

FROM MOMENTUM TO MEASURABLE IMPACT

RUTGERS
NEW BRUNSWICK

Academic Master Plan Progress Report



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TO OUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Empathy, it's often said, isn't learned in school but cultivated over a lifetime. I'd argue that's only partly right.

Rutgers University–New Brunswick has long educated for and with empathy. Rooted in a deep commitment to others, our university exists to deliver excellence in education, research, service, and diversity. Knowledge with compassion is in our DNA.

Rutgers–New Brunswick stands as a bulwark for these values. Our path to excellence has not always been a straight line, but for 260 years we have remained committed to our mission and ready to tackle the grand challenges facing our society.

In 2022, we unveiled an ambitious Academic Master Plan designed to strengthen our institutional foundation, align our academic priorities, and position Rutgers–New Brunswick for long-term advancement. That work clarified who we are as an institution and established the infrastructure and momentum necessary to pursue even more ambitious goals.

We already produce transformational education and life-changing research. But we can, and will, do more.

Our strength as a public flagship university comes from our ability to expand opportunities while advancing academic distinction. When our students succeed—regardless of background or circumstance—the university succeeds alongside them. That commitment requires sustained investment in student success, academic support, wellness, belonging, and experiential learning so that every student can thrive.

In the years ahead, Rutgers–New Brunswick will deepen its leadership in areas where world-class scholarship and public impact intersect. We will continue to invest in disciplines of societal significance, including artificial intelligence and data science, life sciences, climate and energy resilience, and behavioral health. These are fields that will shape the future of economies, communities, and human well-being, and Rutgers–New Brunswick intends to lead that future.

When I was hired as chancellor, I promised to engage our students, faculty, and staff while advancing the vision that we established together in the Academic Master Plan. As the plan and its outcomes illustrate, Rutgers–New Brunswick remains deeply committed to excellence in education, research, and service in support of the public good.

The work ahead is ambitious, but Rutgers–New Brunswick has never shied away from ambitious work. Through our shared commitment to excellence with empathy, and confident in the progress facilitated by the Academic Master Plan, we will continue building the future of Rutgers–New Brunswick together.

Francine Conway
Chancellor
Rutgers University–New Brunswick





EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

Over the past four years, Rutgers–New Brunswick has turned the Academic Master Plan from a shared vision into measurable institutional progress. The plan has strengthened our foundation, brought greater focus and coordination to priorities across the campus, and accelerated advancement in scholarly leadership, innovative research, student success, and community engagement.

That progress now positions us to enter the next phase of our work with greater clarity, stronger infrastructure, and a renewed focus on the outcomes that will define Rutgers–New Brunswick's future.

This next phase also supports the ambition President William F. Tate IV has set for the university: for Rutgers–New Brunswick to be recognized among the nation's top 10 public universities. As President Tate noted in his November 2025 inaugural address, "Opportunity is lost without focus." The Academic Master Plan has given us that focus and created the foundation for continued progress.

At a moment when many institutions are retrenching amid political and financial pressures, Rutgers–New Brunswick is strengthening its institutional foundation and sharpening its strategic focus. We're leaning into research by enhancing scholarly diversity and bolstering our capacity to solve grand social challenges. We're deepening our commitment to student success and well-being. And we're building on a strong foundation to fortify community engagement.

The impact of these efforts is visible across institutional outcomes, student achievement, research growth, and national reputation. Today, Rutgers–New Brunswick is 14th in *U.S. News & World Report*'s list of best public universities in the United States, up from 23rd in 2021. Our acceptance rate in 2026 was 41%, a significant decline from 67% in 2020, reflecting growing selectivity and increasing demand.

Our commitment to access and opportunity is also steadfast. Rutgers–New Brunswick ranks seventh nationally in professional practice doctoral degrees conferred to diverse students across all disciplines, reflecting our dedication to serving a student body that represents the diversity of the state of New Jersey.

Overall, many of our graduate programs rank among the top 25 in the nation.

Since the Academic Master Plan was launched:

- Our four-year graduation rate has climbed to 70%;
- Our six-year graduation rate is a robust 84%;
- First-year retention is a strong 92%;
- Average undergraduate debt at graduation remains comparatively low at $21,500;
- And undergraduate participation in internships and career-related experiences has expanded to 61%.

Research excellence has accelerated as well. Sponsored research expenditures increased from $262.9 million in 2022 to $324.2 million in 2025, while Rutgers–New Brunswick's bibliometric ranking

improved from 82nd nationally in 2024 to 61st in 2026. Over the same period, the university's field-weighted citation impact ranking improved from 95th to 78th nationally, concrete evidence of greater influence and visibility of Rutgers research and scholarship.

These gains were not due to chance; they reflect expanded institutional investment in interdisciplinary research, faculty collaboration, and strategic growth in areas including artificial intelligence, climate resilience, and life sciences.

External validation has reinforced the merits of our strategy. In July 2024, Rutgers–New Brunswick was designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, a prestigious honor recognizing our commitment to maximizing the economic and community engagement impact of the institution.

And in 2026, the university earned the Carnegie Community Engagement Reclassification from the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, our third recognition since 2010.

Together, these outcomes reflect the momentum created through the Academic Master Plan and demonstrate Rutgers–New Brunswick's growing competitiveness across student success, academic quality, and research excellence.

The Academic Master Plan also catalyzed the development of critical institutional infrastructure designed to support long-term progress. Through strategic task forces, cross-campus working groups, and new systems for coordination and accountability, Rutgers–New Brunswick strengthened its capacity to align resources, scale successful programs, and make stronger, data-informed institutional decisions.

Initiatives such as Discovery Advantage, Scarlet*Well*, the Chancellor Challenge, infrastructure for faculty success and community engagement, expanded advising coordination, and research development support now serve as administrative scaffolding across the four Academic Master Plan pillars.

With this infrastructure in place, the Academic Master Plan has done what it was designed to do: carry Rutgers–New Brunswick from strategic vision to demonstrable momentum. That momentum is now the foundation for the next phase of our work, *Advancing Rutgers–New Brunswick: From Momentum to Measurable Impact*.

The four pillars of the Academic Master Plan remain the foundation of our academic mission and continue to guide our work. Building on that framework, this next phase sharpens our focus on the outcomes that define institutional excellence and national competitiveness by translating the pillars into five strategic priorities for action. Together, these priorities will strengthen Rutgers–New Brunswick's competitiveness while advancing our central objective: ensuring that students graduate on time, with minimal educational debt, and prepared to succeed as scholars, professionals, and civic leaders. To achieve this objective, we will concentrate institutional effort on five priority areas:

- Reputation and Visibility. We will strive to make Rutgers–New Brunswick a first-choice destination by enhancing national visibility and peer reputation.
- Social Mobility. We will dedicate ourselves to helping students from diverse backgrounds succeed academically and professionally while keeping post-graduation debt low.
- Faculty and Research Excellence. We will continue to strengthen faculty recruitment and retention, support interdisciplinary collaboration, and drive research competitiveness.
- Student Success. We will foster student well-being and opportunity by strengthening institutional coordination through integrated student support systems, advising infrastructure, and strategic planning.
- Financial Sustainability. We will remain responsible stewards of the university's revenue categories, optimizing resources to secure long-term viability and success.

