Donor Profile Todd Galante
NCAS Alumnus Expands Commitment With Endowed Scholarship

Sometimes, coming back home is all that it takes to renew one’s commitment to an alma mater. Todd Galante (NCAS ’83) knows about that.

The corporate attorney and one-time political science major had been giving for years to NCAS and Rutgers-Newark’s annual fund. In 2003, he created an annual scholarship for arts & sciences undergraduates considering law as a career.

Then, in 2010, Galante and his wife, Alena, attended their first NCAS Donor Recognition Dinner and met some of the students they’d been helping anonymously all those years.

"It was incredibly exhilarating, to tell you the truth. That really energized me again—to see the impact your donations are having and the students achieving their dreams," says Galante. "I was so impressed with the students. It just really let us know that our commitment was going to good work."

It turns out that was only the beginning.

In a very short time, Galante has gone on to increase that commitment, joining the Dean’s Cabinet in 2011 and, in that same year, setting up the Todd M. Galante Esq. Endowed Scholarship with a pledge of $50,000, which he fulfilled by mid-2012.

"Todd’s caring, support and commitment to these students are making their experience at NCAS that much better," says Brian Agnew, Assistant Dean of Advancement and External Relations. "His endowed scholarship will provide the college with the long-term stability we value so highly.

Galante understands first-hand the impact of giving on students’ lives. Hailing from a working-class family in Orange, N.J., and being the first in his family to go to college, he benefitted from several scholarships and grants as a Rutgers-Newark undergraduate and was extremely grateful for the opportunities they afforded him.

In addition to majoring in political science, Galante minored in sociology and history, took part in student government and wrote for The Observer, the school’s newspaper. But what stood out for him most was the school’s value: its outstanding faculty combined with an affordable pricetag.

“I cannot give enough praise to the professors I had. They provided me with an incredible foundation, and always embraced me when I sought them out and showed them I was serious and ambitious,” says Galante. "I also credit the state of New Jersey for making this possible for a working-class kid from New Jersey. It’s a great formula.”

For Galante, that meant graduating from NCAS, attending Seton Hall Law School, and going on to specialize in complex commercial litigation and bankruptcy law for the large corporate law firm Le Clair Ryan. He is now a shareholder at the firm.

Despite his demanding career, he finds plenty of time and ways to give back, sitting on both the Board of Visitors at Seton Hall Law School and the Dean’s Cabinet at NCAS. For him, getting involved at this level means knowing what’s going on with his alma maters “from the inside” and contributing in any way he can to the success of both institutions.

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The year got off to a brilliant start with a series of national recognitions for our campus. Rutgers-Newark was named by U.S. News and World Report the most diverse university in the nation for the 15th year in a row, while the Washington Monthly ranked us second in the nation among research universities in “best bang for the buck” and eighth in “social mobility.” The latter rankings are especially gratifying: The New York Times has singled out the Washington Monthly for rewarding “those colleges that do a good job educating students,” which is what we pride ourselves on doing. This success is a testament to the dedication of our outstanding faculty and the ambition of our extraordinary students.

Our faculty, too, have recently attracted recognition. At a summer White House ceremony, President Obama bestowed a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers upon Dr. Nihal Altan-Bonnet of the Department of Biological Sciences—the second of our young scientists to win this prestigious national award in three years. And at a ceremony in Washington last month, Professor Tayari Jones received the Congressional Black Caucus’ Lifetime Achievement in the Arts award—although this acclaimed novelist is only 41.

NCAS’ undergraduate research program is expanding as well. This past summer, the generosity of NCAS alumnus William Singletary and Interim Chancellor Philip Yeagle provided stipends for seven undergraduates to work side by side with distinguished faculty on long-term research projects—free from the distraction of part-time jobs. Keep reading to find out how the first-ever Summer Undergraduate Research fund at Rutgers-Newark came about, and to read profiles of the accomplished NCAS undergraduates from the inaugural summer class.

