

RUTGERS ESTABLISHES NEW INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL RACIAL JUSTICE

Five-year, \$15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funds its creation

By Jeannine DeFoe RC'97

Rutgers' new Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice will support and amplify the work of researchers whose work brings impact in areas including policy reform, K-12 education, social justice work, and the carceral state.

Rutgers is using a 5-year, \$15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish the institute, which will use humanistic theories, methods, and approaches to study global issues of race and social justice. It will operate university-wide and will eventually include centers at the Newark, New Brunswick, and Camden campuses, and include a collection of named professorships linked to the institute's mission as well as postdoctoral fellows from throughout the university.

"The nation is at a tipping point with respect to racial and social justice," University President Jonathan Holloway said in a statement when the initiative was first announced in September 2020. "This grant will enable Rutgers, an institution older than the country itself, to be an international leader in understanding the causes, effects, and solutions to problems that have plagued the world."

Through the institute, Rutgers faculty from different disciplines whose work addresses racism and social inequality will be able to work in coordinated ways. Holloway said he expects the work to be funded by additional philanthropy from individuals and foundations that are also seeking to address global racial and social inequality and justice.

"The university is committed to this for a long time," said Holloway, adding that the institute will work toward sustaining partners and alumni gifts in the future.

Michelle Stephens, a professor of English and Latino and Caribbean studies in the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, submitted the grant application on behalf of the university and will serve as the founding executive director of the institute. Prabhas Moghe, the university's vice president for Academic Affairs, will oversee the institute.

Stephens, the former dean of humanities at Rutgers-New Brunswick, is the author of several books on race and how it is culturally portrayed and teaches courses in African American, American, Caribbean, and Black Diaspora literature and culture.

In January the institute also named four directors of campus branches across the University. Each director is a faculty member who will oversee the implementation of the institute's mission at a local level:

Erica Armstrong-Dunbar, Rutgers-New Brunswick director: Dunbar is the Charles and Mary Beard Distinguished Professor of History in the School of Arts and Sciences. She studies the lives of women of African descent in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focusing on slavery, racial injustice, and gender inequality.

Elise Boddie, Rutgers-Newark director: Boddie is a Henry Rutgers professor, professor of law, and Judge Robert L. Carter Scholar at Rutgers Law School in Newark, who studies how race is used to exclude people from everyday spaces.

Gregory Pardlo, Rutgers-Camden co-director: Pardlo is an associate professor of creative writing and director of the MFA program in the Department of English at Rutgers-Camden. A poet and memoirist, Pardlo won the Pulitzer Prize in 2015 for his poetry collection, *Digest*.

Patrick Rosal, Rutgers-Camden co-director: Rosal is a professor of creative writing in the Department of English at Rutgers-Camden. Born and raised in New Jersey to parents who came to the United States from the Philippines, during a time when virtually all Filipinos were excluded from immigration into the U.S., Rosal learned firsthand how it felt to be part of a marginalized community.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. In 2019 the Foundation awarded a grant of \$1.5 million to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and Rutgers University-Newark to amplify Newark voices through jazz and poetry.

"Rutgers University has long been a home to distinguished scholarship in race and the humanities," Mellon Foundation President Elizabeth Alexander said in a statement. "We believe in the deeply meaningful work these Rutgers scholars will undertake together, and we are proud to fund the humanities-driven exploration that will inspire even more researchers and institutions to join in this extraordinary new academic endeavor."

Learn more

<https://globalracialjustice.rutgers.edu/>



Elise Boddie, Rutgers-Newark director, a Henry Rutgers professor, professor of law, and Judge Robert L. Carter Scholar at Rutgers Law School in Newark.



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Michelle Stephens, founding executive director, professor of English and Latino and Caribbean studies in the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers-New Brunswick.



Erica Armstrong-Dunbar, Rutgers-New Brunswick director, is the Charles and Mary Beard Distinguished Professor of History in the School of Arts and Sciences.



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UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT JONATHAN HOLLOWAY