A top 10 standing among the nation's public universities is not the destination but the recognition—a reflection of excellence pursued by every measure, in the classroom, in the lab, and in the communities we serve.

In the pages that follow, we share updates on each of the pillars that define the AMP. We showcase new programs, innovative research, inclusive pedagogy, and examples of how we are improving lives in New Jersey and beyond.

Through the Academic Master Plan, we laid the groundwork for our future. Building on our legacy as a land-grant public research university, we're now focused on translating access into achievement, innovation into impact, and partnerships into a shared purpose for all.

SINCE THE ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

Rutgers–New Brunswick progress at a glance

U.S. News & World Report
Top Public Universities

23rd → **14th**

Up 9 spots since 2021

Sponsored research expenditures

$262.9M → **$324.2M**

Up $61M, 2022 to 2025

Acceptance rate

67% → **41%**

More selective amid growing demand since 2020

First-year retention rate

92%

2024 to 2025

Four-year graduation rate

70%

2023



ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN: PLANNING FOR EXCELLENCE

The Rutgers–New Brunswick Academic Master Plan (AMP) was developed to align our institutional priorities, rally the campus community around shared goals, and create a common framework for action. Through broad engagement across schools, units, and campus constituencies, the AMP helped build momentum around a shared vision for the future of Rutgers–New Brunswick.

Beginning in 2021, the 40-member committee at the heart of the Academic Master Plan strategic planning process worked to attain quantitative, qualitative, and experiential data about the university's academic enterprise. A campuswide survey, drawing more than 4,000 responses from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners, yielded insights about institutional strengths, opportunities, and areas requiring additional institutional focus.

The strategic planning process provided a critical snapshot of how Rutgers–New Brunswick teaches, researches, serves, and supports its community. It also reinforced an important institutional insight: before the university could accelerate measurable progress, foundational work would be necessary to strengthen systems, structures, and coordination mechanisms that support excellence at scale.

Many of the findings affirmed Rutgers–New Brunswick's long-standing strengths: the quality of our academic programs, the collaborative nature of our research, the distinction of our faculty, and the diversity of our community.

At the same time, the process highlighted opportunities to strengthen institutional alignment and coordination across a large and highly decentralized environment. The size of Rutgers–New Brunswick and the complexity of its structure—spanning multiple schools, institutes, campus centers, and resource systems—underscored the need for stronger infrastructure supporting communication, advising, faculty collaboration, student success, and cross-campus engagement.

These insights helped clarify the foundational work necessary to position Rutgers–New Brunswick for long-term advancement and measurable institutional gains.

METHODOLOGY

In Fall 2025, the Academic Master Plan Implementation Committee convened to assess universitywide progress toward the goals and priorities outlined in the AMP. In collaboration with the committee, the Office of the Chancellor developed and distributed a structured electronic survey to Rutgers–New Brunswick unit representatives. The survey was designed to collect information on activities advancing the Academic Master Plan.

Submitted activities were required to:

- Be undertaken by a Rutgers–New Brunswick unit;
- Support one or more Academic Master Plan goals, priorities, or objectives;

- Have been created after the Academic Master Plan's development in Spring 2022 or represent a substantive enhancement to a preexisting activity.

A total of 732 activities were submitted through the survey. The findings were analyzed to document progress toward AMP goals and priorities, identify areas of impact, and inform continuous improvement efforts.

ANCHORING FOR PROGRESS

Informed by these findings, university leadership launched a series of strategic initiatives, task forces, and institutional reforms designed to strengthen coordination and improve systems to support growth across the plan's four pillars: scholarly leadership, innovative research, student success, and community engagement.

These efforts created the administrative anchors that now underpin many of Rutgers–New Brunswick's most significant institutional measures and areas of growth.

To **strengthen scholarly leadership**, we established programs focused on faculty success, instructional innovation, inclusive pedagogy, and online learning infrastructure.

Initiatives such as the Center for Faculty Success and the Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP) expanded opportunities for faculty development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and inclusive teaching practices across the university. The Faculty Career Fellows program, funded by the Chancellor Challenge and developed in partnership with TIIP and Career Exploration and Success (CES), helps educators connect their classroom teaching with student outcomes. Together, these efforts helped establish a stronger foundation for instructional excellence and academic breakthroughs at scale.

Additional initiatives supporting online learning, community-engaged scholarship, and interdisciplinary collaboration further expanded Rutgers–New Brunswick's instructional ecosystem and strengthened opportunities for faculty innovation and engagement. For instance, through the Chancellor Challenge, awardees are studying a range of topics, from the effects of arts on health and well-being to how to design and deploy large-scale AI models specific to scientific questions.

Through continued investment in faculty excellence, instructional infrastructure, and innovative academic pathways, Rutgers–New Brunswick is strengthening its academic distinctiveness and positioning itself for greater national visibility and reputation among leading public research universities.

To **enhance research innovation**, strategic task forces and working groups focused on areas including climate change, cyber infrastructure and data science, life sciences, and behavioral health and equity. The Chancellor Challenge—a five-year initiative to invest $15 million to support the objectives of the AMP—and other seed grant initiatives were launched to provide strategic funding and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration in these areas.

The Chancellor Challenge represents more than a funding program—it is a strategic investment in the future of Rutgers–New Brunswick. By supporting bold ideas and fostering collaboration across disciplines, the program is driving meaningful progress in areas that matter most, including education, equity, technology, and sustainability.

In support of these priorities, the Life Sciences Alliance was formed to fuel interdisciplinary research across the life sciences. The alliance also gave rise to the Platforms for Education and Research Cores (PERC) initiative, which transforms the university's research core facilities into hands-on learning environments where undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students work alongside faculty and staff scientists to earn academic credit and certifications in advanced technical skills.

Likewise, the Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute (RCEI), connecting Rutgers scholars in climate science and renewable energy, emerged as an important cross-disciplinary hub bringing together faculty, students, and external partners around shared areas of research strength and public impact. Other signature initiatives to bolster discovery and innovation included formation of the Rutgers Artificial Intelligence and Data Science (RAD) Collaboratory with an accompanying cluster hire program and developmental work being done by the Behavioral Health and Equity Task Force.

The **promotion of student success** was addressed broadly by several task forces and working groups focused on strengthening advising, transfer pathways, experiential learning, student well-being, and academic support systems. Discovery Advantage engaged faculty, staff, and students to reimagine the undergraduate student experience, which fueled coordinated investments in academic support and mentoring, well-being and belonging, and career readiness.

