



Junior Maria Di Costanzo

Studying Italian and Embracing the World

Maria Di Costanzo says her major is a “total life experience”

Whether she's watching *Life is Beautiful* in its original Italian, discussing the plays and novels of Luigi Pirandello with her aunt in Naples, or learning about the social and political issues facing modern Italy, Maria Di Costanzo always feels inspired in the Department of Italian.

“It's a total life experience,” Di Costanzo, a junior, says. “I've learned so much in this department—starting with this beautiful language and then extending into film, literature, and culture.”

She has also learned a lot about herself. When this Piscataway, New Jersey native started taking Italian classes in the **School of Arts and Sciences**, she was hesitant to even speak in class, wondering if the Naples dialect she learned from her family might hinder her ability to speak standard Italian.

Now she's mastered the language and is president of the Italian Club. Adult students auditing courses seek out her help to fulfill their dream of learning Italian.

“At Rutgers, I've been transformed from someone insecure in their ability to speak the language to someone who helps others grow and become more confident in the language,” she says.

Di Costanzo's father, Giovanni Di Costanzo,

grew up in Ischia, an island off the coast of Naples, and came to the U.S. when he was 18. He is the owner of the Gianni's Pizzarama in Piscataway.

When Di Costanzo entered Rutgers, she initially considered majoring in global business. But she slowly realized that it was in her Italian and Spanish language classes that she felt the highest sense of calling. The stage was set when she signed up for an Italian literature class with Professor Laura Sanguineti White, a class in which she read books by the author Luigi Pirandello, a favorite of her aunt's.

“When I went back to Italy over the summer, my aunt and I sat in her kitchen talking for hours about the book,” she says. “Something just clicked in my head—I can read these complex works in the original language and discuss them.”

She went home, got on the Rutgers website, and changed her major to Italian. “This is what I want to do. This is my calling.”

Now, with a second major in Spanish, and a minor in international and global studies from the Department of Geography, Di Costanzo is eager to get out into the world, and is considering a career in the international arena.

“I've always been fascinated with the idea of working at the United Nations,” she says. “The options feel limitless.”

“This is what I want to do. This is my calling.”

A Life Influenced by Liberal Arts

Bruce Kerzic recalls learning life lessons at Rutgers

It has been a few decades since Bruce Kerzic graduated from Rutgers.

But the knowledge, ideas, and experiences he absorbed as a liberal arts student continue to resonate in his life, as well as in his career.

“One of the most valuable skills I learned at Rutgers was how to pull people together rather than push them apart,” says Kerzic RC'83. “The worst thing you can do is not listen to people.”

He began learning those lessons in the classes he took as a communications major and at two internships. He put them into practice as treasurer of a fraternity. And he made them the hallmark of his company, Thrift Investment Corporation, a consumer finance firm where he serves as owner and president.

“I have an open door policy,” he says. “People can come in and talk to me about whatever they want to talk about. And if no one is in my office, then I will walk around and talk to people.”

“It's management by walking around.”

Kerzic's commitment to a broad, multidisciplinary undergraduate experience prompted him to make a gift recently to support the new Career Explorations Initiative launched by the **School of Arts and Sciences**. The initiative seeks to empower students to build meaningful lives and careers through a special course, workshops featuring alumni and employers, and other programming.

“I benefited from taking a lot of different classes, having a range of experiences, and meeting people who were diverse in their ideas and background,” Kerzic says. “Liberal arts students are the ones who are able to find solutions to problems because they see the bigger picture.”

Kerzic himself was forced to see the big picture when, in his first year at Rutgers, he became treasurer of Tau Kappa Epsilon. He suddenly had to figure out the budget.

“Nobody wanted to pay dues unless they had a reason to pay,” he recalls. “You had to talk to people the right way, show them that they are valued, and give them a reason to get involved.” He took on an even bigger challenge after a student became paralyzed in an accident. Kerzic, working with other students, staged a massive benefit concert in which they handled security, booked the bands, and managed the money.

They eventually wrote a check to the family for \$12,000, the equivalent to \$33,000 in 2017.

For Kerzic, the effort reflects the values and skills he learned at Rutgers and carries with him on his life's journey: empathy, creativity, collaboration, and organization.

“Rutgers was a great place,” he says. “You had a lot of friends. You learned a lot. And you had a pretty good time.”



