools in needy areas. He wants to become a math teacher.

"I was always the kid people asked for help on their homework," he says. "I realized at Rutgers that I was naturally drawn to teaching, to getting people excited about learning, and understanding why we should learn.

"There are a lot of students that just need the right push, the right perspective to spark that motivation for academic excellence."

ROUNDUP

Things You May Not Know about the School of Arts and Sciences

Ethel Brooks to Serve on U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

President Barack Obama has appointed **Ethel Brooks**, professor of women's and gender studies and sociology, to serve on the United Stated Holocaust Memorial Council. Her work currently focuses on political economy, cultural production, and the increasing violence against Romani (Gypsy) citizens worldwide. Dr. Brooks serves as a member of the USC Shoah Foundation, the European Roma Rights Centre, and the United States Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and its Roma Genocide Working Group.

A Passion for Public Policy

Building a strong foundation for a career in public service, **Antoinette Gingerelli**, a junior triple majoring in political science, middle eastern studies, and women's and gender studies with a minor in international and global studies, has received two fellowships to prestigious programs that prepare students to do graduate work in public policy and international affairs: summer 2014, Public Policy and Leadership Conference, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; summer 2015, Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute, Ford School, University of Michigan; summer 2016...we look forward to hearing what Toni achieves!

PSYCHO1OGY

THE MOST POPULAR MAJOR IN ARTS AND SCIENCES
• PSYCHOLOGY •
RANKS NUMBER 10 IN THE NATION
(THE USA TODAY COLLEGE FACTUAL)

> Rutgers University is one of the top public research schools in the country ... Of its many excellent academic programs, psychology is one of the best. It is dedicated to helping students understand the connection between the way we think and our behavior. Students learn all concepts, theories and methodologies of the psych field, while gaining hands-on experience that will be useful when entering the job force. Students take classes in behavioral and systems neuroscience, clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, and social psychology.

2 RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEW BRUNSWICK IS #2 IN THE NATION PREPARING STUDENTS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS.

6,697 current Arts and Sciences students are the first in their families to attend college.

The **School of Arts and Sciences** is the largest academic unit at Rutgers University–New Brunswick, providing a comprehensive liberal arts education to more than 20,000 undergraduates. The School upholds the tradition of excellence, first founded 250 years ago by Rutgers College, and continues the expansion of access to outstanding higher education created by Douglass, Livingston, and University Colleges. With more than 750 full-time faculty and 52 majors in the humanities, biological, mathematical, and physical sciences, and social and behavioral sciences, Arts and Sciences offers programs of unparalleled breadth and depth combining excellence in teaching with world-class research.

Theodore Sider Named First Mellon Chair in Philosophy

Theodore Sider, who came to Rutgers in July 2015 to fill the first endowed chair in the philosophy department, the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Philosophy, is known worldwide for his groundbreaking contributions in analytic metaphysics, the branch of philosophy that examines the fundamental nature of being, and his ability to explain complex theories and concepts in his writing and teaching. "I'm thrilled to teach the wonderful students here, and to interact with the renowned and dynamic faculty members in the philosophy department," Sider says. *The Philosophical Gourmet Report* publishes an annual ranking of departments of philosophy in the English-speaking world. It has consistently ranked the Rutgers Department of Philosophy among the top three. The Andrew W. Mellon Chair in Philosophy is endowed by a $1.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a matching grant from an anonymous donor.

"The School of Arts and Sciences welcomes Ted Sider as the holder of the Andrew W. Mellon Chair in Philosophy," says Peter March, executive dean of the school. "The Department of Philosophy is among the best in the world, and the addition of the Mellon chair represents an important investment in the department. The Mellon Foundation's commitment to the humanities enriches our students' intellectual lives and strengthens the liberal arts."

Skilled in Science, She Found Fertile Intellectual Ground in Humanities

Michelle Shapiro wants to make patients feel good about their smiles

Michelle Shapiro always had a knack for science.

So it was no surprise that this Edison native majored in cell biology and neuroscience at Rutgers and then attended Harvard School of Dental Medicine.

But Shapiro's undergraduate experience in the **School of Arts and Sciences** wasn't simply the story of an aspiring scientist hunkering down in the lab.

Some of her most striking intellectual discoveries took place in the humanities.