Related technological investments included development of enhanced student success dashboards and expansion of the Navigate360 advising platform—a comprehensive student success and advising system to streamline academic planning, appointment scheduling, and retention tracking—across undergraduate schools.

Cross-divisional programs, such as Foundations for Success, were developed to help students strengthen academic readiness, navigate university expectations, and connect with resources that support long-term academic attainment. As an online resource, Foundations for Success introduces incoming students to all that Rutgers–New Brunswick has to offer.

Rutgers also launched a redesigned student success website as a centralized entry point for resources ranging from housing and tutoring to financial guidance and career services. Developed collaboratively with students and campus partners, the award-winning site functions not as a repository but as a dynamic gateway to existing services.

The Annual Student Success Conference, meanwhile, convened faculty and staff to share strategies and align student success efforts. With more than 100 sessions to date, the conference has helped reduce silos, expand awareness of resources, and foster a shared commitment to student success across the institution.

Additional foundational work strengthened our student success infrastructure to support students across the academic lifecycle through expanded advising coordination; appointment of an inaugural Vice Provost for Experiential Learning to develop, expand, and broaden participation in experiential learning initiatives; and development of a robust wellness infrastructure, Scarlet*Well*, to foster a culture of wellness among faculty, students, staff, and our community.

Finally, to **enhance community engagement**, task forces examining Rutgers–New Brunswick's capacities in civic engagement and public service, publicly engaged scholarship, and economic prosperity helped strengthen institutional coordination around community-facing work.

Through the Democracy Lab, we are working to ensure that future generations have access to the tools and knowledge needed to strengthen democratic systems. Launched in 2025, the Rutgers Democracy Lab at the Eagleton Institute of Politics is a universitywide effort to strengthen U.S. democracy through education, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving.

Most recently, Rutgers–New Brunswick established the Division of Lifelong Learning and Innovation (LLI), extending the university's reach beyond the traditional academic lifecycle. At its core, the Division exists to expand access to a Rutgers education for learners of all ages and backgrounds. Through flexible online, hybrid, and in-person programs–spanning noncredit courses, professional and workforce certificates, and credit-bearing pathways–LLI brings the full strength of Rutgers–New Brunswick to learners wherever they are. In partnership with schools, employers, and communities, the Division delivers responsive, technology-enabled learning that advances workforce development and positions lifelong learning as a central part of the university's public mission.

In doing so, LLI advances a vision of a Rutgers–New Brunswick where learning has no endpoint and opportunity is open to everyone, at every stage of life.

While this is not a comprehensive list of infrastructure improvements, it does represent the foundational changes made to support community-engaged learning, strengthen public partnerships, and align civic engagement more intentionally with the university's academic and public mission.

The Academic Master Plan and Discovery Advantage planning efforts underscored the importance of strengthening Rutgers–New Brunswick's institutional capacity for data-informed decision-making, strategic coordination, and long-term assessment. As the university worked to articulate its ambitions across the four pillars, leadership identified the need for stronger infrastructure supporting analytics, reporting, and cross-campus collaboration.

Rutgers–New Brunswick invested in several foundational initiatives designed to expand institutional capacity in these areas. Under the Chancellor's leadership, the university established the inaugural Associate Vice Chancellor for Data Strategy role to help coordinate strategic data initiatives and strengthen institutionwide reporting and analysis.

Additional foundational work is underway to modernize the university's academic course planning and degree audit infrastructure. Building on recommendations emerging from both the Academic Master Plan and Discovery Advantage, Rutgers–New Brunswick—in collaboration with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and leaders in Camden, Newark, and at Rutgers Health—has launched a universitywide review of the systems, policies, and processes supporting academic planning and degree progression, with the goal of strengthening the technical infrastructure that supports timely graduation and long-term student success.

The Academic Master Plan was both a roadmap and a catalyst. It brought together faculty, staff, and students around a shared vision while helping to clarify the infrastructure and coordination necessary to support our goals. These administrative anchors strengthened Rutgers–New Brunswick's ability to translate strategic priorities into coordinated action and sustained advancement across scholarly leadership, innovative research, student success, and community engagement.

As we continue building toward our long-term aspirations, the foundation established by the Academic Master Plan will serve as a steppingstone from which we will reach the next tier of national academic distinction while advancing our public mission.





ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES • ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS • FACULTY SUPPORT • FINANCIAL RESOURCES • ADVANCEMENT • CORE SERVICES • COMMUNICATIONS • TRANSPARENCY

PROGRESS ACROSS THE FOUR PILLARS

The Academic Master Plan organized Rutgers–New Brunswick's ambitions around four interconnected pillars: scholarly leadership, innovative research, student success, and community engagement. They were never meant to function as four separate agendas. Taken together, they describe a single, mutually reinforcing vision of what a public flagship university can be—one where distinguished scholarship, pathbreaking discovery, student achievement, and service to the public good advance in concert rather than in isolation.

The sections that follow trace the progress made within each pillar since the plan's launch. They are less a catalog of programs than an account of how strategic alignment becomes measurable results: faculty earning national distinction, research expenditures and scholarly impact climbing, graduation and retention rates remaining robust, and community partnerships deepening across New Jersey and beyond. Where the preceding pages described the infrastructure and momentum the Academic Master Plan set in motion, these pages show what that momentum has produced.

Across all four pillars, a consistent throughline emerges. Excellence at Rutgers–New Brunswick is pursued with purpose and empathy—expanding opportunity while advancing distinction and connecting the work of the university to the lives of the people and communities it serves. The updates that follow offer evidence of that commitment at work, pillar by pillar.



PILLAR I
SCHOLARLY LEADERSHIP

Elevate the scholarly leadership of intellectual communities that support the diverse populations within Rutgers, New Jersey, the nation, and the world.

PROGRESS

Rutgers–New Brunswick's scholarly leadership is rooted in the strength of its faculty, the breadth of its academic enterprise, and its commitment to interdisciplinary innovation and inclusive excellence. Guided by the Academic Master Plan, we have focused on strengthening academic pathways, expanding instructional innovation, elevating faculty visibility, and creating new opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and global engagement.

Three priority areas have guided our efforts to position Rutgers–New Brunswick as a more academically distinctive and nationally visible public research university, including:

SCHOLARLY COMMUNITIES

At Rutgers–New Brunswick, we're addressing global challenges by creating communities of expertise that foster high-impact collaborations across academic units and community partners.

At the School of Engineering, researchers are working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to transform U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturing. Together with Battelle Memorial Institute, Aprecia, Bright Path Laboratories, and Mark Cuban's Cost Plus Drug Company, Rutgers is testing whether innovative technologies can produce active pharmaceutical ingredients and medications as point-of-care services, which would lower costs and reduce barriers to access.