Bruce Kerzic RC'83

ROUNDUP

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

Rutgers Senior Awarded Prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholarship

Chelsie Riche pursues her quest for equal access to education for all



Chelsie Riche, an Africana studies and history major with a minor in women's and gender studies in the **School of Arts and Sciences**, is one of 36 U.S. students awarded the Gates Cambridge Scholarship for graduate studies at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Riche was drawn to Cambridge because of its renowned Centre for African Studies, established in 1965. “I want to be a part of that,” Riche says, noting she will pursue a master's degree in African studies. “The scholarship resonates with what I've been doing at Rutgers,” says Riche, 21, whose research and activism focuses on providing access to education for marginalized communities.

Riche is passionate about all children having access to quality education. Growing up in Haiti, she was one of the few children in her family able to go to school, so she would teach her cousins what she learned in the classroom. After arriving in the U.S. in 2006, she excelled in school in her hometown, Irvington. But during her first year at Rutgers, Riche struggled as a first-generation student navigating college life and a rigorous academic schedule. She realized that the economic barriers to education she thought she had left behind in Haiti also exist in the U.S. Riche was energized to help other students.

As president of Galvanizing and Organizing Youth Activism, she planned 5K walks promoting literacy and collected school supplies for local and global communities. In 2016, she joined a service learning program in South Africa, collaborating with the University of Cape Town to facilitate college-readiness workshops, and interned for Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.), working with his senior team on education policy and civil rights and social justice issues. After the one-year fellowship at Cambridge, Riche plans to obtain a Ph.D./J.D. in education and law “to influence education reform policy.”

Established in 2000, the scholarships funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation cover all fees and living expenses for master's or doctoral studies at Cambridge, one of the oldest and most esteemed universities in the world.

#1 IN THE COLLEGE FED CHALLENGE

Defeating several elite universities, including Dartmouth College, Princeton University, and the University of Chicago, Rutgers Economics won the 2016 College Fed Challenge, a national competition. “It was an absolutely stunning moment, in this very imposing boardroom, where the Fed sets policy,” says Jeffrey Rubin, an emeritus professor of economics, and the team's adviser since 2003. Students deliver a 15-minute presentation analyzing current economic conditions, make recommendations on monetary policy, and respond to questions from a panel of three top economists at the Federal Reserve System.



From left, Jeffrey Rubin, Ali Haider Ismail, Andrew Lee, Federal Reserve Board Chair Janet Yellen, Shriram Viswanathan, Kam Dalal, and Ashton W. Welles.

#2 FOR U.S. VETERANS

The *Military Times* ranks Rutgers–New Brunswick as the second-best four-year college in the U.S. for veterans. The Office of Veteran Military Programs and Services (OVMP) is the Rutgers organization responsible for assisting over 1,700 veterans and other military affiliated students. OVMP works to ensure positive integration of veterans into the university atmosphere by providing academic advising, financial aid, disability services, and tutoring.



From left: Students Grace Marie Perez Santiago, William Gardner, Emmanuel Taylor, and Christopher Drummonds at Rutgers Veterans House.

#3 IN PHILOSOPHY

Rutgers is listed third from the top in the Philosophical Gourmet Report's rankings of the best philosophy departments. In overall score, however, Rutgers is actually tied for second with Princeton. The Rutgers Department of Philosophy is currently working with the Oxford University Press on an annual lecture series that brings the greatest philosophers in the world to Rutgers–New Brunswick.

HELPING RUTGERS BECOME A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers) work across Rutgers University to promote global engagement. Eric Garfunkel has recently taken on the job of leading this complex and multifaceted office, including the task of working with those affected by President Trump's executive orders limiting immigration. In the interview below, Garfunkel, a veteran chemistry professor in the **School of Arts and Sciences**, discusses the role of GAIA Centers at Rutgers.

Q: When were the GAIA Centers established, and what is its mission?

A: The GAIA Centers were formed in 2011. Our mission is to make Rutgers a leader in international higher education and to globalize the experience here at home for faculty and students. We do this in multiple ways. Rutgers has 9,000 international students and scholars, and our office supports them by getting them into the country and keeping them in legal status for the duration of their academic career. We also oversee Study Abroad for students to travel and study internationally. And we provide support for faculty or units to engage in global programming. These programs run the gamut. Sometimes, they are focused on an academic or research topic, or they can provide a cross-cultural social experience.