"I think that taking a rich, varied, and eclectic course load empowers us to learn many things about the world," says Shapiro, formerly Michelle Lieblich, who earned her degree in 2011 as part of the first Arts and Sciences graduating class. "It's one of the reasons we go to college."

> "I want to help people and make them feel happy about their smiles."

Shapiro, who grew up attending Orthodox Jewish schools, pursued a minor at Rutgers in Jewish studies, a field that examines Jewish life from many angles, including historical, political, and linguistic perspectives.

"I learned a lot of Jewish studies growing up, and I wanted to further that education because I was passionate about it, both personally and intellectually," she says. "Rutgers was a place I could do that, one because it has a very good Jewish studies department, and also because it's very different from the way you would learn it in yeshivas."

On the science side, meanwhile, Shapiro's fascination with the underlying details of human life drew her to the Department of Cell Biology and Neuroscience.

"It just spoke to me," she says. "I like studying at the cellular level. It's amazing to me that every single thing that goes on in our bodies happens through these little cellular interactions."

She served as an Aresty Research Fellow, studying spinal cord regeneration at the W.M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience.

"The research element is a huge benefit at Rutgers," she says. "I didn't know coming out of high school that I wanted to do research or even what research was."

Her research wasn't limited to science. Shapiro researched and wrote an interdisciplinary thesis on Vatican-Israel relations. She praised Paola Tartakoff, a professor of Jewish studies and history who served as an advisor on the project and as an overall mentor.

"She pushed me to do better," Shapiro says. "Science was my strength, but she helped me develop another side of my academic interest."

When Shapiro arrived at Harvard, she felt slightly intimidated. But not for long.

"The quality of the education I received at Rutgers was phenomenal," she said. "I was more than prepared for Harvard."

She received her doctor of dental medicine degree in 2015, and is currently completing her residency at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and planning to enter private dental practice.

"I want to help people and make them feel happy about their smiles," she says.

ALUMNI PROFILE

Michelle Shapiro SAS '11

Q&A

A TRANSFORMATIONAL MISSION: EXTENDING SUPPORT TO ALL UNDERGRADUATES

Questions for the Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Academic Affairs

Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui has always believed that the ideal undergraduate experience should offer students as many opportunities as possible to grow—as intellectuals, citizens, and adults.

Now, as Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UAA), this award-winning teacher and scholar in the Department of American Studies and the Program in Comparative Literature oversees a network of resources across Rutgers–New Brunswick aimed at fulfilling that transformational mission. Sifuentes-Jáuregui, who began his new job last June, talks about his mission.

Q: What is Undergraduate Academic Affairs and how would you describe its role at Rutgers?

A: I see our mission as creating the best possible experience for Rutgers undergraduates. UAA is a coordinating office that brings together programs and services that benefit students, including Career Services, the Rutgers Learning Centers, and Student Access and Educational Equity. UAA provides a unified identity, common standards, and best practices across all New Brunswick schools and departments that deal with undergraduate matters.

Q: Can you give me an example?

A: We have a terrific Career Services, and now the next step is to get faculty involved and thinking about how their departments can create a conversation with Career Services that will connect students to those resources. We also have great Learning Centers with a very strong STEM component, and we hope to develop those further. In addition, we are implementing a new campuswide initiative, RU-1st, that extends academic support and mentorship to first-generation, low-income students and their families.

Q: You have had a distinguished teaching career. What drew you to this job?

A: As a faculty member I was always focused on exposing students to as much as possible. I believe that becoming educated is more than getting a degree and then a job. We are creating citizens who will go back home and help their families and help their communities. And I think what UAA does is to enable all students to meet and exceed the requirements of the university.

Q: You often speak of your work at UAA in terms of increasing access. Can you explain that?

A: It's a constant theme of our work: How can we help students who may not have had full access to available resources—academic support, accommodations for the disabled, and financial assistance. What kind of programming can we craft and design that can extend access to the whole of Rutgers? We help many students, but we could reach many more. We just need to craft the programming. And that's part of the ongoing mission of UAA.

Photo credits: Nick Romanenko, Kara Donaldson, Roy Groething

RUTGERS
School of Arts and Sciences

SPRING/SUMMER 2016

Access
Excellence in the Arts and Sciences

Mastering the Art of Teaching

School of Arts and Sciences graduate brings innovative approach to high school science

When high school teacher Tovi Spero introduces his students to physics, he starts with a seemingly ordinary, unintimidating, and non-scientific object.