The NJ Big Data Alliance, led by Rutgers–New Brunswick professor Stephen K. Burley, includes 33 universities and 13 corporate members and works to catalyze collaboration among New Jersey academia, industry, and government in building advanced computing and data analytics capabilities and expertise.

$1.9M+
Invested in the Cluster on Data Science and AI (CDSAI)

10+ Yrs.
Top producer of Fulbright Scholars

17
Faculty elected to National Academies since 2021

Also led by Rutgers–New Brunswick, the 13-member Megalopolitan Coastal Transformation Hub is conducting the scientific research needed to develop effective, evidence-based responses to coastal climate change risks, with a primary focus in the Philadelphia-New Jersey-New York City region.

The Rutgers Offshore Wind Energy Collaborative was created to build expertise around offshore wind energy research and learning across the Rutgers University community. Members have a diverse range of expertise including marine sciences, economics and policy, and materials and engineering.

At the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), researchers are creating innovative scholarly partnerships that bring together universities, government agencies, industry leaders, and communities to address complex environmental and societal challenges. For instance, SEBS' collaboration with Stockton University, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and Ocean Power Technologies Inc. is working to revitalize the Long-Term Ecosystem Observatory off the New Jersey coast, advancing ocean research, workforce development, and marine technology innovation.

SEBS is also expanding its impact through partnerships that connect science with communities locally and globally. In the Federated States of Micronesia, SEBS researchers collaborated with local leaders to support a landmark food security policy, while the school's Immersive Learning Through Science Storytelling Lab earned recognition from the New Jersey State Senate for strengthening public trust in science with collaborative education and outreach.

FACULTY EXCELLENCE AND VISIBILITY

Rutgers–New Brunswick's growing scholarly visibility is also reflected through expanded national and international academic engagement. In 2025, the Rutgers Business School convened more than 2,300 scholarly and executive participants through 17 national conferences and events, including its flagship Innovations in Undergraduate and Graduate Business Education (IUGBE) conference, which brought together academic leaders from institutions including UC Berkeley, Northwestern University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell University.

> **"These efforts position Rutgers as a thought leader in business education, expand our academic networks, and catalyze interdisciplinary collaboration with peer institutions and industry, which will create momentum for future engagement."** — ***Lei Lei, Dean of the Rutgers Business School***

Rutgers–New Brunswick has also received national recognition for excellence in teacher preparation and STEM education leadership. The Graduate School of Education's Physics Teacher Education Program was again recognized by the Physics Teacher Education Coalition, a partnership between the American Physical Society and the American Association of Physics Teachers, for graduating five or more highly qualified physics teachers annually, an achievement reached by fewer than 20 institutions nationally.

Unit-level efforts also support faculty excellence and interdisciplinary engagement, like the School of Engineering's Rutgers Network of Women Faculty in Engineering (RU NEWFACE).

Rutgers–New Brunswick continues to receive national recognition for faculty distinction. The university has been recognized as a Fulbright Scholar Top-Producing Institution and has continued to produce competitive scholars and fellows across disciplines. Since 2021, 17 faculty members from Rutgers–New Brunswick have been elected to prestigious national academies, and faculty continue to earn nationally and internationally recognized honors.

> **"Innovation takes years of work by dedicated teams of people with a shared goal of solving real-world problems. This honor belongs to all of us."**
> — ***James Simon, Distinguished Professor of Plant Biology at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences***

In 2026, Maxime Van de Moortel, an assistant professor of mathematics, received a Sloan Research Fellowship, one of the nation's most prestigious awards for early-career scientists and scholars, for his research in mathematical relativity and black holes.

"I use mathematics to answer big mysteries about the universe; for instance, what happens inside a black hole," Van de Moortel said. "My results are rigorously proven, but they also defy our common sense about how the world works."

That same year, physicist Eva Andrei became the first Rutgers faculty member to receive the Kavli Prize in Nanoscience, one of the world's highest honors in science, for her pioneering discoveries in graphene and quantum materials.

"This recognition reflects the work of every student and postdoc who has passed through our group," said Andrei, who earned her doctoral degree in physics from Rutgers in 1982 and has been a faculty member in the School of Arts and Sciences ever since. "Rutgers has been both my scientific home and the place where this field took root—and that means everything to me."

INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION

Across schools and disciplines, Rutgers–New Brunswick has expanded innovative academic pathways designed to connect interdisciplinary scholarship with emerging workforce, public health, and societal needs. At the School of Arts and Sciences, a strategic curriculum development program provides incentives and structured support for faculty and instructors to develop or redevelop online courses, with special attention to courses serving diverse learners and expanding access to flexible educational opportunities. Since its inception in 2022, the program has fostered the design or redesign of 20 online courses across the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and math and physical sciences, enrolling more than 3,680 students.

Rutgers–New Brunswick has also expanded interdisciplinary and workforce-aligned academic offerings that reflect evolving societal and professional priorities. Examples include:

- The HR Analytics Minor, offered by the School of Management and Labor Relations, which integrates business, workforce strategy, and data analytics;
- The Minor in Spanish and Health, developed in partnership with the School of Arts and Sciences and Rutgers Global, designed to prepare students to serve Spanish-speaking communities in New Jersey and beyond;
- The Disability Studies Minor, housed in the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, developed and governed collaboratively by faculty across disciplines from the Bloustein School, the School of Arts and Sciences, Mason Gross School of the Arts, and the School of Management and Labor Relations;
- And the Arts in Health Initiative, a collaboration between Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers Health, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, which connects scholarship in the arts, health, and community well-being.

Similarly, the Holistic Wellness Minor–developed in partnership with Scarlet*Well* and the first of its kind in the country–integrates wellness, prevention, and public health principles into academic and professional preparation, reinforcing our growing emphasis on wellness as a transferable competency and community-centered approach to education.

> **"Minors elsewhere are mostly theoretical, our courses focus more on skills and strategies for deliberately fostering wellness in all areas of our lives."**
> *— Joshua Langberg, Dean of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology*





PILLAR II
INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

Strengthen Rutgers–New Brunswick's capacity to solve grand challenges in our community, state, country, and the world to reflect our commitment to the public good.

PROGRESS

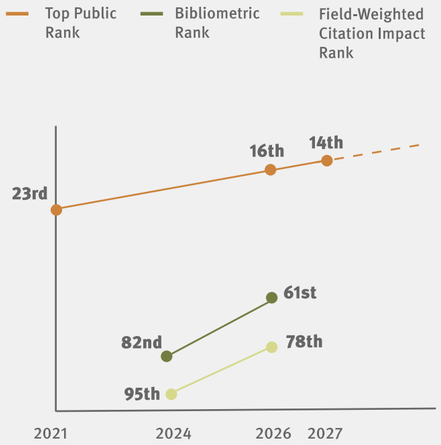
The creation of scholarly communities has helped to drive research innovation across Rutgers–New Brunswick. By bringing together researchers and partners from both inside and outside the university and facilitating deeper collaborations, we have had a measurable effect on many real-world challenges.