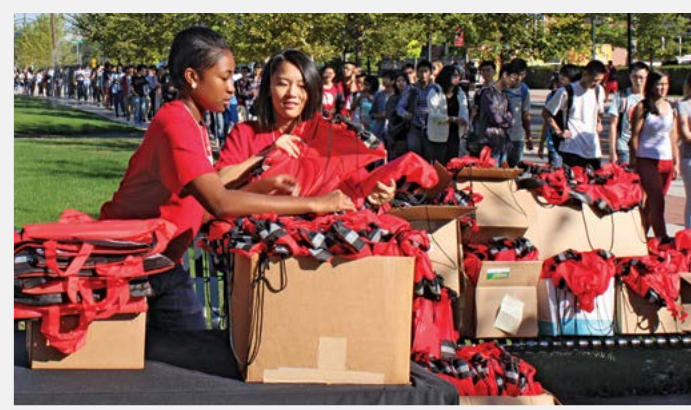
We are the universitywide resource for global relations. For example, if someone wants to start a new program on childhood diabetes in Nigeria, we have five other programs in Nigeria, and we can help you work with existing partner schools and institutions in Nigeria—or wherever you are interested. There is a procedure to officiating these partnerships, so we should be the first stop before you start or continue an international partnership.

Q: What are some of your main priorities for the coming year?

A: One is to increase Study Abroad enrollment for undergrads. Rutgers lags behind some other large universities in terms of numbers of students participating. We are involved in a national initiative to double the number by 2019. In the last few years, we have increased the number of Rutgers participants from about 600 to 900. But we need to continue raising awareness that seeing more of the world is an essential experience for students across majors.

Q: What are examples of new programs that you are running?

A: Rutgers and the United States Peace Corps have a long history that goes back to 1961 when Rutgers was selected to serve as the training site for the original cohort of Peace Corps Volunteers. In 2015, the GAIA Centers established the first Rutgers Peace



Rutgers is global: Volunteers greet arriving international students.

Corps recruitment office. We feel that Study Abroad, particularly our service-learning opportunities, are a great precursor for students interested in Peace Corps service.

We're also highlighting global research conducted by graduate students. For instance, on April 18, we are hosting a new symposium called “Mapping New Directions in International Research” in which graduate students can share their international research projects with the university community.

Q: How was your office affected by President Trump's executive orders banning immigration from countries with a Muslim-majority population?

A: We went into high gear. When the first executive order was announced, we had hundreds of emails coming in. And within an hour, I had 10 emergency emails that needed to be addressed. We have about 150 students from the affected countries. We are continuing to communicate daily with lawyers, refugee experts, and families. We are absolutely in that loop and will continue to be.

Q: Your background is in science, as a professor of chemistry and chemical biology. What made you want to take on this position?

A: I have been involved in international activities since I was a student. Even though I was studying science, I was interested in applying my science background to international development. I did post-docs in Paris and Shanghai. I returned many times to France and China, leading meetings and staying involved in the international arena. So, this is bringing me full circle.

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, or any other category covered by law in its admission, programs, activities, or employment matters. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Jackie Moran, Title IX Coordinator for Students and ADA/Section 504 Compliance Officer, Office of Student Affairs (948-932-8576, jackie.moran@rutgers.edu); and Lisa Grosskreutz, Associate Director, Office of Employment Equity, University Human Resources (848-932-3980, lisa.grosskreutz@rutgers.edu). For further information on the notice of nondiscrimination, you may contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, at 646-428-3900 or OCR.NewYork@ed.gov.

Photo credits: Nick Romanenko, Kara Donaldson, Ian Defalco, Jeremy Berkowitz, Federal Reserve Bank, Rutgers University Archives

RUTGERS

School of Arts and Sciences

SPRING/SUMMER 2017

Access
Excellence in the Arts and Sciences

Creating Math Courses that Resonate with Students across the Liberal Arts

Videos, group work, and humor inspire non-majors

Michael Weingart is a mathematics professor with a knack for connecting with students who don't like math.

Consider the description he wrote for his “Introduction to Probability” elective, and the way it seeks to reassure students feeling anxious, skeptical, or just plain uninterested.

“You will never be left wondering, ‘What is this good for? What does this have to do with real life?’” he wrote in the course summary that appears on the math website.

