

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Arielle del Rosario SAS'12

## She Found Her Calling in Community Psychology

An SAS senior discovers an outlet for her commitment to social justice

Sometimes all it takes is one course to awaken students to their calling. Arielle del Rosario was a School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) junior and psychology major with broad intellectual interests ranging from art history to education when she took professor Maurice Elias's class, "Community Psychology and Mental Health."

Community psychology, which emerged in the 1960s, examines how individuals relate to society. Del Rosario said the class showed her the roles that schools, family, and other social forces play in the development of citizens. She also learned how community psychologists work on a grassroots level through social action based on research to improve the mental health of a community.

"Dr. Elias's class really opened my eyes that psychology was more than individual clinical practice," del Rosario, who graduates this spring, said. "The concepts I was learning—why communities are important and how they work, and how that relates to diversity and social justice—really resonated with me."

The class helped her clarify her goals: she wants to study community psychology in graduate school. It also deepened her burgeoning

interest in community service.

Elias's course included an option to volunteer at a local Head Start, allowing del Rosario to put into practice the concepts she was learning. She has since become deeply involved in the university's Civic Engagement and Service Education Partnerships (CESEP) Program, which specializes in creating public service projects with a strong academic component.

"One of the things I took out of Dr. Elias's class was the theory behind empowering individuals and communities," del Rosario said. "I saw how this could be applied in a larger context in American society."

Del Rosario, a Metuchen, New Jersey, native and the daughter of Filipino immigrants, had come to Rutgers uncertain about her future. In the end, she said the breadth and depth of SAS helped her forge her direction.

"You have a lot of choices in how you fulfill a particular academic requirement," she said. "I took art history to fulfill a requirement. I took general psychology initially just to fulfill a requirement."

"It's funny how that can really snowball into finding your passion. At SAS, I found something I didn't even know I wanted to do."

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## ALUMNI PROFILE

## Inspired by Blue-Collar Parents, an Alumnus Helps the Next Generation

A health care executive remembers his roots

Mike Azzara grew up in a working-class town where fewer than half the kids in his senior class went to college.

But Azzara's parents (Louis, a photo engraver, and Antoinette, a seamstress) had different expectations.

"There was never any question I would be going to college," said Azzara, who graduated high school in 1965. "It was the expectation from the get-go."

Azzara attended Rutgers, graduating with honors in 1969, and then the Sloan Institute at Cornell's Graduate School of Business and Public Administration. He went on to serve as chief executive at a prominent northern New Jersey hospital for more than two decades.

His story exemplifies the tradition of access and excellence—intellectual achievement combined with socio-economic and cultural diversity—that has become the hallmark of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Reflecting on it all, Azzara said he feels deep gratitude to his parents who stretched their resources and to Rutgers for providing a challenging but supportive environment that helped him discover his talents and decide his direction in life.

He entered Rutgers on the premed track but opted against a career in medicine. He credits his adviser, Ralph DeFalco, with urging him to explore hospital administration.

Within a decade of finishing graduate school, Azzara was serving as president and CEO of the Valley Hospital, and later its parent organization, Valley Health System, in Ridgewood, New Jersey, a job he held for 22 years.

"A hospital, for me, combined science, ethics, research, business, community service, and public policy," he said. "Marrying a nurse also helped!"

Azzara gives back to Rutgers in many ways, including serving as chair of the Advisory Board to the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Following his parents' example, he's committed to helping students. Besides making numerous gifts to the university, he has started two key scholarships for students in the life sciences: the Azzara Family Endowed Scholarship and the Mike Azzara Award in Cell Biology and Neuroscience.

"I want to support and encourage students to make a difference by finding cures, helping patients, and serving the larger community," he said. "We need the best and the brightest to pursue the sciences if we want to solve our most pressing problems."



Azzara's 1969 yearbook photo



Mike Azzara RC'69



# ROUND UP

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

# 40%

● Over 40 percent of the Class of 2015 speak a language other than English at home.



Jadaysia Durant, Class of 2015

● 29 percent of 2011's incoming students are the first in their families to go to college.



Almost 300 students in the School of Arts and Sciences are military veterans.

# 3,924

● 3,924 first-year students joined the School of Arts and Sciences last fall.