Jan Ellen Lewis

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“I was very pleased they asked me to be on the Dean’s Cabinet,” says Galante. “I wanted to be an advocate for the Rutgers-Newark campus and NCAS—to protect the interests and integrity of both and preserve opportunities for kids in this urban area.”

When he set up the Todd M. Galante Annual Scholarship back in 2003, he wanted to be a role model for Political Science, English or History majors considering a career in law. He hoped to inspire students to aim high and show them that it’s possible for working-class kids from urban areas to achieve their dreams.

In committing to an endowed scholarship, Galante is amplifying that message.

“I wanted there to be longevity with this scholarship, to make this opportunity available to students for as long as possible,” says Galante. “It’s my way of showing my immense gratitude to NCAS by providing a solid long-term foundation for the college.”

He’s also recently found another way to give back as a part-time lecturer in his old department. This fall, Galante is teaching an undergraduate course in American national government, bringing his legal and political experience to bear on the subject for undergraduates.

Galante has been a Councilman-at-Large for Orange, N.J., serving as City Council Vice President and President. He has also worked as a campaign strategist on the local level and been a fundraiser on the county and state level.

“I’m delighted to be teaching at NCAS,” says Galante. “It will be interesting to explore with the students where America is heading—and it should be even more fascinating, given this is a presidential election year.”

The Importance of Endowed Scholarships

Every scholarship gift is an investment in the future. But an endowed scholarship is the only kind that lasts—and grows—for generations. The endowment’s principal is never invaded and continues to generate interest, providing renewed student assistance every year. By building an endowed scholarship over five or 10 years, donors can provide student assistance in the short term while creating an enduring source of support for NCAS, all while honoring the person for whom it is named in perpetuity.

Contributors
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Faculty Profile Tayari Jones

Critically Acclaimed Author Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Tayari Jones remembers being a young, aspiring writer growing up in Atlanta. At 16, she attended Spelman College and was nurtured by a group of female professors and peers who gave her confidence not only in her writing but in her voice.

“My first teacher was Pearl Cleage—before Oprah made her famous,” says Jones. “She was a working writer who modeled for me the way that art can make a life—a life not measured in awards or money but in the quality of the work, in the way that an artist can connect with her community and beyond.”

Jones, now 41, went on to create that life for herself. An acclaimed novelist and founding faculty member of Rutgers-Newark’s MFA Program in Creative Writing, she has been heralded by The Atlanta Journal Constitution as “one of the best writers of her generation.” Recently, Jones reached another milestone when the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) recognized her with its 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award in the Fine Arts.

She was one of only three artists honored on Sept. 19 at the 16th annual Celebration of Leadership in Fine Arts in Washington, D.C. This year’s other honorees were gospel music artist Dr. Bobby Jones (no relation) and theatrical director Kenny Leon.

“I’m thrilled to be selected by CBCF Foundation for this award, because I’ve always admired that they are a Washington organization concerned not only with politics but also the intersections of policy and community—with people on the ground,” says Jones. “It’s wonderful that an organization with such influence takes time to recognize creative contributions.”

In receiving the CBCF award, Jones is in very good company. Past honorees include Alice Walker, Quincy Jones, visual artists Faith Ringgold and Betye Saar, and B.B. King.

Jones is the author of three critically acclaimed novels. Her fiction and non-fiction have appeared dozens of publica-

Tayari Jones

tions, including The New York Times, Callaloo, MacSweeney’s, The Believer, and New Stories From the South. She also has received fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts, The United States Artists Foundation, and the arts councils of Illinois and Arizona.

Her first novel, Leaving Atlanta, is a coming-of-age story set during the city’s infamous child murders of 1979-81. This was familiar territory for Jones, who was in the fifth grade when 30 African American children from neighborhoods near her home and school were abducted and murdered over a two-year period. The novel received many awards, including the Hurston/Wright Award for Debut Fiction, and was listed as one of the best novels of 2002 by The Washington Post.