With his friendly, down-to-earth manner, Weingart has taken on the task of reaching out to non-math majors across Rutgers University–New Brunswick. Over the course of several years, he has been reimagining and redesigning the 100-level courses that are staples of the Department of Mathematics in the **School of Arts and Sciences** (SAS). He has sought to make the courses more engaging to students from the humanities, fine arts, social work, and other non-STEM disciplines. And he has enlisted a group of talented teachers—including three who won SAS Distinguished Contributions to Undergraduate Education awards—to teach those courses.

“We think a lot about the needs of non-majors in this department and we've invested significant effort to reach them,” Weingart says. “These courses should be an essential part of their liberal arts education and not just a hurdle on the way to graduation. They should grow from them. They should be more stretched intellectually. And they should be more mathematically literate when they finish.”

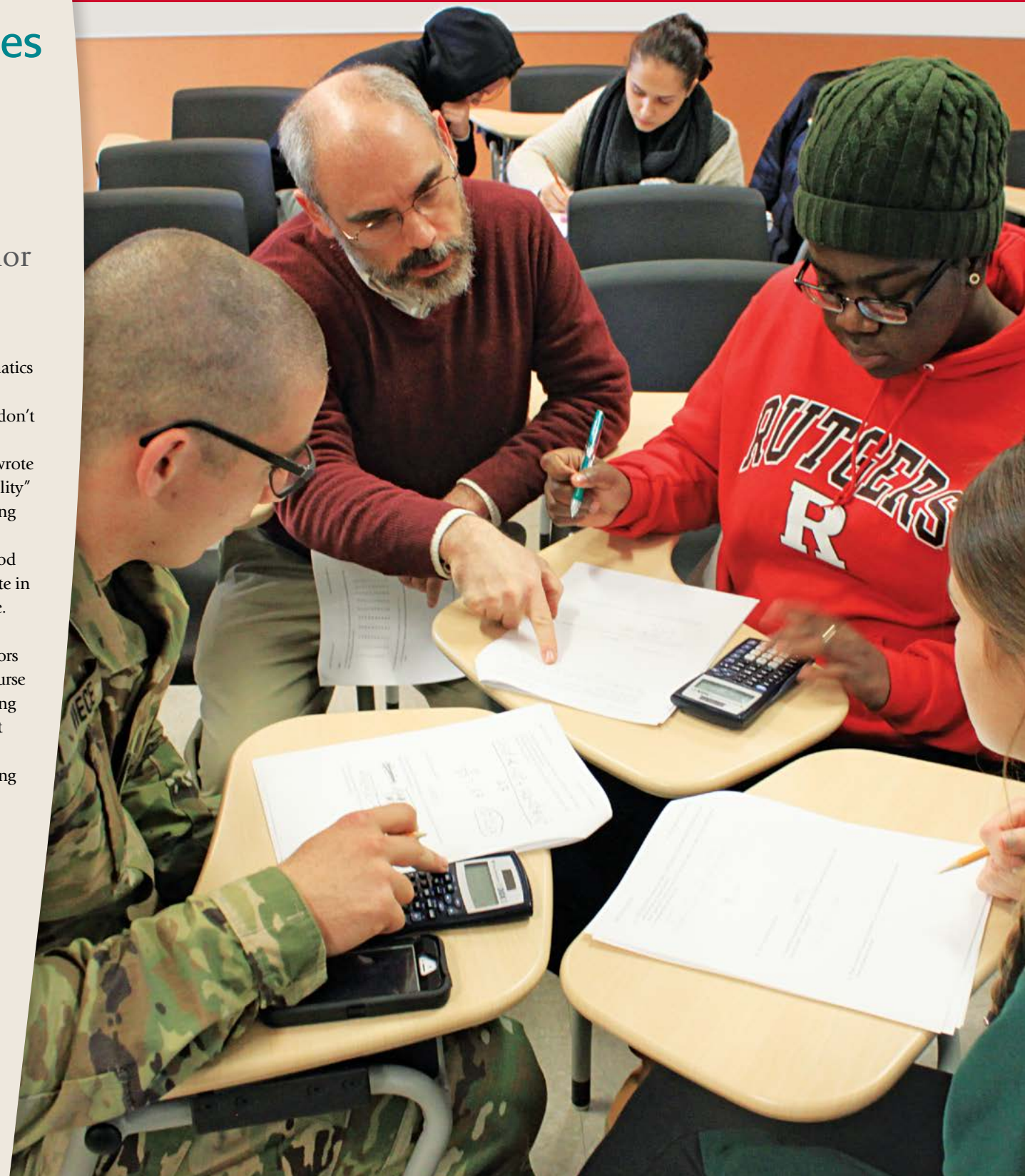
Weingart recently launched a new version of the probability course that employs the “flipped classroom” or hybrid model in which students learn the material at home with the help of online videos and then build on that knowledge during class, where they work in groups to solve more complex problems.