# #15

● Rutgers ranks #15 in the world and #9 among U.S. universities for arts and humanities, according to *Times Higher Education* (U.K.) 2012 World University Rankings.

# 2160

● The average SAT score for first-year students entering the Honors Program is 2160.

## What I did on my summer vacation. . .

With nine gifts over the last five years totaling more than \$9 million, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation supports scholarship in the humanities in the School of Arts and Sciences. Summer grants advanced 25 graduate students' research and progress toward their degrees. They include:

### Shannon Connelly, Art History

Studied Karl Hubbuch's drawings revealing assertions of a bohemian identity in cosmopolitan Weimar Berlin.

### Matthew Mangold, Comparative Literature

Discovered that actual sites in Saint Petersburg, Russia, are marked as locations in the fictional city of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, including Raskolnikov's "apartment."

### Benjamin Ogden, English

Researched the work of J.M. Coetzee, Nobel Laureate, in Great Britain and was unexpectedly granted a rare interview.

### Christopher Bischof, History

Discovered a manuscript by John Faunthorpe, head of Whitelands Teachers' Training College in London, illuminating women's education in Victorian Great Britain.

### Aaron Braver, Linguistics

Ran experiments proving English speakers preserve phonetic contrasts between words like "raider" and "rater," even though they cannot be perceived.

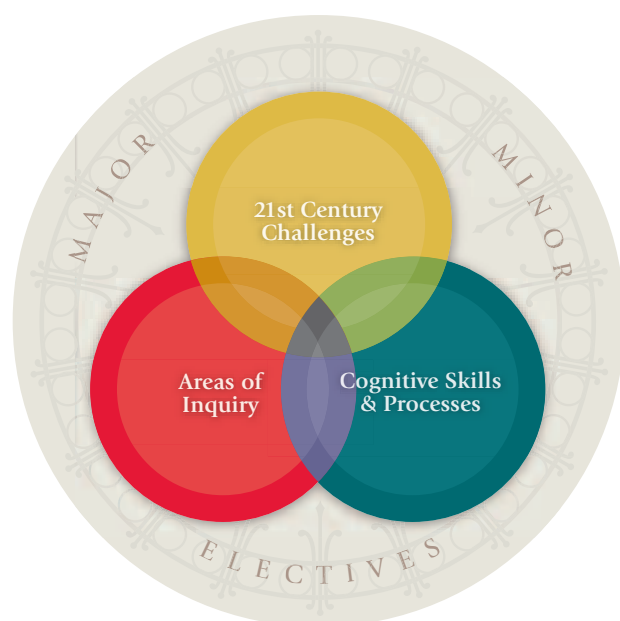
### Nicholas Beckstead, Philosophy

Studied global catastrophic risk with climate change experts at the University of Oxford to determine that low-probability, high-stakes risks pose the most serious threat.

## A BOLD NEW APPROACH TO LIBERAL ARTS

**T**his fall marked another major step in the transformation that created the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) as the unified liberal arts program for the New Brunswick Campus. The incoming class of first-year SAS students was the inaugural class studying under the new Core Curriculum.

Susan E. Lawrence, dean for educational initiatives and the core curriculum and a political science scholar, recently discussed the Core Curriculum and how it improves upon older models.



The goals for each focus area in the SAS Core Curriculum complement and reinforce each other and permeate all of the school's courses and fields of study. The Core Curriculum provides a solid catalyst for excellence in completing major, minor, and elective credits where the student will develop advanced skills in many of these Core goals.

**Q: The new curriculum emphasizes mastery of specific learning goals as opposed to completing a checklist of courses. Why did you take that approach?**

**A:** The learning goals explain right up front why you have to take a particular range of courses and what you achieve by taking them. Higher education and the liberal arts and sciences have always had a series of learning goals in mind, but they've been much more nebulous and not as closely connected to—or closely identified with—specific courses.