Like a bowling ball.

"I tell them to make it move," Spero says. "Then based on what they see, I ask them to think about the information they can gather. Is there a pattern? Does that pattern suggest a larger question?

"Before they know it, they've done their first physics experiment."

Spero, a member of the first graduating class of the **School of Arts and Sciences** in 2011 always knew he wanted to teach. But over the span of five years in which he completed his bachelor's degree in physics and received a master's degree from the Graduate School of Education (GSE) his ideas about teaching underwent a transformation.

"I really thought my career was going to be me telling students to take notes while I explain everything to them," he says. "And that just got flipped on its head."

Indeed, Spero's students at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North had no time to sit idle during a recent honors physics class. He had them swinging their backpacks in the air to experience circular motion, or spinning a marble to calculate its probable direction. When he wasn't engaging these student teams with questions and comments, Spero captivated them by donning a raincoat and threatening to drench himself by whirling a bucket of water over his head—but centripetal force prevailed.

"He relates everything to real life," says Yash Parakh, a junior at the school. "That's very helpful because now when I see something I know what's happening in terms of the physics."

Another student, Shruthi Santhanakrishnan, says the backpack exercise was particularly instructive—and fun.

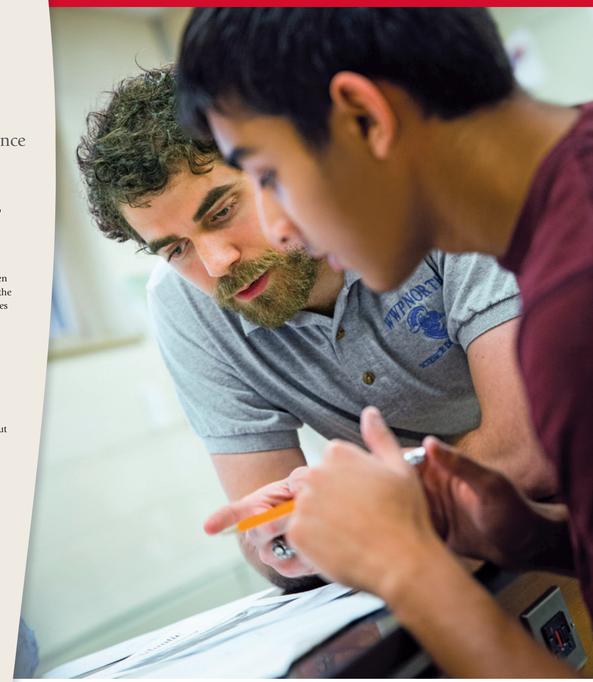
"When you are just drawing the forces, you're expecting a specific outcome," she says. "But when you actually feel the forces, you come up with a very different result."

Growing up in Fanwood, Spero never saw himself as "a science type" until he took a physics course in high school.

"It was the first thing that really challenged me and made me think," Spero says. "I fell in love with it."

In fact, he literally couldn't get away from the subject.

(continued inside)



Tovi Spero (left) of the School of Arts and Sciences first graduating class of 2011 is now a physics teacher at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North. As a student in a five-year teacher preparation program, he learned innovative teaching techniques that he now applies in his classroom.

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Mastering the Art of Teaching

Tovi Spero gives small groups physics problems to solve (top) and then dons a raincoat to keep the students in suspense as he whirls a bucket of water to demonstrate centripetal force.

"I'd look at a car and see the wheels turning," he says. "And suddenly I'm thinking about circular motion, and all these equations and hypotheticals pop into my head."

At Rutgers, he enrolled in a five-year program for physics education. He did his undergraduate work in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, where he expanded his conceptual grasp of the topic, and graduate work at GSE where he studied pedagogy and began shaping his approach to teaching.

His mentor was Eugenia Etkina, an education professor who oversees the physics teacher preparation program and works closely with the physics department in Arts and Sciences, where she is a member of the graduate faculty.

Etkina has long been a proponent for change in science education, arguing that the acquisition of knowledge alone isn't enough to develop scientifically literate students.

"Acquiring a body of knowledge is important, but that knowledge is the final outcome of what's really essential: the science process," she says. "Science process is thinking like a scientist, and acting like a scientist. And that should be as much a goal of science education as knowing the final outcome."

