

MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

# THE EDUCATOR

*Pictured: Making Strides Toward Equity: The Social Justice Academy*

2022

**Making Strides  
Toward Equity**

**Letter from a  
Holmes Scholar**

**The Joy of Making  
a Difference**

**Teacher Preparation  
with Pay**

**Excellence. Access. Ambition.**



**MONMOUTH  
UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL of  
EDUCATION

2020 – 2021

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## Message From The Dean

### New Opportunities

During the past year, the pandemic created unprecedented challenges for educators across the country. I am very proud to say that the energy, vitality, and resilience of the School of Education faculty and staff has been undiminished throughout the entire crisis. In fact, this past year has been one of our finest, as illustrated by the number of new initiatives we began in the midst of this adversity.

For example, in response to national calls for a more just society, the School of Education started two new social justice initiatives. The first was the creation of the Social Justice Academy, a series of professional development offerings designed to promote social justice in education throughout Central Jersey (see the story on pages 4 to 5). This initiative was made possible by a \$2 million grant received from the Grunin Foundation. It is the most extensive social justice initiative in the School of Education's history. The second was the formation of a Holmes Scholars partnership with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Our first two Holmes scholars are Daniqua Williams and Natasha Cornell (see cover for picture and story on pages 6 – 7).

Naturally, a number of our initiatives were direct responses to the demands of the moment. For instance, the Department of Speech-Language Pathology's interest in serving clients virtually prompted our move to teletherapy (see pages 10 – 11). To give our teacher candidates a more in-person experience, we also incorporated simulated teaching experiences by utilizing avatars in a digital space (see pages 2 – 3). The School Supervisor Academy was initiated to provide professional development for our clinical supervisors, who suddenly found themselves mentoring clinical interns in a virtual environment (see page 23). Finally, to better support partnership schools during the pandemic, we initiated the School Change Academy. Its purpose is to help schools facilitate change more quickly and effectively in this rapidly changing environment (see page 24).

Other initiatives were begun—not because of the pandemic, but simply because starting them now was the right thing to do. The most prominent was our first-ever Sustainability Education Week, a weeklong series of speakers and panels on integrating sustainability education into schools. Another was a symposium to facilitate and promote women's leadership, an effort championed by the Women's Leadership Group in the School of Education (see pages 18 – 19). Finally, the Substitute Teaching Academy provided teacher candidates with the opportunity to learn more about how to apply for and obtain a substitute teaching position, how to prepare for substitute teaching, and how to build relationships and manage classrooms as a substitute teacher (see page 22).

To meet the changing conditions, we had to adapt, create, design, redesign, and innovate. The combination of fresh challenges; a new virtual environment; an innovative mindset; and, most importantly, talented, energetic faculty and staff led to one of our best years ever. Please join us by reading more about these exciting new initiatives on the following pages of *The Educator*.

Sincerely,  
**John E. Henning**  
Professor and Dean



Making Magic:

# Simulations in Education

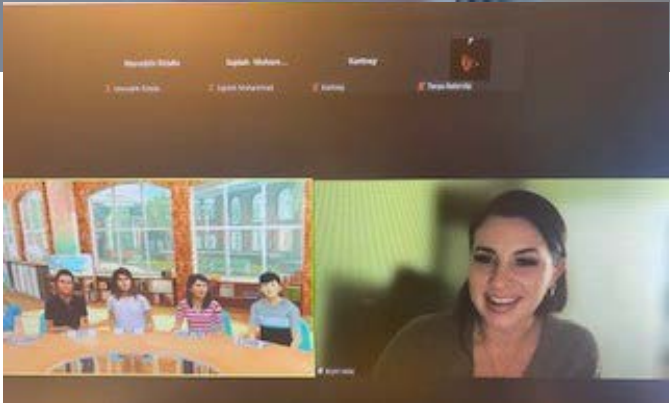


A major challenge for teacher candidates during the pandemic has been acquiring real-world teaching experience in remote learning environments. Concerns about spreading the coronavirus significantly reduced the number of hours of in-person clinical experiences. In response, the School of Education began pioneering teaching simulations through the use of new technology. Simulations provide prospective teachers and leaders with an opportunity to gain valuable real-world skills before engaging with actual students, teachers, and families. During simulations, teacher candidates interact with five to seven student avatars to develop their skills for interacting with real students in real classrooms.

*“The Mursion Simulation is much like the Disneyland magic—don’t think about the real human being behind the avatars—just believe in the magic.”*

- Meredith Riddle, Ed.D., Mursion Project Director

Simulation is especially valuable for providing experiences that are hard to access, even during clinical internships. For example, in Assessment Approaches, a special education class taught by Danielle Frith, lecturer in special education, students gain experience leading Individualized Education Program (IEP) conferences. IEP conferences provide a space for teachers and parents to confer about the best options to improve the child’s learning. It is natural for parents to have high expectations regarding the level of service and insight the teacher provides. So, it is important for teachers and teacher candidates to manage the conference with a great deal of expertise. The simulation provides teacher candidates with opportunities to practice different approaches and receive expert coaching on their performance.



*“The more I embed Mursion simulations into my teaching, the more convinced I am of their value. Mursion is the closest thing to a real-life scenario and provides my pre-service teachers with authentic opportunities to step outside of their comfort zones, refine their skills, engage in reflective practices, and set goals for themselves.”*

- Danielle Frith, Special Education Instructor

Similarly, Ruth Morris, Ed.D., and Meredith Hudson, an adjunct professor in the Early Childhood Program, utilize the program for early childhood parent-teacher conferences. Often teacher candidates do not get a chance to lead conferences with parents until they have become teachers. Without mentoring or coaching on how to lead such interactions, new teachers are left to figure it out the hard way—by themselves.