**Q: With the economic challenges facing the United States, as well as fast-changing technology, employees in the 21st century need to be more flexible, competitive, and entrepreneurial than ever before. Were these developments a factor as you designed the curriculum?**

**A:** Very much so. One of the big lessons is that it's not enough to prepare for a career. You need to prepare for multiple careers and to be a lifelong learner. We believe that the ideal liberal arts and sciences program should provide the kinds of skills in critical thinking, communication, information technology, and research that are essential for lifelong learning, whether



Susan E. Lawrence, dean for educational initiatives and the core curriculum, and a political science scholar.

it's in a formal graduate program or in the workplace, where you are constantly going to be retooling.

**Q: The Core Curriculum is supposed to help students discover not just "what" they want to be, but "who" they want to be. What does that mean?**

**A:** A lot of students come here concerned, understandably so, with what their career will be. But we think that, equally importantly, college is a time for our students to explore who they are and what kind of person they want to be, and what talents and skills they have that will become their unique contribution to the 21st century. The depth and scope of the Core Curriculum provides students with many resources and many opportunities with which to think through those questions.



# Access

Excellence in the Arts and Sciences

With an internationally renowned faculty, and a student body that is as accomplished as it is diverse, the School of Arts and Sciences has staked out a unique position in American higher education.

## Building on Our Strong Academic Heritage

Access and excellence are the core strengths of the Rutgers University School of Arts and Sciences. This newsletter, the first in a new biannual series, captures our culture of access and excellence at work. In these pages, you'll meet scholars from a bold new consortium aiming to fight diseases and disorders like Alzheimer's and autism; hear from women shaking up the field of economics; and take a seat in one of the enormously popular Middle Eastern languages classes. You'll also meet two students: one from the 1960s era and one a graduating senior, both who saw their lives transformed through their experiences at Rutgers.

The value that we at the School of Arts and Sciences place on making the pursuit of academic excellence accessible to a highly talented and diverse student body is evident in these pages. As faculty, students, staff, and alumni, we can be extraordinarily proud as we pursue our mission of education, research, and public service. We are setting the standard for higher education in the 21st century, and our combination of access and excellence will be the model for many years to come.



Douglas Greenberg RC'69  
Executive Dean  
School of Arts and Sciences



School of Arts and Sciences executive dean Douglas Greenberg meets with students in Alexander Library.

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## A New Vision for Battling Brain Disease

Consortium led by SAS creates common ground for scientists

It was an unusual meeting of the minds. Professors in fields such as genetics, neuroscience, and psychology came together at Rutgers in October 2011 with executives and researchers from prominent pharmaceutical firms.

The two groups met for the inaugural symposium of a bold new research consortium that may have them teaming up for years to come.

The Brain Health Institute (BHI), founded by School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) faculty, is bringing scientists from different backgrounds and disciplines together to fight neurological illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, autism spectrum disorder, auditory aging, and schizophrenia.

"These disorders all live beyond the boundaries of individual disciplines and beyond the bureaucracy in which we live our lives,"

SAS executive dean Douglas Greenberg said at the symposium. "The big idea of the Brain Health Institute is to ignore those boundaries and focus on the scientific problems."

BHI's mission follows the National Institutes of Health's call to transform scientific innovation into specific health gains for the nation.

"All the scientists, me included, want to see our work translatable into something larger," said Robin L. Davis, SAS

executive vice dean, cofounding director of BHI, and professor of cell biology and neuroscience. "But that open environment in which scientists can work together and allow that translation to happen is something completely new."

The symposium left everyone energized and inspired.

"The most exciting part was how truly engaged all of the visitors from the pharmaceutical companies were during the poster sessions," said Karl Herrup, cofounding director of BHI and chair of the Department of Cell Biology and Neuroscience.

BHI is perfectly positioned at Rutgers. The university has a tradition of excellence in the sciences and is located near many major pharmaceutical companies. Plans for Rutgers' potential reunification with the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School create an even stronger foundation for research.