Her second full-length work of fiction, The Untelling, led Essence magazine to name Jones “a writer to watch.” In 2005, The Southern Regional Council and the University of Georgia Libraries awarded Jones the Lillian C. Smith Award for New Voices.

Her third novel, Silver Sparrow, sealed her reputation as a major author after its 2011 publication. It was followed by a long list of literary honors and netted Jones her third Hurston/Wright Award nomination.

Jones spent the 2011-12 academic year at Harvard University as a Radcliffe Institute Fellow, researching her fourth novel, Dear History. She has recently begun her sixth year teaching in Rutgers-Newark’s MFA in Creative Writing Program and, as part of its founding faculty, has seen it grow into a nationally renowned department with exceptionally promising students.

“It has been inspiring to work with writers who are just starting out and watch them learn to fly,” says Jones. “We are extremely diverse, and the collaboration is incredible.”

Jones also finds time to give back beyond the Rutgers-Newark campus, sitting on the board of directors of Girls Write Now, a non-profit serving New York City at-risk or underserved teenagers. She is part of a large, dedicated and accomplished group of female writers who mentor girls attending public schools throughout the city, 100 percent of whom graduate and move on to college.

“I heard the girls read their poetry and I thought, This is the future, and I wanted to be part of it,” says Jones.
Faculty Profile  Gary Farney
NCAS History Professor Leads Archeology Field School in Italy

Studying abroad during college can be a life-changing experience for undergraduate and graduate students alike. No one knows this better than Rutgers-Newark History Professor Gary Farney, who for six summers has led a Rutgers summer study-abroad program in Greece.

This past summer, he started an archeological field school in Italy, providing a rare multi-year opportunity for NCAS students and others to gain hands-on experience in surveying, excavation and conservation.

"To my knowledge, archeological digs have been infrequent at Rutgers," says Farney. "There have been several seasons of fieldwork by the Anthropology Department in New Brunswick, but that kind of work is a bit different."

So Farney, whose expertise lies in Roman history, numismatics and material culture, created the Upper Sabina Tiberina Archeological Field School. In its inaugural summer, it drew nine students, along with an experienced staff of seven academics and archeology-and-conservation experts from major universities and organizations around the U.S. and Italy.

They began excavating a Roman Republican villa site at Vaccone, in the Upper Sabina Tiberina region of Italy, about 40 miles northwest of Rome, while living in the small nearby village of Casperia.

The project, which will span several years, attempts to understand Roman settlement and land-use in this region during the middle and late Roman Republic (third to first century B.C.E.), which may have served as a model for later Roman expansion and exploitation in the rest of Italy and Europe.

Farney’s team got geophysical surveying help from members of Rutgers-Newark’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (EES), who used ground-penetrating radar to determine roughly what man-made objects were one-to-two meters below ground at the site before excavation began.

They found traces of Roman life spanning many centuries, starting with two villas, one from the first century A.D., the other from the first century B.C.E., which lay under a mosaic floor that had been untouched since Italian archaeologists first discovered it in the 1980s. The team also discovered a child’s skeleton fully intact in what appeared to be a burial tomb, and ceramics and remnants of what they believe to be a vineyard dating to the medieval period.

Farney, who is chairperson of Rutgers-Newark’s Department of History and Director of the Program in Ancient and Medieval Civilizations, is no stranger to excavations. As a grad student, he had excavated three Italian sites, and he’d been longing to return since the publication of his first book on ancient Italic ethnic groups.

He’s also no stranger to setting up study-abroad programs for Rutgers-Newark and NCAS students. From 2005 to 2010, Farney organized and led summer archeological and art-history tours of Greece through the Rutgers Study Abroad office.

In this regard, Farney has set himself apart. "Newark faculty and students aren’t involved with Study Abroad all that much. It’s always been a passion of mine to change this," says Farney. "Providing opportunities for students to be abroad helps create a global campus here at Newark."

Of the nine students who studied abroad with Farney this summer, four were from Rutgers-Newark (three undergraduates and one graduate student). Of those, three represented NCAS.