*“I learned how important it is to say the right things and to speak confidently so the parent does not get worried. I will definitely change how I approach an IEP meeting in the future. I will be more confident in myself and be prepared to answer the harder questions the parents might ask.”*

- Emily Balsamo, Student in the Assessment Approaches Class



The teaching simulation initiatives are currently all under the direction of Project Director Meredith Riddle, Ed.D. Riddle arranges for the simulations through Mursion, a California company that uses techniques pioneered by the California State University at Northridge. The director’s role requires training through a series of webinars designed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Faculty facilitators request a specific virtual lesson from a menu of virtual experiences and then arrange a 30- or 60-minute virtual experience for an individual student or a class. During the experience, the teacher candidates engage with avatars animated by an actor or actors behind the scenes.

*“Nothing in a textbook could compare to the experiences with the avatars on Mursion. Using simulations can enhance teacher training at a level not seen previously.”*

- Meredith Riddle, Ed.D., Mursion Project Director

# MAKING STRIDES TOWARD EQUITY: THE SOCIAL JUSTICE ACADEMY



The School of Education recently launched the largest social justice initiative in its history, thanks to a \$2 million grant from the Grunin Foundation. The grant supports the Social Justice Academy (SJA), whose purpose is to foster equity in schools by providing professional development in racial justice to Central Jersey educators.

The Academy was inspired by Jeremy Grunin, president of the Grunin Foundation and a member of the Monmouth University Board of Trustees (pictured on the cover). Grunin approached President Patrick Leahy with the idea after the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade. Grunin's goal was to focus on a large-scale developmental initiative specifically for educators in Monmouth, Middlesex, and Ocean counties. The School of Education coordinates the SJA in partnership with Brookdale Community College, Ocean County College, and Georgian Court University.

Representatives from each school serve on an advisory committee led by Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D., who serves as the director of the SJA. Pulliam, an associate professor in the School of Education, was selected by the SJA Advisory Committee to lead this important initiative. Social justice advocacy has been a lifelong mission for Pulliam, who is engaged in numerous social justice initiatives and committees across campus.

*"The common thread in my career has always been equity and access for historically excluded and oppressed groups. As a BIPOC educator and*

*leader, it is an incredible privilege to build an initiative from the ground up. The focus of the academy speaks to everything I have done and all that I believe in."*

**- Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Educational Counseling**

The inaugural year of the academy is intended to establish a strong foundation for the program through two initiatives. The first is the establishment of an initial two-week summer academy, which took place during July 2021. In years two through four, the SJA will expand to include five two-week summer workshops. The second important component of the SJA is the "Combating Racial Injustice Through Education" professional development series, which features prominent national speakers including but not limited to Nikole Hannah-Jones (pictured left), Sonia Nieto, Bettina Love, and Robert Kim. Individually and collectively, they have brought national recognition to the School of Education. The series will feature three additional social justice education speakers during the Spring 2022 semester and will continue each year.

*"What is so powerful about the Social Justice Academy is its design, which allows us to disseminate tangible resources to educators who are committed to making a real difference in the lives of their students. We also hope that current students who are interested in social justice and equity*

*will begin to understand the field of education as a pathway for positive societal transformation."*

**- Zaneta Rago-Craft, Ed.D., Director of the Intercultural Center, Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion at Monmouth University**

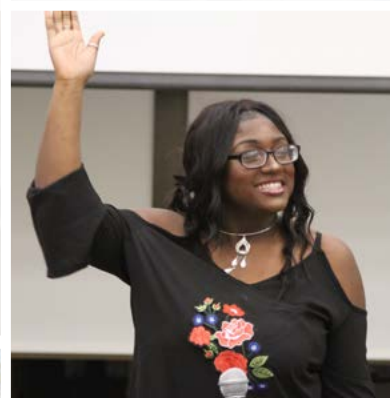
Over the next three years, the academy will select five cohorts of current and future K-12 educators and counselors to participate in social justice workshops each summer. Each workshop is two weeks long, with the first week dedicated to professional development around educational equity and anti-racism, and the second week dedicated to designing a project to initiate change within the respective schools. Implementation of the project is supported by coaches during the following school year, and completed projects are showcased at a special event at the end of the year. The grant also supports teachers and counselors by compensating them to attend the workshops and by providing mini-grants to implement their proposed projects.

Thanks to the generous support of the Grunin Foundation, the School of Education is making tremendous strides toward creating a more equitable future for New Jersey schoolchildren. The nature and size of the grant, along with the visibility of the initiative, open the door for future opportunities for even more extensive social justice conversations to take place at Monmouth University.



Supporting Students of Color:

# Holmes Scholars Program



The COVID-19 global health crisis has precipitated a renewed social justice movement within higher education and a sense of urgency that has led to an increase in activism across the United States. Monmouth University has heard the call for action and taken significant steps to facilitate change. One such effort is the launching of the Monmouth University Holmes Scholars Program.

In Fall 2021, Monmouth University's School of Education launched the Holmes Scholar Program as a subsidiary of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The primary goal of the program is to provide a pathway for students from marginalized groups to become university faculty. Jason Fitzgerald, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, is the advisor and catalyst for launching the program. According to Fitzgerald, the Monmouth University Holmes Scholar Program serves two purposes:

*"The first purpose is to provide historically minoritized scholars a chance to receive professional development that they wouldn't normally get as part of a graduate program. The second purpose is to develop relationships across the country ... a support system of like-minded, highly driven, super-intelligent people."*

The program was initiated in the Fall 2021 semester with the acceptance of the first two Monmouth University doctoral students, Daniqua Williams and Natasha Cornell. Thus far, the program has provided opportunities for connection and networking on a national level. Both scholars have connected with other doctoral students with shared lived experiences. Additionally, they have attended conferences and professional development events that the Holmes Scholar Program sponsored.

*"The program has provided me with a platform to elevate my professional voice and has validated my own marginalized experience as an Afro-Caribbean educator."*

**- Natasha Cornell, Doctoral Student**

While the Monmouth University Holmes Scholars Program is still in its infancy, the vision is much larger. Fitzgerald states, "I would like to develop a recursive community, where Monmouth University Holmes Scholars become not just a support for each other while they are in the program but can 'reach back' and provide additional support across the years."