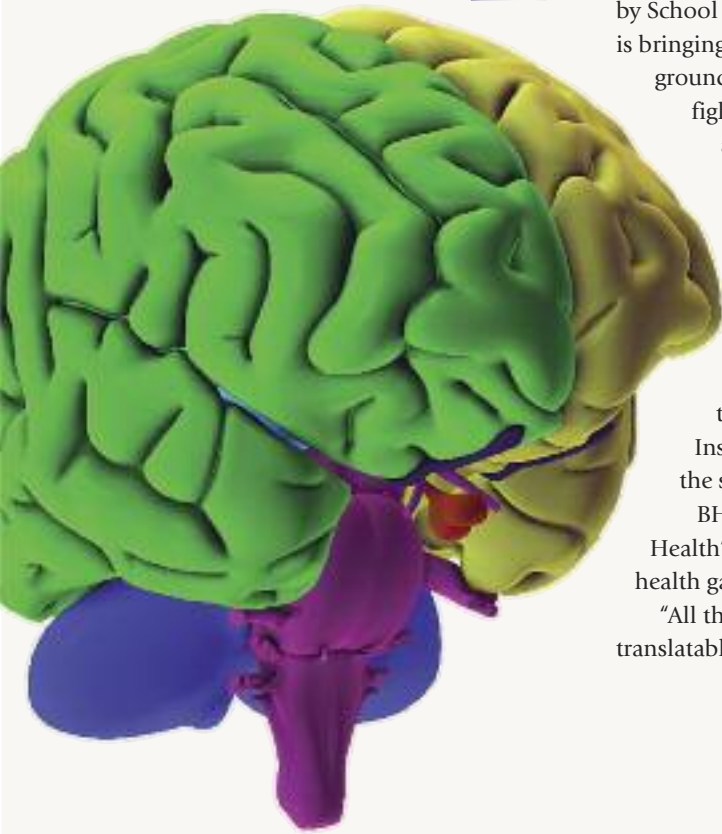
"We are ideally poised geographically, historically, and scientifically to be a hub of biomedical innovation here in New Jersey," said Doreen Valentine, BHI's associate director.

At the recent symposium, scholars spent the day with drug discovery executives and researchers from Merck, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Sanofi, and Eli Lilly.

Everyone felt a common connection, Herrup noted.

"The general feeling is that it's not enough to solve an intellectually challenging problem," Herrup said. "The real goal is to be able to create treatments and drugs that make a difference in people's lives."

“The real goal is to be able to create treatments and drugs that make a difference in people’s lives.”



## A DEPARTMENT BLOSSOMS AS IT EMBRACES THREE DISTANT REGIONS

An academic mission at the vanguard of U.S. higher education

Professor Anjali Nerlekar hears the most remarkable conversations as she passes through halls on her way to class.

It might be a snippet of French between two African professors. Or it could be a Long Island native speaking Persian to an Iranian colleague.

"It's just so delightful—the diversity, the variety, and the interconnectedness of it all," Nerlekar says. "And that is precisely what we try to showcase for our students."

Those multilingual, cross-cultural conversations take place at the Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures (AMESALL). The department is a relatively recent addition to the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and has an academic mission that puts it at the vanguard of U.S. higher education.

AMESALL focuses on a swath of the world that stretches from the minarets of Turkey to the Great Lakes of East Africa to the rivers of Bangladesh. The faculty is just as diverse, with 17 professors and lecturers representing 12 nations. Instruction is offered in 10 languages, including major world ones like Arabic and more nationally confined ones like Twi, spoken in the African nation of Ghana.



Language instructor Hala Issa (right) teaches Arabic in the Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures.

But AMESALL is also deeply rooted in New Jersey through its strong connections with the immigrant and heritage communities from the three regions it covers.

"We are a reflection of Rutgers' motto: 'Jersey Roots, Global Reach,'" said Ousseina Alidou, a professor of African linguistics and literatures.

The department was founded in 2008 on the

guiding principle that—despite differences in culture, history, and geography—Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia are inextricably entwined, said Alamin Mazrui, department chair.

Students see AMESALL's instruction in language and literature as essential for meeting the challenges of the job market in a globalized world, especially for careers in academia, government, business, international relations, and translation.