Working under Etkina, Spero was exposed to the latest research on physics education and began applying his techniques as a student teacher.

"I came out of Rutgers really wanting my students to take ownership of their learning," he says.

With that mindset he brought bowling balls to one of his first classes on motion. Students responded with enthusiasm, putting the balls on ramps, pushing them by hand, and recording the motion with cell phone cameras and stopwatches.

"I can't even describe how wonderful it was," Spero says. "They were being real scientists."

> "Learning to think like a scientist should be as much a goal as knowing the final outcome."

With New Jersey adopting new science standards, Spero is discovering that the participatory, inquiry-based methods he learned under Etkina at Rutgers are putting him in the vanguard of science educators in the state.

"The new standards are really in line with how I teach," Spero says. "I can be a resource in my district."

He looks back fondly at Rutgers, where he was part of the first Arts and Sciences graduating class.

"I liked that I got to know a lot of people from many majors," he says. "It was nice to be part of a school big enough that I could have all these experiences."

Emily Allen-Hornblower, a professor of classics, recently taught a western civilization course at a New Jersey prison. She describes it as one of the most rewarding experiences in her teaching career.

AT A STATE PRISON, PROFESSOR TEACHES CLASSICS AND INSPIRES CONVICTS

Emily Allen-Hornblower's lessons on tragic heroes resonate with inmates

Emily Allen-Hornblower enjoys reaching beyond the classroom to educate the public about the literary masterpieces of the ancient world.

The Rutgers professor has presented pre-concert lectures at New Jersey Symphony Orchestra performances, discussed the connections between the European debt crisis and ancient Greek myth on NPR's *Marketplace* program, and served as a consultant for the *Clash of the Gods* documentary on the History Channel.

But recently she brought her expertise to a group of dedicated students in what some might consider an unlikely setting for expounding on the Homeric epic: a New Jersey state prison.

Allen-Hornblower taught a western civilization course at the medium-security Northern State Prison in Newark. Facing a class of 16 men, some incarcerated for decades, Allen-Hornblower presented powerful studies in such works as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Iliad*, and Aristotle's writings on anger.

It was, she says, one of the most deeply rewarding experiences of her career.

"It gave me such a strong and renewed sense of the humanities; how it helps us understand what makes us human, why we commit certain acts, and most importantly, what connects us," says Allen-Hornblower, a professor in the Department of Classics in the **School of Arts and Sciences**.

The students were just as unequivocal about the class, and Allen-Hornblower's teaching.

"Thank you for coming into my life and giving me knowledge about the world," one student wrote at the end of the course.

"Your drive and love for teaching shines bright," another wrote. "Please continue to bless students with your expertise."

The students were incarcerated for a variety of offenses, including drug-dealing and robbery. But their troubled life experiences helped create a classroom atmosphere of remarkable frankness that made the literary tragedies come alive.

Classical heroes are often troubled, complex figures, notes Allen-Hornblower, citing the fit of madness that caused Heracles to murder his children.

"The ancient heroes have a very dark side," she says "What resonates in these stories is the recognition of the force in each of us that can lead to positive or negative outcomes."

The students wrote eloquent essays that connected the literature back to their own lives.

"This changed the way I think about the future," one student wrote about *Gilgamesh*. "It helped me understand that the consequences of my acts don't only affect me."

Another student reflected on how the literature made him feel more connected to humankind.

> "The happiness, pain, and tragedy felt by those yesterday touches us today."

"The most important thing I learned is our interconnectedness to our past and to each other," he wrote. "The happiness, pain, and tragedy felt by those yesterday touches us today. This connection knows no boundaries and has no limits."

Allen-Hornblower says the experience brought home the impact that liberal arts can have in the realm of public engagement.

"What I felt going in was that each of us has the power to contribute a lot of good," she says. "I felt so much of that in their stories, in their senses of humor, and the finesse with which they read and addressed major moral, social, and political issues that come up when you look at history together."

The course was offered through the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP), an association of colleges and universities that provides college courses for inmates and assists in their transition to college life upon release from prison. The NJ-STEP program oversees the renowned Rutgers Mountainview Program, founded by history professor Donald Roden.