*"Changing how higher education values and supports diverse ideas and scholarship will take time, especially at predominantly White institutions. Creating a local network of support and development is the goal."*

**- Jason Fitzgerald, Ph.D., Assistant Professor**



## Letter from a Holmes Scholar: Natasha Cornell

*“As an Afro-Caribbean, first-generation, low-income student on a journey to attain higher education, I have experienced many turns and bumps in the road. I know first-hand the feelings of marginalization and lack of belonging. In the late 1990s, I began attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) with two goals in mind: (1) to be the first person in my immediate family to obtain a college degree, and (2) to ensure my upward mobility. Like many students from the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community attending PWIs, I quickly realized that I first had to remove the stigma of marginalization to achieve my dream of obtaining higher education.”*

Sitting in my history class on my first day of college, I remember thinking to myself excitedly, “This is going to be great. I am going to learn so much historical stuff.” I love to learn and talk about where humans have been and how we got here. The professor began the class with a question: “Are Black, Hispanic, and Asian considered a race?” and pulling from my memories of prior discussions on race, I quickly shouted, “None of them is considered a race.” And immediately, I could hear a few of my classmates laughing. This kind of response had been all too familiar to me because I experienced a similar situation in high school. So, I wondered, “Was my answer incorrect? Or, was it my accent? Did I not pronounce something correctly?” The issue was not whether or not my answer was incorrect. (And for the record, I was right. There is only one race, the human race.) The issue, intended or not, was that my classmates’ laughter added to the long-standing narrative of many immigrants; that is, the misconception that being an immigrant means you are not an intellectual.

### My Battle with “Impostor Syndrome”

The feeling of being an impostor is all too common for students in the BIPOC community, especially those from an immigrant background. Social science theorists describe “impostor syndrome” as “having doubts in one’s knowledge, skills, and



abilities.” A recent study conducted by the University of Texas indicated that impostor syndrome is even more prevalent among female academics (Cokely et al., 2013). The feeling of “being a fraud” is due, in part, to societal, historical stereotypes around gender roles (i.e., women are not as intellectual as men).

This study resonated with me because my professional leadership journey has been filled with frequent moments of feeling like an impostor. I can recall the first time I was invited to sit on a Presidential Leadership Workgroup. The team consisted of executive-level higher education administrators, who were primarily White males. My body manifested all the symptoms of an anxiety attack (i.e., nervousness, panic, increased heart rate). I kept asking myself, “Why am I being invited to participate in this group?” “What if I say the wrong thing? What do I know?” Again, I have visited this place before; it is at the intersection of “uneducated immigrants” and “you don’t belong here.”

### The Search for Belonging

My feelings of being under-educated, coupled with my feelings of impostor syndrome, have led me in search of a community. It is this search that prompted me to apply to the Holmes Scholar Program at Monmouth University. In Fall 2021, Monmouth University launched the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Holmes Scholars Program to help extend a high level of support for BIPOC doctoral students. AACTE is a premiere education organization with a core mission to help prepare educators to become innovative researchers and professional practitioners. The AACTE Holmes Scholars Program (a subsidiary of

the larger AACTE organization) began in 1991 with the specific goal to provide mentorship and support to BIPOC doctoral-level students.

### Helping to Elevate Professional Voices

The U.S. Census Bureau has indicated that the minority populations will become the new majority by 2045. However, the road to student success continues to be a challenging path for many BIPOC students. To this end, the AACTE Holmes Scholars Program serves as an effective strategy to address issues affecting this demographic shift. The AACTE Holmes Scholars Program has demonstrated that they are willing and able to stand for the advocacy and agency of all students.

While my journey as a Holmes Scholar has just begun, thus far, it has been filled with ebullience. I have met fellow BIPOC doctoral-level students from all walks of life. I have been in spaces with politicians and renowned educational experts. There is a sense of pride, readiness, and confidence that now exudes in my professional practice. For the first time in a long time, I feel confident in my intellectual abilities. I have embraced the fact that I am not an “impostor.” I sit at the table because I have earned it and demanded it in some cases. My journey, colorful as it has been, has given me strength and character. I have found my sense of belonging within the AACTE Holmes community.

Cokely, K., McClain, S., Encisco, A., & Martinez, M. (2013). An examination of the impact of minority status stress and impostor feelings on the mental health of diverse ethnic minority college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 41*(2), 82–95.



## Connecting with Speech Center Clients: **TELETHERAPY**

The faculty of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) faculty faced a challenging dilemma when the pandemic began. How can SLP clinicians safely interact with their clients? Their answer was teletherapy. During teletherapy, clinicians consult with their clients via videoconferencing software (e.g., Zoom) or telephone. Teletherapy provides uninterrupted care for clients while simultaneously protecting vulnerable patients from the highly contagious coronavirus.

In addition to reducing the spread of COVID-19, major benefits of teletherapy are more efficient scheduling and maximizing therapeutic time. Prior to teletherapy, there were many instances when families were late for appointments or even missed them altogether, thus missing essential therapy. Using synchronous videoconferencing sessions greatly reduces or eliminates travel; families can log in from a location of their own choosing. Ultimately, patients spend more time in therapy and get more out of it.



Teletherapy was introduced in the Department of SLP under the leadership of the Clinical Director Brittany Khan. She implemented a new electronic medical record system, ClinicNote, so student clinicians can document their clinic notes electronically during their in-house clinics. She also developed a collaborative training model so student clinicians can co-treat with their peers during teletherapy.

Assistant Professor of Speech-Language Pathology Yao Du, Ph.D. (pictured left bottom), supervised nine graduate students via teletherapy and also mentored several graduate students conducting a research study about clinicians. The study found mobile health applications to be very helpful for working with pediatric patients. Based on this research, Du “hope[s] that teletherapy services can be expanded so that they are reimbursable by insurances and Medicaid beyond just the COVID-19 period.”