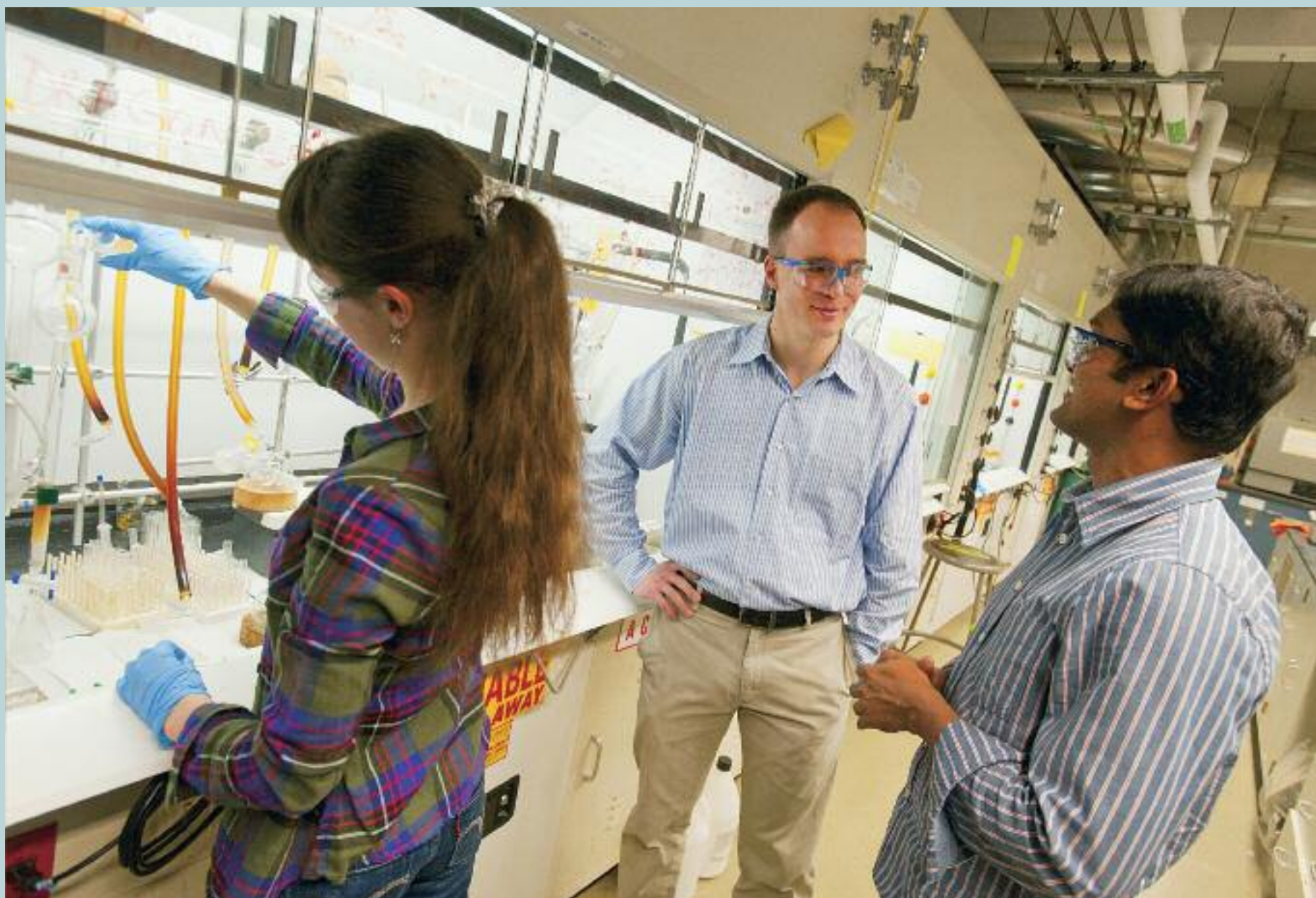
Arabic and Persian language classes have been steadily increasing over the last decade. This year, six students took advanced-level Persian, in which they read and discussed in Persian the epic novel *Symphony of the Dead*.

"I talk to colleagues at other universities, and typically they feel lucky if they have two students at the advanced level," said veteran Persian lecturer Paul Sprachman.

SAS honors student Gordon Morrisette is taking Arabic because he is eyeing a career in international relations.

"In order to craft a better foreign policy you have to understand the people," he said in a recent interview. "And you can only understand the people by understanding their language."





Chemistry professor Daniel Seidel (center) believes in giving students every possible opportunity to do research.