Since the launch of the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick has increased sponsored research expenditures from $262.9 million in 2022 to $324.2 million in 2025, while also strengthening national measures of research impact and scholarly visibility. Over the same period, the university's bibliometric ranking improved from 82nd nationally to 61st, while its field-weighted citation impact ranking climbed from 95th to 78th nationally.

These improvements were realized through the Academic Master Plan's focus on growing institutional investment in interdisciplinary collaboration, research infrastructure, and a focus on priority research areas, including artificial intelligence and data science; climate and energy resilience; and life sciences, health, and translational research.

NATIONAL RANKING GAINS

A higher position reflects stronger national standing



National ranking gains, 2021–2027

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA SCIENCE

Artificial intelligence and data science have emerged as strategic growth areas for Rutgers–New Brunswick and are central to the university's long-term research vision. Through investments in interdisciplinary collaboration, faculty recruitment, and emerging technologies, Rutgers–New Brunswick is expanding its capacity to lead in AI-driven research and public impact.

A centerpiece of this work is the Rutgers Artificial Intelligence and Data Science (RAD) Collaboratory. A Chancellor Signature Initiative developed in alignment with the Academic Master Plan, the RAD Collaboratory serves as a universitywide hub connecting artificial intelligence, data science, student programming, and community engagement across disciplines and schools.

Bringing together faculty expertise spanning engineering, environmental science, computer science, psychology, informatics, management science, and biomedicine, the Collaboratory is helping position Rutgers–New Brunswick as a leading interdisciplinary center for AI and data science research. Its work supports emerging initiatives in areas including AI for society, quantitative biomedicine, and large-scale computational research while strengthening collaboration across the university's broader AI ecosystem.

"Combining data science with AI has already begun to pay dividends across the biological and medical sciences," said Stephen K. Burley, Henry Rutgers Chair and University Professor in the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, who heads the initiative.

"This new Collaboratory will make it easier, and more fun, for our community of scholars to capitalize on the expertise represented across the university, and the enormous wealth of digital data stored at Rutgers, running the gamut from agriculture to zoology."

Institutional and corporate partnerships are supported through programs like COSMOS3, an NSF-funded smart-city testbed hosted at the School of Engineering's WINLAB. COSMOS3 connects the Rutgers Busch Campus to the Columbia University testbed in New York City and integrates smart-city sensing capabilities. The project supports the defense and national security and infrastructure domains, advances AI-driven wireless systems, and enables multi-institution collaborative research in advanced wireless technologies.

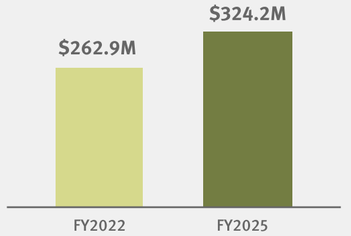
"COSMOS3 provides a shared experimental platform for the broader research community to develop technologies supporting smarter intersections, cities, and communities," said Ivan Seskar, WINLAB's chief technologist.

Additional investments supporting this ecosystem include interdisciplinary seed funding and faculty recruitment efforts.

Rutgers–New Brunswick's Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence seed funding initiative is one example: it accelerates breakthroughs in joint faculty research across a range of disciplines—from robotics to wildlife conservation—which have sparked collaborations with global partners such as MIT, Microsoft, and the Bordeaux School of Economics, while attracting interest from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, and Canadian federal agencies.

RESEARCH GROWTH

Sponsored research expenditures and strategic investment at Rutgers–New Brunswick



$61.3M
in expenditure growth since 2022

$240,000+
in AI and machine-learning seed funding

5 projects
with MIT, Microsoft, and Bordeaux



"Collectively, the program has strengthened faculty research capacity, expanded high-impact partnerships, advanced external funding pipelines, and created meaningful experiential learning opportunities for students." — ***Wendie Cohick, Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor for Research at Rutgers–New Brunswick***

Similarly, the faculty Cluster on Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (CDSAI) was established and funded through the Chancellor Challenge to recruit and support faculty working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, computational science, and domain-specific research areas across the university. In partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, these academic hires support the university's strategic investments in interdisciplinary AI and data science, bioinformatics, and AI-driven healthcare solutions.

By expanding interdisciplinary faculty expertise in areas ranging from engineering and computer science to environmental science, business, and health-related fields, the initiative is helping strengthen Rutgers–New Brunswick's long-term capacity for AI-driven scholarship and innovation.

"CDSAI will help Rutgers–New Brunswick become a national leader in applying these new technologies to the problems facing our world." — ***Stephen K. Burley, Professor and Henry Rutgers Chair***

CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Climate, sustainability, and environmental resilience have emerged as major areas of growth and institutional focus across Rutgers–New Brunswick. Through expanded collaboration in science, engineering, policy, agriculture, and environmental research, the university is strengthening its capacity to address some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing communities in New Jersey and around the world.

The Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute (RCEI) was launched with this goal in mind; it brings together scholars from science, policy, engineering, and the arts to foster collaborative solutions for a sustainable future. Through interdisciplinary grants, student fellowships, and cross-sector partnerships, RCEI is expanding Rutgers–New Brunswick's capacity for climate-focused research.

"The Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute advances a resilient, equitable, and sustainable climate future by connecting faculty, staff, and students across disciplines to address complex climate and energy challenges." — ***Julie Lockwood, RCEI director***

Since its launch in 2023, RCEI has awarded $105,000 in planning grants to 11 Rutgers faculty members and approximately $50,000 in research and travel support to 59 graduate students. RCEI Fellowships have also supported 26 early-career researchers (graduate students and postdoctoral fellows) to participate in RCEI programs. In late 2025, RCEI launched the Clean Energy Graduate Certificate and Clean Energy Fellowship programs in partnership with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.

A central initiative of RCEI is the Wind Energy Test (WET) Center, which is designing a net-zero wind energy system that could potentially be located near the Jersey Shore, and development and implementation of a smaller wind energy test lab on the New Brunswick campus.

Additional initiatives such as the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program, led through collaborations involving the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the School of Engineering, reflect the university's growing leadership in applied sustainability research. The program explores how agricultural production and solar energy generation can coexist on the same land, advancing research at the intersection of food systems, renewable energy, land use, and environmental resilience.

"We define agrivoltaics as systems that allow for a more diverse range of agricultural or horticultural practices, including grazing large animals, producing staple and specialty crops, and hay," said David Specca, assistant director of the Rutgers EcoComplex and lead of the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program. "Our approach emphasizes food production and considers the generated electricity as a low-risk and supplemental income for farmers."