RUTGERS DAY AND ALUMNI WEEKEND: April 30, 2016

Rutgers Day is a terrific time for alums and families to return to campus, visit favorite haunts, and meet old friends. Stop by the **School of Arts and Sciences** Tent of Big Ideas on Voorhees Mall and revel in this heady, high-energy, and uniquely Rutgers gathering as professors meet the public to break out their latest research across the humanities and the sciences. Pick up some knowledge and a new Arts and Sciences T-shirt.

Alumni Weekend, the School of Arts and Sciences will be welcoming its first graduates–the Class of 2011–for their fifth-year reunion along with all the other liberal arts graduates ringing in another decade or hall decade as Rutgers alums.

To mark the occasion, this issue of ACCESS celebrates the achievements of our young and soon-to-be alums, including three members of the first graduating class: Tovi Spero, physics teacher at a top New Jersey high school; Yuliya Afinogenova, a medical resident at Yale-New Haven Hospital; and Michelle Shapiro, a Harvard School of Dental Medicine graduate.

These proud Scarlet Knights join the 190,496 liberal arts and sciences Rutgers alums around the world–like those in the class of 1961!

Celebrating their 55th reunion the Rutgers College Class of 1961 invites you to join them for

BIG QUESTIONS:
Rutgers Faculty and Alumni in Conversation

What are black holes and what is their role in the formation and evolution of galaxies?
RACHEL SOMERVILLE
PROFESSOR OF ASTROPHYSICS

How will this presidential campaign be similar to or different from past campaigns?
DAVID GREENBERG
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES

What role are data mining and computer science playing in support of homeland security?
FRED S. ROBERTS
PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS AND DIRECTOR, COMMAND, CONTROL AND INTEROPERABILITY CENTER FOR ADVANCED DATA ANALYSIS (CCICADA)

April 30, 2016
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
New Brunswick Theological Seminary
Hageman Hall

1766-2016 RUTGERS 250

SISTERS GIFTED IN SCIENCE FIND THEIR CALLING AT RUTGERS

Alina and Yuliya Afinogenova plan to make their marks in medicine and law

It's known as the premier undergraduate award in the sciences.

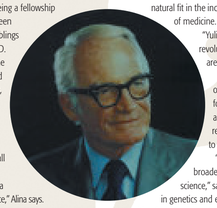
The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship is awarded each year to a select group of sophomores and juniors nationwide.

The **School of Arts and Sciences** can boast of more than a dozen Goldwater scholars since the School's inception in 2007.

But one New Jersey family has an impressive claim all to its own. Russian émigrés Semion and Zhanna Afinogenova have two daughters–Alina and Yuliya–both of whom won the scholarship as Arts and Sciences juniors.

Alina SAS'16 won last year. Yulia SAS'11 received the scholarship in 2010.

"In my 16 years being a fellowship advisor I have never been associated with two siblings winning," says Arthur D. Casciato, director of the Office of Distinguished Fellowships at Rutgers, who held a similar post at the University of Pennsylvania. "It's pretty special."



The sisters take it all in stride.

"We've always had a predisposition for science," Alina says. "It goes way back."

At Rutgers, the sisters embraced the liberal arts tradition. They each double-majored across life sciences and social and behavioral sciences while developing specialties that could shape their careers and make them innovators in their fields.

Yuliya worked with Nancy Woychik, a Robert Wood Johnson Medical School professor whose research focuses on developing improved treatments for tuberculosis. Yuliya went on to Harvard Medical School and is doing her residency at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

"Before Rutgers, I didn't even know you could do research as an undergraduate," says Yuliya, who majored in molecular biology and biochemistry, and economics. "Dr. Woychik was so supportive about me being there in her lab."

Woychik says her former student has exceptional math and computational skills that make her a natural fit in the increasingly complex field of medicine.

"Yuliya has the ability to revolutionize these big data areas," Woychik says.

Alina is forging her own direction. After focusing on genetics and neuroscience in her research, she has decided to attend law school.

"I'm fascinated by the broader implications of the science," says Alina, who majored in genetics and economics. "In the transition from the laboratory to the public sphere, there are so many important questions that arise."

Studying economics complemented her understanding of science and broadened her worldview, she adds.

"Economics is really the study of behavior, and behavior is the result of molecular changes," she says. "The more I saw the overlap, the more interested I became in the interface of science and ethics."