Du has also found challenges that need to be overcome. Some of these include building rapport in a virtual environment; keeping younger patients engaged without physical tactile cues or in-person

intimacy; and training clinicians so they are as effective virtually as in person. Despite these challenges, Du foresees a positive future for teletherapy beyond the pandemic.

*“In the future, clinicians will use a variety of technology and innovative technical tools, besides the conventional paper-based materials and digitized materials. There are more interactive materials, activities, and resources on line now that are fully focused on the technology of treating clients remotely.”*

**- Yao Du, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Speech-Language Pathology**

To overcome the challenges associated with teletherapy, the Department of SLP obtained a School of Education training grant for students. The grant allows clinicians and clients to plan language and literacy intervention activities in order to pilot new tools for teletherapy. This work is a win-win for individuals who are seeking services and clinicians who are looking for additional learning opportunities.

One of Du’s most recent initiatives is investigating the potential for clinical students to receive training on a variety of digital tools like mobile apps, virtual worlds, and web-based online games and platforms so that they can engage with more immersive learning experiences. Supported by a Monmouth University creativity and research grant, Du looks forward to offering a new transformative learning opportunity in Spring 2022. She plans to train graduate clinicians on language assessment for bilingual Mandarin-English speaking children via teletherapy.

*“I will continue to supervise more teletherapy sessions and work with more students, including undergraduates who are in the SLP minor programs, in the future. Our goal at the clinic is to really make services accessible to all, so even after the pandemic, we’ll be able to continue to provide services, both in person and remote, based on client preferences.”*

# FIRST TIME EVER: THE VIRTUAL STUDENT RESEARCH EXHIBITION



For the first time ever, the School of Education hosted the Fall Student Research Exhibition virtually. At the in-person event, students display their physical posters while proudly describing their research and learning experiences to interested attendees. Virtually, students created digital posters, with embedded voiceovers describing their research. Through a dedicated website for the event, attendees were able to view all presentations, at any time. This virtual format also allowed for attendees outside of the Monmouth University community to view this exceptional student scholarship. The culmination of this exciting event took place via a live Zoom event, which included a moderated research panel of experts and a student awards ceremony.

Whether in person or virtual, awards at the Fall Student Research Exhibition are presented for outstanding posters across various categories, such as Best Completed Research, Best Proposed Research, and Best Clinical Practice Reflections. This year’s virtual event introduced two new award categories. The Student Choice Award was determined by an online vote of students, faculty, and community members. The second new award was given for work in social justice. The judges for the best poster in this special category were from the Social Justice Advocacy Committee. Applicable posters received a special “social justice” designation. Criteria for such a spotlight included:

1. *Awareness*: Includes general concepts of social justice and multiculturalism. Overall, the project focuses on both recognition and reflections related to social justice and practices which impact the highlighted topic.

2. *Advocacy*: Incorporates an informed inclusion of social justice and multiculturalism within the project. Additionally, the project includes action which generates small change.

3. *Activism*: Includes an intentional, proactive engagement in social justice with the goal of creating change to systems or policies that impact the highlighted topic.

The Fall Student Research Exhibition was the brainchild of Associate Professor of Special Education Kathryn “KC” Lubniewski, Ph.D. The pandemic gave Lubniewski and her co-leader of the event, Alyson Pompeo-Fargnoli, Ph.D., assistant professor in Educational Counseling, the idea to host this annual event virtually.

*“The Fall Research Exhibition is a way to foster research in all forms and allow students—undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral—to express their findings and practice their presentations before presenting their research to larger audiences.”*

**- KC Lubniewski, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education**

The virtual Student Research Exhibition was extremely successful in student participation and audience attendance. Future plans include making the event more interactive, highlighting more research based on social justice advocacy, and sharing the event more widely through social media outlets.

**Congratulations to all of the students who presented, the winners of awards, and everyone who was able to share their knowledge with others!**

## AWARD WINNERS FALL 2020

### CATEGORY: Proposed Research

Laura Petillo, “Asbury Park’s Gentrification and Proposed Research into Changes in Early Childhood Education”  
*Faculty Mentor: Ai Kamei, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Experiential Education and Clinical Practice Reflections (tie)

Chris Landry, “My Experimental Experience and Clinical Practice Reflections This Fall 2020 Semester”  
Rachel Polzer, “Experiential Education and Clinical Practice: School of Education Exhibition”  
*Faculty Mentor: Ai Kamei, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Completed or In Progress Research

Kyle Seiverd, “A Comparative Gender Analysis of Printed High School Chemistry Textbooks: A 21st-Century Perspective”  
*Faculty Mentor: Judy Bazler, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Other

Amanda Balestrieri, “Interdisciplinary Approach Cures Mathematics Isolation”  
*Faculty Mentor: Serbay Zambak, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: People’s Choice

Alyssa Rupnarin and Melani Kovacs, “Effects of Counseling on First-Generation College Students”  
*Faculty Mentor: Alyson Pompeo-Fargnoli, Ph.D.*

## AWARD WINNERS SPRING 2021

### CATEGORY: Creative Practice

Michelle Ballin, “A Tale of Two Teachers”  
*Faculty Mentor: Serbay Zambak, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Completed Research

Marc Rosamilia, “Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Mental Health Support”  
*Faculty Mentor: Jason Fitzgerald, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Proposed Research

Amanda Pluchino, Caitlin Smoler, Katie Snedeker, and Paula Thomson, “Perceptions of Stuttering: Exploring the Thoughts of Middle School Students in the United States and Italy”  
*Faculty Mentor: Kathleen Scaler Scott, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Experiential Education and Clinical Practice Reflections (Undergraduate)

Aidan Hague, “My Anastasia Experience”  
*Faculty Mentor: Ai Kamei, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: Social Justice Designation

Romina Generali, “EOF Scholars: Resiliency and Excellence in a Virtual World”  
*Faculty Mentor: Alyson Pompeo-Fargnoli, Ph.D.*

### CATEGORY: People’s Choice Award

Megan Okuniewicz, “Implementation of Explicit Literacy-Based Instruction within CASEL’s 5 SEL Competencies to Achieve Social and Emotional Development and Literacy Growth in Elementary Aged Students”  
*Faculty Mentors: John Henning, Ph.D. and Jason Fitzgerald, Ph.D.*



THE JOY OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

## Jacob George, Ed.D.

*“Making connections with students is one of the most special experiences ever.”*

Recent Ed.D. graduate Jacob “Jake” George discovered he loved teaching bilingual students during his second year in the classroom. He found that he liked teaching students who came from all over the world, and further, he learned they were a great resource for his other students. They exposed his students to different cultures, different perspectives, and different ways of thinking. Best of all, he was gratified to discover how much his teaching made a difference for them. Making a difference was the reason why he became a teacher.