By integrating engineering, environmental science, agriculture, and policy expertise, the initiative supports new approaches to sustainable energy development while preserving agricultural productivity.

LIFE SCIENCES, HEALTH, AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Rutgers–New Brunswick has also strengthened its research infrastructure and interdisciplinary capacity in life sciences, health, and translational research through investments in advanced scientific facilities, industry partnerships, and collaborative research initiatives.

Through the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick launched the Life Sciences Alliance, a cross-cutting initiative designed to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, expand research capacity, and support growth in emerging life sciences fields.

Bringing together faculty and leadership from Rutgers–New Brunswick, Rutgers Health, and schools and units across the university, the alliance supports interdisciplinary "grand challenge" research teams, large-scale grant development, expanded research training opportunities, and stronger partnerships with industry, government, and external research organizations.

The alliance also supports growth in shared research infrastructure, including Platforms for Education and Research Cores (PERC), designed to expand access to advanced scientific research resources and strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration across the university's broader life sciences ecosystem.

"PERCs are increasing research experiences for a diverse student population while also spurring community and alumni engagement and seeding industry and state-agency partnerships." — ***Jean Baum, Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at the School of Arts and Sciences, who developed the PERC program***



Complementing this work are major investments in advanced scientific infrastructure and translational research initiatives. The university's CryoEM and Nanoimaging Facility supports cutting-edge imaging and structural biology research while expanding Rutgers–New Brunswick's competitiveness for externally funded scientific research and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Rutgers–New Brunswick has also expanded translational and industry-connected research through initiatives such as the School of Engineering's Center for Structured Organic Particulate Systems (C-SOPS), a collaborative research and workforce development initiative focused on advancing pharmaceutical manufacturing and process innovation. Bringing together faculty researchers, industry partners, and students across engineering, pharmaceutical science, and related fields, the initiative supports research addressing drug manufacturing, supply chain resilience, and emerging production technologies while strengthening New Jersey's broader life sciences and pharmaceutical ecosystem.

PREPARING THE RESEARCHER OF TOMORROW

Rutgers–New Brunswick is also redefining how students engage in the research process. Undergraduate and graduate students are not just learners but active contributors. Through the Clean Energy Fellowship, students are gaining hands-on experience through faculty-mentored projects, fellowships, and field-based research that prepares them for future careers.

Programs such as the RAD Collaboratory Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) and the Bruce and Phyllis Nicholas Engineering Students Project Studio provide students with hands-on experiences connected to faculty expertise, interdisciplinary collaboration, and advanced research infrastructure. Rutgers–New Brunswick's Undergraduate Research Discovery Days, meanwhile, introduce undergraduate students to research opportunities through talks, lab tours, and panel discussions.

These opportunities allow students to contribute directly to research addressing grand societal challenges while strengthening pathways into graduate study, research careers, and innovation-focused industries.

Rutgers–New Brunswick's research enterprise is becoming larger in scale, more interdisciplinary in scope, and more visible nationally by addressing challenges facing communities, industries, and public institutions in New Jersey and beyond.

Across these initiatives, a common thread emerges: research at Rutgers–New Brunswick is collaborative, inclusive, and purpose-driven. Investments in artificial intelligence and data science, climate and sustainability research, life sciences, and translational infrastructure are strengthening the university's ability to attract external funding, expand research partnerships, and compete in strategically important areas of scholarship and innovation.

At the same time, through the growth of interdisciplinary research hubs, faculty collaborations, and advanced scientific infrastructure, we are building a model of innovation that not only generates knowledge but transforms lives.



PILLAR III
STUDENT SUCCESS

Transform the student experience.

PROGRESS

Rutgers–New Brunswick is committed to building a campus community where students thrive, opportunities are abundant, and debt is minimized.

Guided by the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick has prioritized creating a welcoming, equitable, and supportive learning environment that promotes global competencies, cross-cultural engagement, and dialogue. By emphasizing timely graduation, affordability, and high-impact learning, the university ensures that graduates are prepared to lead as engaged citizens.

Delivering on these priorities at a large, decentralized institution—serving nearly 38,000 undergraduate students across numerous schools and programs—requires intentional coordination and clear communication throughout the student lifecycle.

To achieve this vision, we have invested in coordinated systems and support structures designed to improve retention, graduation, student well-being, and post-graduate success across a large and highly diverse student population.

Central to this effort is the Discovery Advantage initiative, a reimagining of the undergraduate experience that produced a comprehensive set of recommendations focused on academic support, advising coordination, student well-being, belonging, career readiness, and access to resources across schools and units.

Discovery Advantage helped establish a more integrated institutional approach to student success and directly informed many of the foundational investments and support systems expanded through the Academic Master Plan, such as advising coordination, wellness initiatives, experiential learning efforts, student success infrastructure, and the unification of honors communities into a single Honors College.

These efforts are contributing to measurable improvements in student outcomes. Since the launch of the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick's four-year graduation rate has increased to 70%, first-year retention has reached 92%, and 61% of undergraduate students participate in internships and career-related experiences, up from 57%.

"This is just the beginning of our new, strategic approach to student success," said Kathleen Scott, a professor of cell biology and neuroscience at the School of Arts and Sciences, and chair of the Discovery Advantage Steering Committee. "The journey ahead will require dedication, collaboration, innovation, and continued input from our internal and external stakeholders."

STUDENT HONORS AND DISTINCTION

1ST
Rhodes Scholar in more than 25 years

4TH
Rutgers student named Beinecke Scholar

15TH Year
Rutgers named Fulbright Scholar Top-Producing Institution

58
Goldwater Scholars
Three students earn Goldwater Scholarships recognizing Rising Star in the Sciences

1ST
Senior earns Churchill Scholarship, the first at Rutgers in a decade

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Rutgers–New Brunswick is dedicated to ensuring accessibility for students of all backgrounds, and the goal of educating students who might otherwise never consider pursuing a four-year degree from a major research university is at the heart of our mission. In 2022, to expand college access, we launched the Scarlet Guarantee, a tuition assistance program that helps make attending college affordable. Since its launch, an estimated 7,600 undergraduates—about 20% of the campus population—have qualified annually for the assistance.

Rutgers–New Brunswick also offers a variety of dual- and joint-degree programs, which allow students to accelerate their education by earning both a bachelor's and a master's (or a second professional degree) in a condensed timeframe. Benefits include significant tuition cost savings, a faster path to graduation, and enhanced career marketability.

Similarly, Rutgers–New Brunswick has expanded access pathways through a dual admissions program with Middlesex College. Students who are residents of Middlesex County are invited to start at Middlesex College with a guaranteed transfer to Rutgers–New Brunswick after they earn their associate's degree.