The sisters are in complete agreement about what made their undergraduate education essential.

"Meeting so many people and hearing their stories," Yuliya says.

Alina agrees. "My biggest takeaway from Rutgers is all the people I have interacted with, and all the ideas I have been exposed to," she says. "It shapes you as a person."

Sisters Yuliya (left) and Alina Afinogenova both won Goldwater Scholarships. The sisters embraced a full Arts and Sciences course load across life sciences and social and behavioral sciences.

The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation is a federally endowed agency established by public law in 1986. The scholarship program honoring the late U.S. Senator Barry M. Goldwater was designed to foster and encourage outstanding students to pursue careers in the fields of mathematics, the natural sciences, and engineering. It is regarded as the premier undergraduate award of its type in these fields.

Graduates Draw the Map to a Common Destination: The Job Market

Geography alums find success in wide range of workplaces

For senior Sheila Kelly there's no escaping the big question.

"Everyone is asking me: 'what are you doing next year?'" says Kelly, a geography major in the **School of Arts and Sciences**. "And the answer is: 'I don't know.'"

Although she's passionate about her field, and committed to pursuing work in environmental protection, Kelly, like countless other students who will graduate this year, is still figuring out her place in a constantly changing job market.

But during her final fall semester, Kelly and other geography students caught a glimpse into the day-to-day working lives of recent Rutgers graduates. And what they saw made them feel reassured, hopeful, and even a bit excited about the future.

> "You can go in so many directions with geography."

Three graduates visiting campus gave students some good news: They each landed jobs with employers across the economic spectrum, from New Jersey's largest energy utility to a financial technology firm in lower Manhattan to a non-profit organization that develops data for advertisers.

And all three say their undergraduate work in geography helped them ace the interview and clinch the job.

"My independent study helped me build a personal narrative that distinguished me from other candidates," says Brian Davidson, a 2009 graduate working as a software engineer for REDI Global Technologies. "It was a little edge that got me more interviews."

Davidson, along with Kevin Romero, who graduated in 2012, and Jamie Donatiello, who graduated in 2014, gave detailed accounts of their job searches and successes to students at a panel discussion organized by Department of Geography Chair Robin M. Leichenko.

"These folks have begun building careers out of the major," Leichenko told the audience of mostly juniors and seniors. "They can tell you how they found the job, what they are doing in the job, and what they gained from the major."

Donatiello said she was able to demonstrate her skills by showing examples of an undergraduate mapping project during a job interview with Public Service Electric and Gas. She was later hired as an asset management analyst, responsible for developing maps of the utility's vast network.

"I had an example of a trail map I did with [Rutgers cartographer] Michael Siegel," Donatiello told students. "They were like 'wow she can really do this.'"

Romero works as a senior geoanalyst at the Traffic Audit Bureau for Media Measurement, which provides a ratings system for out-of-home media, typically found on billboards, buses, and transit shelters. The ratings, like the Nielson Ratings for television, provide essential data for advertisers and advertising agencies seeking the best market for their ads.

Romero said courses in geographic information systems (GIS), economic geography, and data analysis all helped, as did an internship in which he and a classmate designed a map showing how a New Brunswick food pantry could reach more clients.

Recently, his job responsibilities have been evolving, giving him more opportunity to work directly with clients.

"I'm not only talking to clients, I am going to the different billboard companies and asking them how we can make their ratings better," he says.

Davidson, meanwhile, told students about the challenges of job hunting during the throes of the Great Recession.

"It was one of the worst job markets in memory," he told students. "There were no GIS jobs. There was nothing."

Relying on research and analytical skills he honed as a double major in geography and economics, Davidson landed a job at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and reinvented himself as a software engineer.

"The key is to be flexible and open to new challenges," he says.

The diverse experiences of the alumni resonates with students.

"It's nice to see how analytical skills can be applied in different ways," Kelly says. "And it's great to hear success stories."

Erin Nigro, also a senior, agrees.

"It showed that you can go in so many directions with geography."

Clockwise from top: Brian Davidson (center), a Class of 2009 graduate, discusses his experiences in the job market with current geography students. Below left: Alumni Davidson, Kevin Omero, and Jamie Donatiello tell their job search stories. Below right: Robin Leichenko, geography department chair, connects her current students to visiting graduates for a discussion on careers.