During the class, Weingart moves adroitly from group to group, sitting in on their collective problem-solving and interjecting his expertise, which he always expresses in conversational language, sometimes laced with clever pop-culture references.

When one group is perplexed by a problem involving a series of coin tosses, Weingart helps them narrow down the objective, eventually channeling *Mission Impossible*. “Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to find out how biased this coin toss is toward heads,” he says.

The videos for the class take a similar approach: concise instruction with Weingart's voice providing precise and pithy narration over

(continued inside)



In Professor Michael Weingart's (center) hybrid class “Introduction to Probability,” students like Joseph Niece (left) and Cierrah Williams (right) work together to solve problems after learning the material at home.

RUTGERS

School of Arts and Sciences

School of Arts and Sciences
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
77 Hamilton Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Nonprofit
US POSTAGE PAID
New Brunswick, NJ
08901
Permit 157

SAS.RUTGERS.EDU

Solution Set

In redesigning electives for non-math majors, professor Michael Weingart has drawn on the teaching talent and education scholarship of faculty members in his department.

Two of his colleagues, Alice Seneres (now with the Rutgers Learning Center) and lecturer John Kerrigan, wrote their dissertations on the hybrid or “flipped classroom” approach now offered in several popular electives, including “Topics in Mathematics for the Liberal Arts.”

“There is no one-size-fits-all approach.”

“Their research on the hybrid project informs our teaching and allows us to improve it as we move forward,” Weingart says.

He also cites the teaching contributions of fellow mathematicians Melissa Lieberman, Matthew Russell, Debra Gulick, and Cynthia Roemer.

Weingart stresses that hybrids are not for everyone, and that he has also retooled the content and the teaching of traditional versions of the courses, adding subject matter relevant to students such as the mathematics behind student loans and voting.

“There is no one-size-fit-all approach,” Weingart says. “We should provide different formats and let students decide what works best for them.”

(continued from front)

Creating Math Courses that Resonate with Students across the Liberal Arts

images of the problems getting worked out step by step.

“It’s not me sitting there lecturing for 80 minutes,” he says.

In one video, Weingart introduces the “Monty Hall problem” based on the classic game show *Let’s Make a Deal*. Students have to figure the probability of choosing between three doors, and then two, to win the new car and avoid getting the booby prize of goats.

In another video, he shows test scores from two different classes and instructs students how to draw conclusions about the results, an analytical skill that he notes will have value in many workplaces.

“If your eyes are glazing over looking at all these numbers, that’s a good reaction!” Weingart tells students. “But we live in the era of big data, so being able to take a look at data and extract some information is important.”

Alyssa La Neve says the videos are remarkably effective. “Online courses can be problematic,” says La Neve, a junior psychology major who plans to become a K-8 teacher. “But Professor Weingart makes the videos very animated and engaging. He changes the level of his voice for emphasis. He just sort of grabs your attention and pulls you through the lesson.”

La Neve and others say they like the hybrid class because they have more opportunity to absorb the material than if they were learning it only in a lecture. And they can move forward sooner if they master the lessons.

“You can go at your own pace when you are watching the videos,” says Cierrah Williams, a junior. “If you don’t



Professor Michael Weingart moves about the classroom in his probability course, interacting with small groups of students.

“The professor grabs your attention and pulls you through the lesson.”

understand something, you go back and rewind it.” And while it’s true that most students in Weingart’s class are not planning to switch their major to mathematics, neither are they simply dismissing the discipline. Sophomore Joseph Niece, who is in Army ROTC, plans on working in human resources management as a military officer, and says the study of probability is important in predicting workplace trends. “One of the things I like about the hybrid approach is that it really makes me focus on my work at home,” he says. “And then when I come into class, everything gets refreshed and reinforced.”