Rutgers–New Brunswick expands opportunity by connecting students with nationally and internationally competitive fellowships. Through the Office of Distinguished Fellowships, students receive guidance in pursuing awards that support research, graduate study, global learning, teaching, public service, and professional development. Recent recipients include Omar M. Abuattieh, the university's 15th Truman Scholar and a 2026 Rhodes Scholar; Keshav Badri, a 2026 Goldwater Scholar; and Jane Teran, Rutgers' fourth Beinecke Scholar. Rutgers students have also earned prestigious awards such as the Fulbright, Marshall, Gates Cambridge, and Schwarzman scholarships. These distinctions demonstrate how Rutgers–New Brunswick helps students turn academic promise into nationally and internationally recognized achievement.

STUDENT WELLNESS

The university has prioritized wellness as an essential element of success, both during college and later in life.

Areas of focus include:

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Our signature well-being initiative is Scarlet*Well*, a universitywide program grounded in public health and prevention approaches to mental health and wellness. Serving students, faculty, and staff, Scarlet*Well* promotes a culture of well-being that supports both academic and personal success. Grounded in a holistic and preventive approach to student wellness, Scarlet*Well* has helped elevate well-being as a shared institutional priority while strengthening coordination and communication around wellness resources, programming, and student support services across schools and units.

"The Scarlet*Well* organizational and intercollaboration activities have influenced students, faculty, staff, and campus partners by strengthening how wellness is understood, taught, and coordinated across Rutgers–New Brunswick," said Margaret "Peggy" Swarbrick, director of the Scarlet*Well* program. "Students have benefited from expanded opportunities to develop practical, interdisciplinary wellness skills that extend beyond the classroom and into future professional roles."

MEETING STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS

Rutgers–New Brunswick has also expanded support for students facing barriers that can affect wellness and academic success.



The Basic Needs Center connects students with resources addressing food insecurity, housing instability, financial hardship, and other essentials that can directly impact retention, well-being, and timely graduation.

LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Student success also requires strong residential support, which programs like the Health and Medicine Living-Learning Community, a Discovery Advantage First-Year Neighborhood, seek to provide. Part of Rutgers–New Brunswick's living-learning community ecosystem, the first-year residential opportunity opened in fall 2025 with 350 residents and demonstrated a strong impact on first-year student success, with high levels of academic confidence, social belonging, and resource awareness among participants.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE NEURODIVERSE COMMUNITY

Targeted support for specific student populations is another priority. With nearly 10% of the student body identifying as neurodivergent, the College Support Program, housed within the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services, is working to broaden access, integrate mental health services, and provide training for faculty and staff. The program's aim is to improve academic, social, and well-being outcomes for students with autism and ADHD, who historically face lower graduation rates.

"Autistic adults increasingly identify college graduation as a goal, but estimates suggest that they graduate from college at significantly lower rates than their neurotypical peers," said Christopher Manente, founding executive director of the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. "The College Support Program exists to improve outcomes for neurodivergent students."

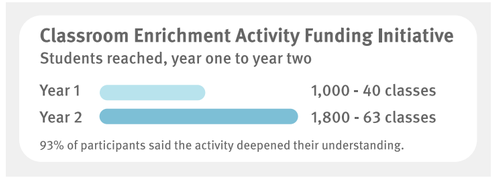
Rutgers–New Brunswick has also made it easier for students with ADHD and autism to access evaluation services needed to qualify for accommodation and medication services. In 2023, a partnership between the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and initiated through Scarlet*Well* helped make assessments affordable and more widely available.

Meanwhile, the Open Arms Community at Livingston Apartments has reduced isolation and increased belonging among members: neurodivergent individuals and allies. According to feedback collected from the inaugural 2024-2025 cohort, students report stronger peer relationships, increased comfort expressing needs, and greater confidence navigating shared living environments. Staff have observed improved communication and increased use of campus support resources.

Together, these initiatives reflect the Academic Master Plan's goal of creating a welcoming learning environment where all students feel supported, connected, and positioned for long-term success.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CAREER READINESS: PREPARING OUR STUDENTS FOR THE WORKFORCE AND BEYOND

To help students connect academic learning with professional development and post-graduate success, Rutgers–New Brunswick has expanded a slate of experiential learning and career readiness opportunities, priorities championed by the Vice Provost for Experiential Learning, a position created in 2024.



An early initiative of the vice provost for experiential learning was the Classroom Enrichment Activity Funding initiative, which supports field trips, workshops, and other activities that bridge classroom learning with real-world application.

During the program's first year, more than 1,000 students in 40 classes participated, climbing to more than 1,800 students in 63 classes in its second year. In a 2026 feedback survey, more than 93% of students said the activity they participated in enhanced their understanding of the subject matter.

Initiatives like the Student Employee Enrichment (SEE) Program integrate on-campus employment with mentorship and skill development, helping students gain practical experience while building connections across the university community. In 2026, 324 Federal Work-Study (FWS) students, representing 17% of the Rutgers–New Brunswick FWS population, participated in the program. Beginning in fall 2027, all first-time FWS students will take part.

"The mission of the Student Employee Enrichment Program is to enhance the professional and personal development of student employees at Rutgers University by integrating meaningful on-campus work experiences with career readiness competencies," said Lyn Baier, associate director of internships and professional development at the Office of Career Exploration and Success. "Through mentorship, skill-building, and reflection, the SEE Program enables students to develop career confidence, preparing them for post-graduation success."

Several signature events were also organized under the SEE umbrella and hosted by the Office of Career Exploration and Success. Included was the first-ever On-campus Student Employment Fair in January 2026, with 700 students and 20 on-campus employers participating.

Additional initiatives, including the Aresty Research Center's annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, provide students with opportunities to engage in undergraduate research, present scholarly work, and connect with faculty mentors and scholarly communities.

These efforts are complemented by broader institutional investments in internships, experiential education, undergraduate research, and career readiness programming. Among alumni who graduated in 2025, 61% reported participating in at least one internship or career-related field experience as undergraduates, reflecting the university's growing emphasis on applied learning and professional preparation.

Rutgers–New Brunswick's student success efforts reflect a coordinated institutional approach that connects academic support, well-being, experiential learning, and career preparation across the undergraduate experience. At the same time, our continued emphasis on access, affordability, and belonging reinforces the university's broader commitment to ensuring that excellence and opportunity remain deeply connected.



PILLAR IV
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Build on Rutgers–New Brunswick's strong foundation of community engagement.

PROGRESS

Community engagement is central to Rutgers–New Brunswick's identity as a public flagship university. Not only do universities and colleges serve as vital economic and entrepreneurial partners for the communities they serve, but community institutions also expand opportunity and create pathways for real-world learning and research collaboration.

Guided by the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick has strengthened its public impact by embedding community engagement across teaching, research, and service. Since 2021, the university has expanded opportunities for community-engaged learning, increased support and recognition for faculty scholarship in this area, and built infrastructure to deepen partnerships across the institution.