## Women Economists Take on Powerful Roles Guiding Governments

In a traditionally male-dominated field, women are becoming increasingly influential

**T**he appointment of Christine Lagarde to lead the International Monetary Fund was viewed by many observers as a sign that women are ascending to more powerful roles in economics.

But the rise of women in this traditionally male-dominated field comes as no surprise to economists at Rutgers.

Women professors in the Department of Economics in the School of Arts and Sciences serve as policy advisers at all levels of government, guiding officials on such issues as taxation, environment, health care, and criminal justice.

“The women in our department are heavily involved in policy work,” said department chair Rosanne Altshuler.

“Their research has real value to government at the local, state, and federal levels.”

Altshuler herself appeared before the House Ways and Means Committee on Capitol Hill last summer and the Senate Budget Committee last spring, just some of the many times Congress has asked her for help sorting out the complex, controversial topic of taxation. When former president George W. Bush announced in 2005 he was creating a bipartisan panel to reform the federal tax code, Altshuler was tapped to be the panel’s chief economist.

Similar opportunities continue to arise for women in

the Department of Economics, including professors Jennifer Hunt, Anne Piehl, Louise Russell, and Hilary Sigman. All developed specialties early in their careers that make them particularly valuable as policy advisers.

Russell was working in the Social Security Administration during the late 1960s when she began examining the economics of the health care sector. Soon she was seeing the roots of the crisis that bedevils the nation today.

“I said to myself: ‘Good grief, at this rate the health sector is doubling its resources every 12 years,’” said Russell, whose numerous advisory roles at the federal level include co-chairing the U.S. Public Health Service Panel on Cost-Effectiveness in Health and Medicine.

For Piehl, an authority on criminal justice issues, an important moment occurred during graduate school when she surveyed state prison inmates and discovered a wide disparity in criminal history.

Soon she was advising state and federal governments on issues such as sentencing guidelines and corrections reform.

“We tend to look at the population as if there are criminals and noncriminals,” said Piehl, who coauthored the book *Prison State: The Challenges of Mass Incarceration*. “We ignore the fact that there are those who dabble in crime, those who are career criminals, and those who

got involved once for some particular reason.”

Hunt, meanwhile, is an expert on European labor markets, with a focus on Germany. “They had this great data set that followed (workers) over time and asked really good questions,” she said. When the German government began an initiative to improve its public universities, Hunt was selected to serve on committees that decide whether schools are eligible for new funding.

The women are linked by their belief that economic principles are the best way to evaluate public policies.

Sigman, long interested in environmental issues, saw economics as a way to measure the likely success of proposed policies and regulations.

“Economics is a very useful framework for evaluating practical choices,” she said. “It brings the most insight into how these policies are likely to play out.”

Sigman advised the federal Environmental Protection Agency on its Guidelines for Preparing Economic Analyses, which established a framework for reviewing regulations and policies.

The professors’ command of policy brings benefits to the classroom, where they help ground students in the intricate details of the issues, producing good citizens as well as scholars.

“It’s our job to cut through the rhetoric—and there is a lot of rhetoric out there,” Altshuler said. “So unless we educate our students to be informed voters, we’re not going to have the government we deserve.”

“Economics is a very useful framework for evaluating practical choices.”



## FINDING NEW FRONTIERS IN CHEMISTRY

← Acclaimed chemist excels in the lab and the classroom

As a kid, Daniel Seidel looked beyond the surfaces of nature to the processes that lie beneath.

"I would ask questions like, 'What starts a fire?'" Seidel said. "I wanted to know what makes a specific reaction work the way it does."

His intellectual curiosity eventually led him to the imposing field of organic chemistry, where the 39-year-old professor is an expert not just at understanding chemical processes but improving upon them. His work could have a profound impact on the field, and in 2011 he received national and international awards.

“Chemistry is very logical and a very nice tool for students to develop their skills and logic.”

But it is not only his work in the lab that has garnered recognition. He is also an accomplished teacher who believes in giving students, including undergraduates, every possible opportunity to do research.

"Chemistry is very logical and a very nice tool for students to develop their skills and logic," said Seidel, a professor in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology in the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS). "And it's an area that can make significant contributions to human well-being."