HUMANITIES



A different kind of Hamilton experience: Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan (far right) gathered her class at the Alexander Hamilton marker, just up the hill from Hamilton Street in New Brunswick, and asked them to critique its effectiveness. The students had no trouble suggesting improvements.

PUBLIC HISTORY PROGRAM GIVES STUDENTS NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE PAST

Museums, monuments, and *Hamilton*

As a soldier in the United States Army, Moses Villanueva guided paratroopers through missions in Afghanistan.

He experienced a different type of military adventure after returning home, enrolling in Rutgers–New Brunswick as a history major, and participating in the university’s new program in public history.

Villanueva landed an internship at the Liberty Hall Museum in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he collected and transcribed the letters of Captain John Kean, a World War I veteran and a member of New Jersey’s Kean family.

The letters provided Villanueva SAS’17 with a vivid impression of the experiences of a soldier who served nearly a century before him.

“The fascinating thing was that not much has changed in terms of the human experience of the soldier,” he says. “Even back then there was a lot of sitting around and waiting, putting up with bureaucracy, dealing with rumors, and even doing a bit of whining.”

“It was pretty cool.”

Villanueva was among the first wave of students to participate in the program in public history, which was developed by the Department of History in the **School of Arts and Sciences**. The program offers students majoring or minoring in history the opportunity to earn a 15-credit certificate as well as choose from internships at more than 100 different sites throughout New Jersey.

Public history emerged in the 1970s, with scholars and practitioners discovering rich and revealing sources of historical narrative in the lives of ordinary people and their communities. The field draws students who are passionate about history but who often build careers outside academia, such as in museums, historical sites, libraries, and archives. Public historians work as filmmakers, authors, consultants, and teachers,

among other professions.

“Public history is typically thought of as any sort of history that happens outside the classroom or outside the academy,” says Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, the coordinator of the Rutgers program. “Whenever you go to the museum, whenever you see a historic marker on the side of the road, when you see *Hamilton*—these are all versions of public history.”

Students in O’Brassill-Kulfan’s course “Public History: Theory, Method, and Practice” learn that they don’t have to venture far to confront and critique a major piece of American public history. During one class

they gathered around the Alexander Hamilton marker adjacent to Kirkpatrick Chapel. There, O’Brassill-Kulfan asked them to evaluate how effectively the sign tells the story of Hamilton delaying the advance of British troops across the Raritan River, an action that allowed General George Washington to retreat across the Delaware River to safety in Pennsylvania.

“If you are visiting from Brazil, or France, or China, what would you think when you saw this sign?” she asked. “How much background knowledge is required to understand what’s going on?”

Her students rose to the occasion, analyzing and critiquing the marker for archaic, vague, and imprecise language, among other issues.

“This was a great exercise in critical thinking,” says senior and class member Abigail Haresign. “It’s easy to look at a sign and simply take it at face value. But listening to the class discussion you get a much wider perspective.”

Sophomore June Titus agrees.

“I think it’s important for us as historians to go into public spaces and examine what’s there and whether it’s presented and expressed in a way that informs the public,” she says.

Both students are participating in the certificate program, which has won praise for building connections across the humanities and social sciences. Students can choose electives like archeology, filmmaking, and urban studies in addition to their required course work in history.

Senior Emily Mueller said she took on difficult but rewarding courses in digital mapping and architectural conservation, as well as a research-intensive internship at the university’s special collections in which she examined the role of women in World War I.

A case of artifacts that she curated will be displayed in an exhibition this spring at Alexander Library.

“I think that every class has made me well-rounded and able to connect with people on different levels,” she says. “And that’s a good thing.”

Villanueva, meanwhile, who graduated in January, said his internship at the Liberty Hall Museum left a lasting impact on him.

“I’d see the museum director wearing so many hats, from educator to actor to a customer service pro,” he says. “To see the amount of effort and pride people brought to their jobs, that is something I will take with me into my own career.”

SAS.RUTGERS.EDU

A STAR SURGEON REFLECTS ON HIS RUTGERS PAST

Finding the “spark” that changed his life

George Alfieri is one of America’s premier heart surgeons. And anyone familiar with his work as a congenital cardiac specialist—nearly half his patients are less than a year old—might assume that his undergraduate experience at Rutgers–New Brunswick was a blur of nonstop honors, awards, and achievements.

But when Alfieri arrived in New Brunswick in the late 1970s, he struggled to find his calling.