Undergraduates from Rutgers-New Brunswick and Villanova University rounded out the group. All of the participants received six course-credits from Rutgers’ Office of Study Abroad, which sponsored the field school along with the Departments of History and Earth and Environmental Sciences at Rutgers-Newark and the American Academy in Rome.

"This is crucial work requiring a certain level of expertise," says Farney, "and I can’t thank EES enough."

Sara Ketterer, a senior from Little Falls, N.J., majoring in ancient history, represented NCAS at the field school. For her it was a dream come true.

"I’ve always wanted to go on an archeological dig since I was a child," says Ketterer. "It was amazing to see Roman mosaic floors I’d read about and to see how much work goes into a dig. For anybody even considering archeology, this hands-on experience gives you an idea what’s in store for you."

Farney believes his summer field school is set apart in still other ways.

Giving undergraduates a chance to dig with active instruction, learn how to run a total station, or draw and map out a site were important. He also wanted to offer conservation and preservation instruction, especially to graduate students.

"It’s rare to get instruction in conserving ancient objects and material by a professional conservator in the field," says Farney. "This could draw students who are interested in material culture, public history or museum studies into the Rutgers-Newark fold."
Campus News

Summer Undergraduate Research Made Possible With Alumni Support

Ask any NCAS student who has completed an undergraduate research project, and they’ll tell you that the chance to work side by side with a renowned scholar on primary research is a life-changing experience.

And although undergraduate research has been part of the NCAS experience for many years—and is one of the things that sets Rutgers-Newark apart from peer institutions in the area—funding for this important work had been limited to fall and spring semesters.

That has recently changed with the establishment of the William F. Singletary Undergraduate Research Fund, the first privately funded effort focused on undergraduate research in NCAS’ history.

The gift, a $25,000 commitment over five years, is funding summer stipends, travel and other costs for full-time NCAS undergraduates conducting research in biology, chemistry, physics or psychology. It has since been matched by several additional funding sources to expand summer research opportunities to students from all NCAS majors.

“William Singletary’s gift helps us create a bridge between fall- and spring-semester research for NCAS undergraduates,” says Brian Agnew, Assistant Dean of Advancement and External Relations. “Now, they can continue to focus on their research, uninterrupted over the summer, without the distraction of part-time jobs. It is a huge boost for students already engaging in this invaluable academic opportunity.”

Singletary (NCAS ’72, RBSG ’73), a retired apparel-company executive, is originally from Hackensack, N.J. He entered the military after finishing high school, then attended the University of Maryland and Bergen Community College before transferring to Rutgers-Newark for a three-year stint as an undergraduate and graduate student. Thereafter, he migrated to Los Angeles to launch his business career. He resides there to this day.

While at Rutgers-Newark, he majored in Economics and was a member of the Economics Honors Society. He commuted to campus and worked two jobs outside school, and loved the rigor of the high-level analytical work he took on in his advanced Economics courses.

“The faculty and the department were very strong, and Rutgers in general made a big difference in my life,” says Singletary. “The opportunity to work with a world-class scholar one-on-one is transformative, and it’s a tribute to alumni like William Singletary who are helping to make this possible for today’s students.”

Singletary was also grateful for the help he received while devoting time to his studies. A recipient of several veterans grants, he graduated with very few loans and finds it very rewarding to give back to students.

“I hope the money allows them flexibility so they can devote more time to their research and further their ambitions, because what you do in school, you carry with you the rest of your life,” says Singletary.

The push for private funding of summer undergraduate research began several years ago with former NCAS Dean Philip Yeagle, now Interim Chancellor of Rutgers-Newark. Insisting on the importance of maintaining continuity throughout the calendar year, he set out to expand such opportunities into the summer, then backed up the initiative with a financial commitment of his own.