Seidel's team succeeded recently in selectively

producing one form of an organic compound over another by using small-molecule catalysts in a way that previously required the use of biological enzymes. That breakthrough opens up new possibilities for the synthesis of complex molecules, which is important to drug discovery.

"Chemists have become efficient at making essentially any stable molecule," said Seidel, "But the reality is that it might take 10 years and cost a lot of money to build it because we are not nearly as good as nature. So the goal now in the field is to find simplifying strategies to build really complex molecules very quickly."

Seidel's work has been widely recognized. In 2011 alone, he won an Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellowship for outstanding early-career scientists and an Amgen Young Investigator Award for work that contributes to the pharmaceutical and biomedical research industry. He is also the recipient of the 2012 Carl Duisberg Memorial Award of the German Chemical Society.

Seidel grew up in East Germany and participated in the protests in 1989 that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. His experience growing up in an

authoritarian regime, where access to higher education was restricted, has shaped his approach to students.

"In East Germany, I would never have become a chemist because of the way the system was set up," he said. "So as a professor, I am very committed to creating a stimulating research environment and providing my students with research projects that complement their interests and abilities."

Indeed, he has been honored at Rutgers for his teaching. In 2011 he received a Presidential Fellowship for Teaching Excellence and an SAS Award for Distinguished Contributions to Undergraduate Education. He also received a Board of Trustees Research Fellowship for Scholarly Excellence.

Seidel's students say they're drawn to his combination of enthusiasm and high expectations, and his willingness to let students, including undergraduates, work on his research team.

"He is a very hard working person in the lab," said Diana Sun, a first-year student. "He doesn't hover, but if you're in his group, he expects you to dedicate the time and he expects results."

Seidel always seems to draw a crowd for his office hours, Sun added. One reason is that organic chemistry is challenging. She also said students find him engaging and approachable.

"He is very good about answering people's questions," Sun said. "He explains things really well."

## Jersey Roots, Global Reach at SAS

### Caribbean Conference Reflects a Growing Academic Movement

● The School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) cosponsored a major conference on Caribbean studies in September 2011 that drew a diverse group of scholars, activists, and writers from around the world. The sheer size of the conference, more than 50 panel discussions over the course of three days, is a testament to the growing prominence of Caribbean studies as an academic discipline.

But the location of the conference showed just how prominent Rutgers has become in that discipline. A cluster hiring initiative over the last several years has allowed the school to hire six new faculty members and a postdoctoral fellow who are Caribbean studies scholars but work in diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds.

"We are now positioned to be the leading place for Caribbean studies," said SAS executive dean Douglas Greenberg.

### Massive Telescope in South Africa Has Rutgers Connection

● Rutgers astronomers are known for their investigations into mysteries like the dark matter of the universe and the shockwaves left by exploding stars.

Now the restoration of one of the world's largest telescopes will help the astronomers advance those research topics and others to even higher levels.

The Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), in which Rutgers holds a 10 percent partnership, became fully operational in September after a two-year shut down for modifications.

"A lot of faculty members have been working with other telescopes and waiting for SALT to come online," said Ted Williams, a professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy and the Rutgers representative on the SALT Board of Directors. "It will now become part of their regular data stream."

Williams, along with Kathryn Uhrich, dean of mathematical and physical sciences in the School of Arts and Sciences, attended the telescope's November 7 rededication ceremony in South Africa.

### Examining Bias against Jews and Muslims

● An unusual public program focusing on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia drew nearly 400 people in October 2011 to the Douglass Campus Center.

The event, "Going Viral: Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and the Role of the Media," reflected what the organizers said was an urgent need to inject reason, tolerance, and thoughtfulness into an increasingly rancorous conversation taking place on college campuses, in the media, and in the political arena.

The event developed from a collaborative effort between School of Arts and Sciences faculty specializing in Jewish studies and their colleagues in Middle Eastern studies who focus more on the Arab and Islamic worlds.

"The goal was to raise the discourse to a much higher level than it had been heretofore," said Nancy Sinkoff, chair of the Jewish Studies Department. "As academicians and scholars who are deeply invested in tolerance, we want to make sure we project that into the community."



From left: Economics professors Jennifer Hunt, Anne Piehl, Hilary Sigman, and Rosanne Altshuler