Eventually George’s passion for teaching bilingual students inspired his qualitative dissertation in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program. An essential component of his research was finding new teaching strategies for middle school bilingual students. George wanted to know what professional development would best help teachers practice, adapt, and create new instructional approaches. His research findings showed that bilingual students learn best in small-group settings where they can communicate freely in both their native language and English.

*“Viewing bilingual students as exceptional learners should become the norm because of the invaluable global perspective they bring to the classroom.”*

*- Jacob George ‘19M, ‘21Ed.D., Long Branch Teacher*



Ironically, George didn’t start his journey planning to become a teacher. Initially, he accepted a wrestling scholarship to attend Cornell University. As an undergraduate, George studied the global development of sociology, which is the study of population dynamics, economic development, and national development within a global society. George knew that in order to make an impact or positive change in the world, he needed to better understand the different circumstances that influence people’s lives.

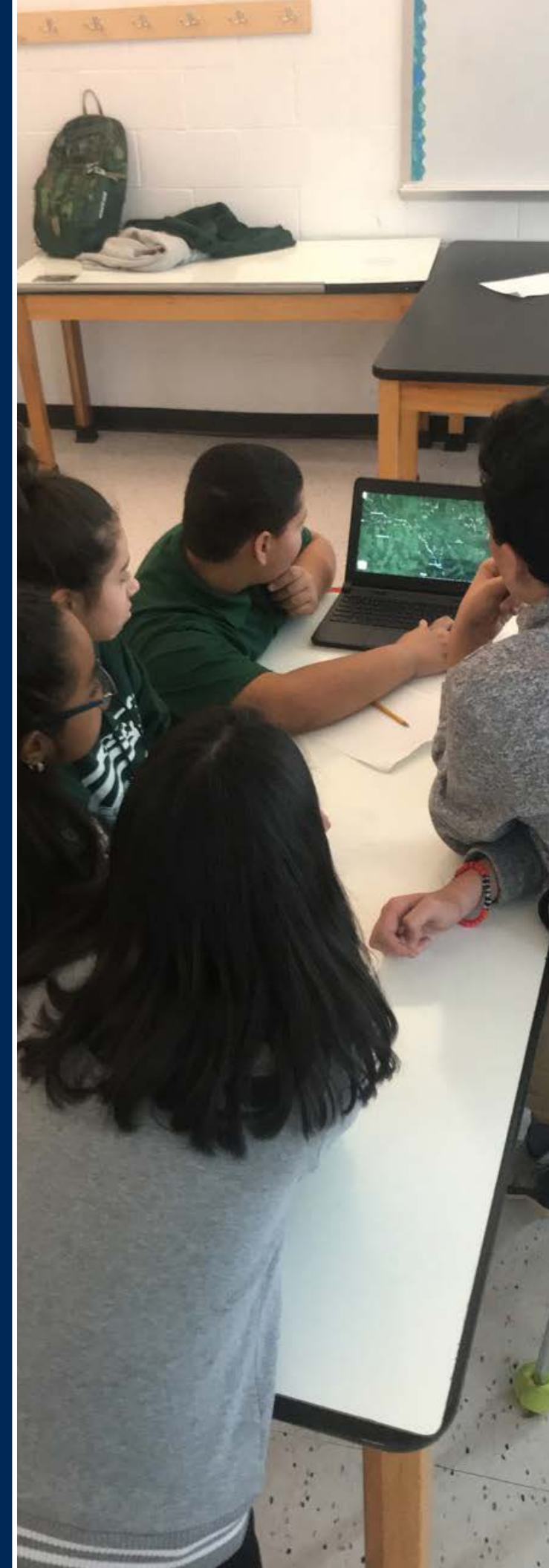
After graduation, George was accepted into the prestigious Teach for America program. However, he opted instead to enter the teaching profession through the Provisional Teacher Program at Monmouth University. Monmouth was a logical choice because of its proximity to his new employer, the Long Branch School District; because of its excellent reputation in education; and because he could earn a master’s degree while obtaining his teaching license.

*“What drew me in was how incredible the education program is and how they utilize their relationship with Long Branch schools to prepare their students.”*

In the beginning of his teaching career he felt overwhelmed, as if there wasn’t enough time for anything. The first few weeks filled him with uncertainty about how to best prepare. He explained, “The first week was a whirlwind that seemed like so much work, as if you couldn’t even take a second to eat lunch. But it was also very rewarding.” However, George had learned how to balance his personal life, student life, and athletic life as a student-athlete during his days as an undergraduate. As in athletics, a strong commitment and a positive mindset is essential in the field of teaching.

*“The personal experience I both lived and witnessed along with the field work experience of working with middle schoolers was my biggest influence in becoming a middle school teacher.”*

Originally, George did not plan to move through both his master’s and doctorate in three years, but he soon saw what a positive difference his graduate course work was making in his instruction. He spent the last three years taking classes, working a full-time job, and trying to find the balance between them. To relax, he loves to surf, fish, and skateboard, and he enjoys going to the beach; he also tries to go snowboarding a few times a year. But he says that “nothing is better than spending time with family and friends.”