“I was lost,” Alfieri RC’82 told students during a recent return to Nelson Biology Laboratories on the Busch Campus. “Everyone one else seemed so focused. People were very competitive. I didn’t know why I was here.”

The transformation from struggling student to star surgeon took time, patience, and sacrifice. But Alfieri says that one key was simply the ability to keep an open mind and listen to others—teachers, friends, and colleagues—who helped guide him toward his destiny.

“It’s amazing how you run into people who change the course of your life,” he says. “It’s so important to listen to everyone because you never know where that spark is going to come from.”

Today, Alfieri is the director of pediatric cardiac surgery at the Golisano Children’s Hospital in Rochester, New York, and associate professor of surgery at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. He is one of only 125 doctors nationwide

certified in congenital heart surgery and has achieved the highest cardiac surgery survival rate in New York State for the most complex congenital diseases.

“George went out into the world and has come back as the world’s preeminent heart surgeon,” says emeritus professor Bruce Babiarz, a longtime faculty member in the Department of Cell Biology and Neuroscience in the **School of Arts and Sciences**, who taught Alfieri as an undergraduate and introduced him to students during his recent visit.

Alfieri, the son of Greek immigrants, arrived at Rutgers after abruptly deciding against his longtime plan to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy—a decision that disappointed his father and left Alfieri wondering what he would do with his life.

But things began to turn around when, on a whim, he took an anatomy course with professor Nathan Hart.

“Here’s this big imposing figure with this huge mane of blond hair looping into the classroom,” Alfieri says. “Dr. Hart was fascinating to me. I wanted to perform well for him. It was the first time I really looked forward to going to a lecture and going to a lab.”

Hart, now an emeritus professor, invited Alfieri to join his research team, which studies fertilization in zebrafish.

“All of a sudden, I found where I wanted to be, and I would be in his lab all the time,” Alfieri



George Alfieri tells students how he found direction at Rutgers.

says. “And it all came out of this course I had taken because I wanted to do dissections.”

That would not be the last time Alfieri would receive a crucial push from a seemingly chance encounter. As a graduate student at Georgetown University, he landed a summer job as a lab tech at the National Institutes of Health. One day he impressed and stunned two surgical residents by performing a complex procedure that he had learned simply by observing the residents.

They told Alfieri he should become a heart surgeon and called his advisor at Georgetown.

“Here it is 2016 and I am back in Nelson Hall, and sitting in this life that I don’t know how it happened to me,” he told students. “But what I do know is that

when I found something I loved, I went at it full blast.”

His presentation made a deep impression on students, many of whom want to be physicians.

“It inspired me to keep going through this process—and medical school is a long process,” says Christie Chang, a senior double majoring in genetics and computer science.

Fady Soliman, a sophomore, agrees. “I personally related to what he was saying, especially about coming from immigrant families,” says Soliman. “I moved here two years ago from Dubai, and my parents are Egyptian. I’m still figuring out my plans and it was just so inspiring to hear Dr. Alfieri talk about his life in such a down-to-earth way.”

Looking Back at a Student Movement that Changed Rutgers

Puerto Rican students in the ‘70s pushed for new academic program

Margie Rivera was fighting off tears as her father drove her to Rutgers. She had never left home before and now she was becoming the first in her family to go to college. She had barely stepped foot on campus and already missed her five brothers and sisters. She had no idea what to expect.

“I led a very sheltered life,” the Perth Amboy native says. “It was about school, church, and family, and there was nothing in between.”

She hardly expected to become a force for social change at Rutgers.

“In my wildest dreams I never thought I’d be part of any movement,” she says.

But the year was 1969. And Rivera LC’73 was among the first class at Livingston College, a new undergraduate liberal arts school characterized by a bold spirit of social justice, intellectual seeking, and academic innovation.

She would soon be handing out flyers against the Vietnam War, attending political rallies, and even occasionally occupying a building.

Over time, she joined with other Puerto Rican students, building their community and advocating for social justice. They called on Rutgers to support the study of their heritage, history, and culture. And as a result, the Program in Puerto Rican Studies was launched in the early 1970s.

That fledgling program is now the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies in the **School of Arts and Sciences**.