“Undergraduate research is thought by many to be perhaps the most important single academic experience during a college career,” says Yeagle. “I had the experience as an undergrad and believe in it deeply. The opportunity to work with a world-class scholar one-on-one is transformative and of huge importance to so many—especially those pursuing a career in the sciences—and it’s a tribute to alumni like William Singletary who are helping to make this possible for today’s students.”

Now that the program is up and running with gifts from Singletary and others, Agnew hopes to build on the momentum and put summer undergraduate research on solid footing for the long term. He says it’s no surprise that Singletary’s gift came as a result of his reconnecting with Rutgers-Newark in a very personal way.

“Bill saw the bigger picture and the role he could play in it, believed in NCAS’ vision, and invested in it,” says Agnew. “My hat is off to him for stepping in to fill this void—in area of huge importance to NCAS students. We hope other alumni will join him.”

ncas.rutgers.edu
Student Profiles
Meet the 2012 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows

With the establishment of the William F. Singletary Undergraduate Research Fund, NCAS is finally able to bridge the gap between fall- and spring-semester research for its undergraduates. Students who previously had to put their research on hold can now continue to focus on their project, uninterrupted over the summer, without the distraction of part-time jobs.

The initiative kicked off this past summer with the funding of seven undergraduate research fellows across a spectrum of disciplines. Here you’ll meet three of the students who formed part of the inaugural class.

Colleen McGuirl

Colleen McGuirl already had a wealth of experience before she transferred three years ago to Rutgers-Newark from Bergen Community College. There she’d received an associate’s degree and certification in alcohol and drug-abuse counseling, and prior to that had spent 13 years as a pharmaceutical buyer for a major New Jersey hospital.

A recent graduate of NCAS and resident of Fort Lee, N.J., McGuirl double-majored in Social Work and Psychology and carried a 4.0 GPA. At 37, she managed that feat while pursuing undergraduate research outside class, working full-time as an addictions counselor at Bergen Regional Medical Center, and being a single mom. (She took custody of her half-sister’s child in 2004 after the child’s parents died.)

This past summer, McGuirl worked with Professor Elizabeth Sloan-Powers, from the Department of Social Work, and Professor Paul Boxer, of the Department of Psychology, as a research assistant on a federally funded study looking at the effects on urban children of prolonged exposure to violence. The research was part of a continuing project McGuirl had been working on with Sloan-Powers and Boxer the previous year.

McGuirl helped transcribe, code and analyze the results of 130 interviews with children to better understand how they coped with violence in a variety of contexts. She then co-authored a journal article—rare for an undergraduate—and helped present the team’s findings at conferences. She also surveyed literature for a separate Trauma Treatment Project with Boxer, and helped on another project dealing with the effects of asthma on urban children.

For McGuirl, the research experience was invaluable.

“I was focused on clinical work when I came to Rutgers-Newark and had limited interest in research. Now I realize the bridge between clinical work and research—how important the latter is to the former,” says McGuirl. “To develop, then test and validate a theory, rather than just read about them in class, and to be part of a journal article, gave me a whole new appreciation for what academics do. It totally transformed my educational experience.”

As a result, McGuirl has decided to pursue a master’s degree in social work at New York University, where she’s studying now, and will continue to work toward a Ph.D.

Sloan-Powers witnessed McGuirl’s tremendous growth during their time working together, in research design and both qualitative and quantitative methods. She says that speaks volumes about NCAS’ new initiative.

“One of the best aspects of the summer research assistantship is that the program focuses on undergraduates,” says Sloan-Powers. “I am a firm believer that the earlier a student can be involved with independent research, the more apt they are to continue with it in the future. And that can only be a net positive for universities and society at large.”
Matthew Gavin

A little more than a year ago, Matthew Gavin was studying to be an English teacher at Montclair State University. Then he had an epiphany: He wanted to do research in psychology and biology.

So, he transferred to Rutgers-Newark in summer 2011 and wasted no time, volunteering in a psychology lab the first year and gaining hands-on experience in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

This past spring, he was one of two undergraduates admitted to a graduate biology seminar and began volunteering part-time in the lab of Professor Tracy Tran. There the Caldwell, N.J., native learned fundamental molecular and cellular techniques such as growing and maintaining cells in culture and extracting DNA from tissue samples.