In 2026, the university earned the Carnegie Community Engagement Reclassification from the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, our third recognition since 2010. This distinction reflects a long-standing mission of public service dating back to 1864 and Rutgers' designation as New Jersey's land-grant institution,

Rutgers–New Brunswick's continued investment in community-engaged learning and publicly engaged scholarship, and statewide partnership development.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING

A central strategy for this pillar has been integrating community engagement into academic coursework and campus life. Since 2020, the number of courses with a community engagement component—a partnership with a community organization or agency that includes an experiential learning element—has grown nearly 60%, reaching 176 courses, serving more than 4,700 students annually.

Exemplifying this commitment is Resetting the Table's "Speaking Across Conflict", a collaboration between the Division of Access and Community Engagement's Tyler Clementi Center, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Eagleton Institute of Politics. This initiative helps students and campus leaders develop skills in dialogue, conflict navigation, and collaborative problem-solving while reinforcing the university's broader commitment to civic engagement and constructive public discourse.

The Bonner Leaders Program is another initiative that connects students with community partners in New Brunswick and Piscataway. This four-year leadership initiative, which is run by the

Collaborative Center for Community Engagement, primarily connects first-generation and underrepresented students with projects in areas such as food access, health equity, college readiness, and youth development. Participants complete more than 7,000 service hours annually and help partners expand programs and reach more residents while gaining hands-on leadership and civic engagement experience.

"Because of the work that Bonner Leaders do, community partners can provide more in-depth services in the community and have more help with new projects or initiatives," said Abby Rapisardi, assistant director for community engagement and programmatic initiatives at the Collaborative Center for Community Engagement.

To map our progress in public service, the RCommunity engagement portal helps measure the university's collective impact: during the 2024–25 academic year, Rutgers–New Brunswick staff, students, and faculty donated over 58,000 hours—valued at more than $2.1 million in volunteer time—to communities across New Jersey and beyond.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Research-driven engagement and partnership is another priority area for the university, as evidenced by the Governor's School of New Jersey in Engineering and Technology, which introduces high-achieving high school students to advanced STEM learning and research experiences while strengthening pathways into higher education and scientific careers.

Rutgers–New Brunswick also continues to expand educational and pipeline opportunities through programs such as the Collaborative Center for Community Engagement, which has expanded partnerships with schools, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and community-based organizations across New Jersey. These programs connect more than 3,000 students, faculty, and staff each year to community partners in New Brunswick and beyond through in-depth placements and projects involving policy research, access to education, health, language, and the arts.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Engagement across New Jersey since the Academic Master Plan

176
Community-engaged courses

$2.1M+
Volunteer service value in AY24-25

162
Active community partnerships in AY25-26

4,700+
Students engaged annually in community-engaged courses

$24.9M+
AY25-26 statewide financial impact of Rutgers University–New Brunswick community-engaged activities

Cultural partnerships are advanced by the Zimmerli Art Museum, which promotes engagement through free public programming that reaches tens of thousands annually. The museum often invites renowned experts to guest curate pathbreaking exhibitions, such as *Indigenous Identities: Here, Now & Always* (Spring and Fall 2025), which was guest curated by Amanda Cachia, a disability arts activist and scholar, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, a curator and Native American artist. Correlating educational programs allowed the Zimmerli's audiences access to the most cutting-edge scholarship and knowledge.

"Unlike most exhibitions at public art museums, exhibitions at university art museums foreground scholarly leadership and innovative research, foundational elements of the Rutgers–New Brunswick Academic Master Plan," said Brandon Truett, the museum's Mellon Head of Learning and Community Engagement. "The Zimmerli grounds itself in scholarship, research, and academic excellence, often taking advantage of the full cultural and intellectual capital across the Rutgers system."

Similarly, at Mason Gross School of the Arts, students partner with local nonprofits to design arts-based community projects in dance, theater, and music. These and other projects integrate coursework, research, and outreach while responding directly to community needs.

PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

Since the launch of the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick has significantly expanded the number of active statewide community partnerships supporting engagement, service, and collaborative programming. At the Ralph W. Voorhees Center for Civic Engagement, graduate and postdoctoral scholars contribute to the New Jersey State of Affordable Rental Housing project, producing reports on rent control, county-level housing data, and statewide analyses. These efforts have informed policy discussions and support community stakeholders.

Additionally, the Scarlet Hope for Autism project, housed at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, works with educators across the state to recruit, develop, and retain professionally trained talent to meet the needs of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As the prevalence of children with ASD increases, efforts like this are essential to addressing an urgent statewide need.

Additional partnerships, such as the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network, are strengthening collaboration among public health organizations, researchers, and community stakeholders while supporting efforts focused on health equity, environmental conditions, and community well-being across the state.

Through expanded community-engaged learning opportunities, publicly engaged scholarship, and local partnerships, Rutgers–New Brunswick is strengthening its role as a public flagship university committed to meaningful and measurable community impact.



CLOSING

The Academic Master Plan grew from a simple but important premise: Rutgers–New Brunswick could not reach its full potential without greater alignment around a shared vision for the future.

Since the plan's release, that vision has shaped new investments, strengthened collaboration across schools and disciplines, and helped build the infrastructure necessary to support measurable progress. Improvements in student outcomes, research competitiveness, scholarly visibility, and public engagement reflect not only the work of individual programs and initiatives, but a broader institutional commitment to advancing with greater coordination and purpose.

The work is far from complete. Higher education continues to evolve rapidly, and the expectations placed upon public research universities continue to expand. Institutions are increasingly called upon to advance knowledge, prepare students for lives of leadership and service, contribute solutions to complex societal challenges, and demonstrate meaningful public value. Meeting those expectations will require sustained focus, strategic investment, and a continued commitment to excellence.

With the Academic Master Plan as our foundation, Rutgers–New Brunswick is now focused on using the momentum it created to achieve our goal of Top 10 public university status. In the coming years, Rutgers–New Brunswick will rank among the nation's first-choice destinations for new students and faculty. We will grow our reputation as a leader in social mobility, faculty and research excellence, and student success. And we will remain committed to being financially strong and safeguarding our long-term viability.

"In an era defined by speed, spectacle, and performative acts, we have a moment to demonstrate our commitment to opportunity. It exists in every zip code and income bracket in New Jersey. It is limited only by our collective focus and imagination," said President Tate.

The Academic Master Plan was designed to strengthen the university's capacity to achieve its ambitions. It clarified priorities, aligned institutional efforts, and established a stronger foundation for future progress. The results of that work are evident across the university's academic, research, and public missions.

Building on the progress of the Academic Master Plan, Rutgers–New Brunswick enters its next chapter with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear vision for the future defined by academic distinction, societal impact, and enduring public value.

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To track the progress of the Academic Master Plan, visit amp.rutgers.edu

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