# Building Environmental Sustainability into the Curriculum: Sustainability Education Week

The increasing awareness of what sustainability education means to the world’s future recently led New Jersey to become the first state in the U.S. to address environmental education in the school curriculum across subjects and grade levels. To better support the preparation of environmentally aware educators, the School of Education sponsored its first annual Sustainability Education Week during the week of Feb. 15–19, 2021.

The goals of the conference were to (1) educate the community about sustainability issues, (2) create a forum for discussion, reflection, and collaboration, (3) offer professional development opportunities for teachers, (4) share best practices and provide a network of support, and (5) allow K–12 students to engage in challenges related to sustainability. The event attracted 200 registered patrons, including university students, faculty, community members, K–12 students, administrators, in-service teachers, and other individuals interested in learning more about sustainability.

*“In its simplest form, sustainability is meeting the needs of people today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs tomorrow.”*

**- KC Lubniewski, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education and Director of Sustainability Education Week**

Each evening of the five-day, weeklong, virtual event addressed a different topic. It began with a welcome message from the First Lady of New Jersey, Tammy Murphy, and two notable keynote speakers. The first was Monmouth University Professor of Journalism and author of the Eco-Adventure Series, John Morano, M.A., M.Ed., who discussed trends and issues in environmental sustainability, his experiences, and how he addresses sustainability in his writing. The second was former science teacher and current science standards specialist with Great Minds PBC, Missy Holzer, Ph.D.,

who explored opportunities for incorporating climate science and climate change across the curriculum.

*“The most effective approach to sustainability education is problem-based, interdisciplinary instruction. The first step is to develop awareness through an interdisciplinary problem; the second is to show people how to make change by generating solutions to the problem. I teach my future teachers in an interdisciplinary way and show them how to teach their students using the same methods.”*

**- Jiwon Kim, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Social Studies Education**

The remaining days featured students, teachers, and environmental leaders. The second day featured selected student presenters who shared their essay or video based on the theme “What Can We Do for Environmental Sustainability?” On the third and fourth days, New Jersey teachers shared some of their best sustainability practices, while also learning how to build environmental sustainability into the curriculum. The conference concluded with a panel on how to facilitate change and development around environmental sustainability in education led by environmental advocate Hank Bitten, executive director of the New Jersey Council for the Social Studies.

The inspiration for the inaugural Sustainability Education Week came from a discussion between KC Lubniewski, Ph.D., and John Henning, Ph.D., dean of the School of Education. Lubniewski took the initial idea and ran with it, organizing the planning committee, collaborating across campus to build support, creating the website to supply conference attendees with program information and takeaways, conducting the internal and external communication needed to conduct planning meetings, and promoting the event

to schools and other constituents. She was assisted in her communication with schools by Carol McArthur-Amedeo, Ed.D., lecturer in special education. McArthur-Amedeo’s extensive school administrative experiences facilitated strong connections with schools across the state and into surrounding states.

*“Sustainability Education Week is an exemplar of how inspiration, commitment, and teamwork can create such a timely and vital initiative.”*

**- John Henning, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Education**

Two other School of Education faculty members also constituted the talented team of four who created Sustainability Education Week: Associate Professor of Social Studies Education Jiwon Kim, Ph.D., and Lecturer in Science Education Michelle Schpakow, Ed.D. Both are actively involved in promoting climate action across K–12 and higher education curricula in New Jersey through the NJ Education for Climate Action Stakeholders Initiative. In addition, both have been active participants in Monmouth’s Climate Crisis Teach-In. Kim is also working with school experts and leaders to develop an interdisciplinary approach beyond climate, including striving toward United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,

such as sustainability in gender equality, energy, the economy, and education. Schpakow has designed simulations for teachers and teacher candidates surrounding sustainability solutions relating to the Next Generation Science Standards. Their work helped attract the notable speakers for Sustainability Education Week.

The interest generated by this event led to the creation of a student subcommittee and to the addition of several School of Education faculty members to the Sustainability Education Committee. The committee is planning the second annual Sustainability Education Week for March 2022. Based on the increasing interest and commitment, the committee anticipates broadening the scope of their work in the coming years.

*“We can’t just sit back and do nothing. It’s our role to educate future teachers, counselors, speech pathologists, and educational leaders. They are the ones who will teach our children about sustainability. It’s a huge job, but if we aren’t successful, we won’t have a world to live in, and nothing else will matter.”*

**- KC Lubniewski, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education**





Supporting Emerging Female Leaders:

# The Women's Leadership Group

A recent study highlighted that while “they hold 52 percent of all professional-level jobs, American women lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions” (Warner & Corley, 2017, p. 1). Despite much progress, this finding indicates that many women continue to face barriers in obtaining leadership roles within the American workforce.

One leader recognizing the need for change is Wendy Harriott, Ph.D., associate dean of the School of Education. As the founder and creator of the Women's Leadership Group at Monmouth University, an initiative of the School of Education, she has created a space for women leaders to meet in a supportive environment and develop their leadership skills.

*“I learned in higher education that women leaders often become leaders without any formal training, so I started the group to create a safe space for women leaders to share their leadership ideas and mentor one another.”*

**-Wendy Harriott, Ph.D., Associate Dean and Founder of the Women's Leadership Group**

In addition, many women who obtain leadership roles often face the feeling of being an “impostor.” As a female leader, Harriott can relate to “impostor syndrome.” In reflecting on her own experience, Harriott stated, “I was a first-generation college student. Neither of my parents graduated from high school. I wasn't raised to be a leader, and I had to overcome many obstacles to obtain my degrees in higher education. In the beginning of my professional career, I tried to dress like my male counterparts, thinking it would make others take me more seriously. I quickly learned to wear what was comfortable for me, and that there is no need to mimic males.”

The Monmouth Women's Leadership Group addresses impostor syndrome by creating places and spaces for women to receive mentorship and sponsorship through various annual events, activities, and meetings. One notable event is the Women in Leadership Symposium, which has been held for three years. The symposium aims to help train and develop aspiring and current women leaders working in K-12 and higher education.