And last fall, Rivera and other members of the movement—including some from the Camden and Newark campuses—returned to Rutgers to tell their stories, reflect on their struggles, and celebrate their achievements. The all-day conference, “Remembering the Rutgers Puerto Rican Student Movement of the 1970s,” was part of the



“What the Puerto Rican students accomplished had lasting importance.”

university’s 250th anniversary celebration and reminded the audience how a long-forgotten movement helped forge Rutgers’ identity and shape its academic program.

“What the Puerto Rican students accomplished had lasting importance on many levels,” says Paul Clemens, a professor of history and author of *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. “It resulted in the creation of one of the finest departments in the university today.”

The conference was organized by Clemens and Kathleen Lopez, a professor of Latino and Caribbean studies and history. The event featured a panel discussion with Rivera and two other Livingston alumni, Mercedes Valle and Elias Rivera, as well as Douglass College alumna Ivette Mendez.

The panelists recalled facing a daunting challenge even before arriving on campus: An expectation that they wouldn’t go to college. Valle LC’73 and Mendez DC’75, for example, say they were steered by high school counselors

and parents toward careers as secretaries.

Mendez says that one day her high school announced that students interested in attending Douglass College could sign up for a tour. She seized the moment.

“I ended up on a bus from Plainfield, New Jersey to Douglass,” she says. “I decided I am going check it out. I filled out all my own papers. My mother never spoke any English.”

Their lives changed quickly after becoming students. The overall ethos of Livingston and the experience of meeting socially-conscious students had a powerful impact.

“Their demeanor and style imparted on me that I would have to make a difference,” Margie Rivera says. “Having that type of kinship was really an education. I learned about social change and the impact it had on our communities. I sought out projects that would allow me to learn more.”

Valle, meanwhile, joined a theater troupe that wrote plays about the Puerto Rican experience and performed them for audiences at Rutgers and at schools in New York and Massachusetts.

“My experience on Livingston helped me find and clarify my identity as a Puerto Rican,” Valle says. “I started to become so much stronger in my thinking.” She also cites the influence of the professors.

“These were not just professors,” Valle says. “They were like our parents and they guided us along, helping us to find out who we were, what our responsibilities were.” Despite the passage of decades, the accomplishments of the Puerto Rican student movement resonate with current Rutgers students.

“This showed me how my department was founded in struggle and resiliency,” says Monica Torres, a senior majoring in Latino and Caribbean studies and women’s and gender studies. “And it showed me the debt that we owe to those who came before us.”



The conference “Remembering the Rutgers Puerto Rican Student Movement of the 1970s” drew former student activists back to campus. Clockwise from top: Mercedes Valle (left) and Ivette Mendez; Rutgers Professor Kathleen Lopez introduces the panel; Margie Rivera and Mercedes Valle describe their growing awareness of their Puerto Rican identities during their Rutgers years. Inset: Livingston College students in the 1970s. Alumni recall a campus known for diversity, political involvement, and intellectual seeking.

With Two Big Tops, Arts and Sciences Showcases Liberal Arts on Both Banks of the Raritan



The School of Arts and Sciences will have a big presence at Rutgers Day 2017. This year marks the third annual **Arts and Sciences Tent of Big Ideas**—a showcase of scholarship, creativity, and innovation from across the School’s academic spectrum.

This year, two tents will house the wide array of disciplines in the Arts and Sciences, one on Voorhees Mall, College Avenue Campus, and a new one on Busch Campus that will bring the humanities and more social sciences across the river. Both will also serve as hubs where people can gather and meet Arts and Sciences faculty, students, and alumni.

“We’ve had a lot of people doing fabulous work on Rutgers Day since the beginning,” says Arts and Sciences Executive Dean Peter March. “People can experience the vast depth and breadth of our academic programs at individual tents and see how they come together to create the liberal arts in our Tents of Big Ideas.”

Experience the work of School of Arts and Sciences faculty and students at over 50 locations across Rutgers University–New Brunswick. Examine skulls, see physics and chemistry demonstrations, try French cheese, and choose sides in a gladiator fight, then meet an expert under the big top on College Avenue or Busch Campuses. Visit Arts and Sciences programs across Rutgers–New Brunswick on Rutgers Day, collect three or more stamps in your Arts and Sciences program, bring it to the Arts and Sciences Tent of Big Ideas on Busch or College Avenue, hear from a scholar about their cutting-edge research, then receive a free, limited edition Arts and Sciences giveaway.

For more information on Rutgers Day, go to rutgersday.rutgers.edu.

RUTGERS School of Arts and Sciences

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.