Gavin had found his calling in biology research.

Luis Del Orbe

Luis Del Orbe has been privy to things that most of us will never experience.

At age 22, he was sent to state prison for committing kidnapping, robbery and assault using a weapon. He would remain behind bars for 26 years, spending the majority of his adulthood locked up.

But Del Orbe, now 48, was not your typical inmate.

While serving time in prisons in New York State and New Jersey, he turned his life around, taking every course offered by participating colleges and coming away with nearly 60 college credits. He also trained as a medical technician and aided elderly inmates, became a legal paraprofessional, and directed therapy groups for fellow prisoners.

Since September 2011, while finishing his term at a halfway house in Newark, N.J., Del Orbe has been a full-time student at Rutgers-Newark. This summer he was one of six NCAS undergraduate research fellows, working with Professor Lisa Hull, of the Department of Political Science, on examining the challenges ex-prisoners face in re-entering society, and preconditions for successful re-entry.

Del Orbe, who now lives with his parents in Passaic, N.J., is interviewing 35 former New Jersey inmates for his project. In addition to his qualitative research, he intends to get help with quantitative analysis from professors in the Departments of Social work and Political Science, and hopes to publish his findings with the help of Professor Hull. She and Del Orbe want his research to have real-life consequences.

“Hopefully this work will lead to policy changes,” says Del Orbe, who immigrated to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic as a child. “The recidivism rate for long-term inmates is very high for so many reasons: Prisoners are shipped far away from their families. The culture of prison life. The current prison system needs to be reformed.”

Del Orbe’s is an unusual, if remarkable, story of redemption. He defied the odds first and foremost because of the consistent, unwavering support of his parents and other family members, who visited him weekly for the entirety of his time in prison, something

He went on to do a full-time summer research fellowship with Tran’s team, where he helped investigate how the central nervous system is wired and how these neural connections are maintained in both healthy and diseased states. The research could one day be used to help treat spinal-cord injuries.

For Gavin, who is 21, moving beyond the classroom and into the lab, where he worked on original research, was transformative.

“It’s the difference between going into a restaurant, reading a menu and eating—that’s the classroom—and going to the same restaurant but this time going back into the kitchen, putting all the ingredients together and cooking the meal, then eating,” says Gavin. “Conceiving the project, designing experiments, and producing new, tangible data that no one has looked at yet just puts your education on another plateau.”

The experience also confirmed his desire to pursue a career in cellular biology focusing on neuroscience.

Tran is looking forward to Gavin staying on in her lab throughout this academic year, and admires his motivation and dedication, as well as his professionalism. She feels the summer research opportunity was essential to Gavin’s growth.

“The undergraduate research fellowship allowed Matthew to work full-time in my lab this summer, and he would not have progressed so far if he’d had to balance working in the lab with another summer job,” says Tran. “I can’t speak highly enough about this new program for our undergraduates.”

Gavin recommends hands-on research to any NCAS undergraduate wanting to delve further into a field. He says it’s invaluable whether it confirms your career path or not.

“You might realize the field you’re pursuing is the thing for you, and you may not. But trying it and getting that hands-on experience—there’s no substitute for it,” says Gavin. “And if it turns out you have chosen a field that’s for you, then you’ll have a much better idea of what graduate work will be like way before you get there and be much better prepared once you arrive.”

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Campus Welcomes New Rutgers University President

On Monday, September 10, the campus held a convocation for Rutgers University’s new president, Dr. Robert Barchi, in the Robeson Campus Center’s Essex Room. Dr. Barchi, a renowned neuroscientist, respected educator and academic innovator, is the university’s 20th president. He spoke at length to a packed house of Rutgers-Newark faculty, administrators and students about his vision for the university’s future amid historic change, including the recent restructuring legislation and Rutgers’ acquisition of UMDNJ.