The theme for the Women's Leadership Symposium in April 2021 was wellness and self-care for leaders and their teams, a timely topic that was well-received by all attendees. The keynote was delivered virtually by Tina Boogren, Ph.D., a national trainer, author, and consultant. The event also included a multidisciplinary panel who shared their perspectives on integrating wellness into the workplace daily.

Each year, the conference is planned and developed in conjunction with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA). Judy Rattner, director of special projects for NJASA, leads the symposium collaboratively with a team of leaders from the Monmouth Women's Leadership Group. The Equitable Foundation collaborates with the planning team and provides financial support.

*“Dr. Harriott recognized the need for women's leadership in education, then created the Women's Leadership Group to address it. The ability of a leader to conceive and implement new initiatives to address the needs of an organization is the mark of an outstanding leader.”*

**-John Henning, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Education**

The Monmouth Women's Leadership Group currently consists of 12-15 members and is open to staff, administrators, and faculty in the School of Education. Members of the group are invited to facilitate the meetings based on expertise and interest in the session topics. The group provides a safe space for emerging leaders to “try out” various leadership skills. A main focus within the group has been on using the CliftonStrengths assessment. This tool helps individuals learn about how to identify and use their unique talents to enhance their leadership skills.

Future plans include expanding the group beyond the School of Education to develop and cultivate more women leaders across the University.

Warner, J., & Corley, D. (2017). *The women's leadership gap: Women's leadership by the numbers*. Center for American Progress. [https://cf.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WomenLeadershipGap2017-factsheet1.pdf?\\_ga=2.135529464.852522332.1640982761-751957511.1640982761](https://cf.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WomenLeadershipGap2017-factsheet1.pdf?_ga=2.135529464.852522332.1640982761-751957511.1640982761)

# YEAR IN REVIEW

2020

2021

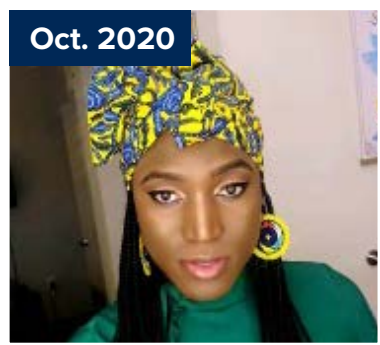
Sept. 2020



## Academic Welcome

School of Education faculty and staff welcomed new students during the height of the pandemic.

Oct. 2020



## Human Rights

The guest speaker at the School of Education Full Faculty and Staff Meeting was Ms. Tiara Gendi, an activist and a transwoman from Zimbabwe, whose work focuses on youth activism, human rights, acceptance, trans diverse community building, and intercultural understanding.

Nov. 2020



## Central Jersey Consortium for Equity and Excellence

Ali Michael, renowned social justice educator, led Central Jersey educators through a year-long program as part of the Central Jersey Consortium for Equity and Excellence.

Mar. 2021

LONG HISTORY OF RACIALIZING DISEASE: ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Wed, March 31st  
2:30-4 pm



## Long History of Racializing Disease

Soyhun An, Ph.D., professor of social studies education at Kennesaw State University, spoke about the "Long History of Racializing Disease: Anti-Asian Violence amid COVID-19 Pandemic and Educational Implications."

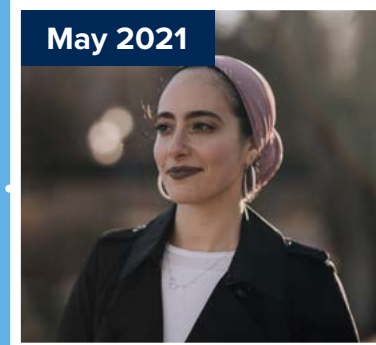
Apr. 2021



## Women's Leadership Symposium

The Women's Leadership Symposium featured Tina H. Boogren, Ph.D., author of numerous books on quality instruction, coaching, mentoring, and wellness, to give the keynote address.

May 2021



## The Roberts Award Dinner

The Roberts Award Dinner celebrated two years of outstanding teachers. Pictured above is award-winner Nagla Bedir, teacher of psychology at Perth Amboy High School in Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

Dec. 2020



## Virtual Student Research Exhibition

Pictured above is Derek Tranchina, Ed.D., one of the panelists and judges at the Research Exhibition.

Jan. 2021



## Special Education and ELLs

The School Change Academy launched to begin the new year. Pictured above is presenter Danielle Frith speaking on "Special Education and ELLs: The Critical Need for Collaboration."

Feb. 2021



## Sustainability Education Week

Pictured above is one of the keynote speakers, Missy Holzer, Ph.D., a passionate science educator for over 30 years, former president of the Earth Science Teachers Association, and currently a science standards specialist with Great Minds PBC.

Jun. 2021



## Distinguished Clinical Intern

Christina Barlik was recognized as a Distinguished Clinical Intern, one of 15 New Jersey clinical interns to receive this recognition.

Jul. 2021



## The Social Justice Academy

The Social Justice Academy kicked off its inaugural year under the leadership of Director Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D.

Aug. 2021



## Graduation 2021

Newly graduated doctors celebrated after the 2021 August graduation ceremonies.

# The Substitute Teaching Academy

Gaining practical teaching experience in the classroom is vitally important for teacher candidates. Yet, often their need to work in part-time jobs interferes with their opportunity to obtain more experience in school classrooms. One way to gain experience while getting paid is through substitute teaching. According to John Henning, Ph.D., dean of the School of Education, substitute teaching can provide an invaluable means of gaining classroom experience in teaching and can build relationships and networks of colleagues who can open the door for future employment. New teachers often struggle with classroom management, a skill they can build on when substituting.

*“I encourage all teacher candidates to become substitute teachers, because the experience builds confidence, allows you to try out a variety of new teaching strategies, and gives you the opportunity to practice your classroom management, all of which will help you to become an effective teacher.”*

**- John Henning, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Education**

The Substitute Teaching Academy was developed by James Falco, Ed.D., a Monmouth University instructor and assistant principal at Middletown High School North, in collaboration with Christine Grabowski, an adjunct at Monmouth University and teacher at Middle Road Elementary School in the Hazlet School District. The Substitute Teaching Academy consists of four, two-hour sessions that meet on Saturday mornings. The purpose is to provide teacher candidates with information on how to become a substitute, as well as instruction on how to substitute teach. Student attendance is voluntary for each session, although attendance at all four sessions is encouraged.

*“Every district has a different procedure for hiring substitute teachers. The process includes fingerprinting, background checks, and a lot of paperwork, so we show teacher candidates how to get started and what to do when they get their first substitute teaching job.”*

**- Christine Grabowski, Substitute Teaching Academy Instructor**

Both Grabowski and Falco have substitute taught themselves and found the experience helpful. Based on their experiences, they know how important it is to keep students actively engaged in the lesson. Therefore, they like to share a “teacher tool bag” of activities they have found to be effective across many different types of classrooms. Having these activities on hand prepares teacher candidates for situations when the teacher doesn’t leave any lesson plans, the teacher’s lesson is finished and there is still substantial time left in the class, or when the class needs a different focus to stay on task.

*“The value of the workshops to me as an aspiring educator was profound. They prepared me to handle those situations that could possibly happen during my time as a substitute teacher or classroom teacher. They provided me with experience that will make me comfortable and prepared for real life in the classroom.”*

**- Parker Dewey, Monmouth Senior and Substitute Teaching Academy Graduate**

To be a good substitute teacher one must be empathetic, be willing to build relationships, take initiative, be flexible in thought and practice, and demonstrate courageous leadership. The case studies and substitute teaching scenarios discussed in the Substitute Teaching Academy sessions help students anticipate different situations they may encounter, what decisions they may have to make, and how they will feel emotionally as they work through them.

*“The anxiety around substitute teaching can be fixed by preparing, actually overpreparing for different situations.”*

**- James Falco, Ed.D., Substitute Teaching Academy Instructor**

Becoming a substitute teacher is a great way to gain practical experience while supplementing income. As Grabowski says, “There is no downside to substitute teaching.”



## Supporting Clinical Experiences: The Supervisors’ Academy

Clinical supervisors play a critical role in every teacher candidate’s journey to become a teacher. The feedback they provide as they observe, advise, and evaluate the teaching performance of teacher candidates can have a dramatic impact on the professional development of teacher candidates. Accordingly, the Supervisors’ Academy was created as a means for supporting supervisors in both hybrid and in-person learning environments.

The academy provides supervisors with a chance to work collaboratively on improving their supervision. A primary feature of the program is discussing case studies of supervision. This enables the group to share ideas on how to address specific situations effectively. The high level of expertise in the group also makes the sessions highly informative for the instructors.

*“We are all a work in progress striving to be better at what we do. The Supervisors’ Academy allows the supervisors to provide support to the teacher candidates, as well as their mentor, so it is important to stay current and talk through situations.”*

**- James Falco, Ed.D., Supervisor Academy Instructor**

This academy provides the opportunity to meet with other clinical supervisors who support teacher candidates, talk through challenges, and provide strategies they might be able to use with teacher candidates. The differences in experiences among the supervisors also enrich the discussions and enhance learning.

Grabowski and Falco are the lead instructors for the Supervisors’ Academy. Their goal is to make professionals in the field aware of current mentoring practices by talking through how and what they do to offer support to teacher candidates.



C H A N G E

Pioneering New Ways to Learn:  
The School Change Academy

The great philosopher Heraclitus once said, “The only constant in life is change.” This statement has never been more relevant in the education ecosystem than now. The recent challenges introduced by the pandemic have brought a whole new set of demands and numerous subsequent change initiatives. Thus, gaining a complete understanding of change management is an essential skill for school leaders.

Helping School Leaders Lead

In recognition of the importance of change management, Monmouth’s School of Education has created the School Change Academy to facilitate the leadership of school change initiatives. The academy is led by William O. George III, Ed.D., who also serves as assistant professor and program director of Educational Leadership and the Ed.D. program. Approximately 24 New Jersey school districts serve as members and actively participate in the Monmouth University School Change Academy programs and events.

“The mission of the School Change Academy is to assist school leaders in building strategic initiatives that lead to student success. Specifically, the academy helps to guide leaders through the process of designing and implementing change initiatives.”

- William O. George III, Ed.D., Educational Leadership Program Director

Additionally, the academy provides professional development opportunities to help school leaders develop and enhance their change management skills. These skills are critical, given the current demands in education. With them, school leaders can “create a data-driven institution, and improve teachers’ practices and student learning,” said George.

Modeling the Change Process

The Monmouth University School Change Academy tries to model the change process by creating sessions tailored for collaboration, design, and discussion. Topics have addressed current educational trends, such as the change process,



technology, culturally responsive pedagogy, virtual teaching, the creation of inclusive learning environments, and social-emotional learning. Following the discussion of these topics, school change leaders are encouraged to brainstorm initiatives that they might implement in their schools to improve student learning. Successful initiatives become the subject for future sessions.

“Our knowledge of how learning occurs is expanding at an incredible rate. The School Change Academy is at the intersection between the new knowledge available and the desire of school leadership to keep their schools on the cutting edge of educational innovation.”

- John Henning, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Education

The School Change Academy’s original goal was to continue the great work that is already being done and to further enhance the conversation around school change in Central Jersey. But due to generous support received from the Equitable Foundation, the School Change Academy has set its sights even higher. According to George, “The vision is to use research from the Monmouth University doctoral candidates and faculty to connect with other practitioners on a national level.”

Thank You to Our Donors

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A very special thanks to Dean’s Advisory Council member **Stephen Bray** whose donation made this annual review possible.



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A special thanks to Emily Condrón, Shannon McGorty, Natasha Cornell, Daniqua Williams,  
and Rebecca Hanly for their work in the preparation of *The Educator*.

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