

## **New Brunswick Strategic Planning Proposal**

**Proposal Title:** The Public Engagement Project

**Proposal Initiator:** Deborah Carr and Arlene Stein, Department of Sociology

**Primary Contact Name and Phone Number:** Deborah Carr, 848-932-4068

**Primary Contact Email Address:** carrds@rutgers.edu

**Primary Strategic Priority/Foundational Element/Integrating Theme Addressed (Select one)**

- Envision Tomorrow's University
- Build Faculty Excellence
- Transform the Student Experience
- Enhance Our Public Prominence
- Strong Core of Sciences and Humanities
- Inclusive, Diverse, and Cohesive Culture
- Effective and Efficient Infrastructure and Staff
- Financial Resources Sufficient to Fund Our Aspirations
- Robust Shared Governance, Academic Freedom, and Effective Communication
- Cultures, Diversity, and Inequality—Local and Global
- Improving the Health and Wellness of Individuals and Populations
- Creating a Sustainable World through Innovation, Engineering, and Technology
- Educating Involved Citizens and Effective Leaders for a Dynamic World
- Creative Expression and the Human Experience
- Measuring Progress and Defining Success

**Proposal Abstract** (brief summary of the proposal – 250-word limit):

Social scientists and scholars in the humanities are ideally suited to engage with pressing public debates, yet their voices are too rarely heard. Our potential influence could be more profound, yet the tools needed for communicating with multiple audiences, and practicing public scholarship, are difficult for scholars to access. The **Public Engagement Project (PEP)** will be a clearinghouse at Rutgers for scholarly engagement in public issues. Our aim is to help academics disseminate their work widely by writing op-eds in leading newspapers, informing policy makers, blogging, and offering their expertise to journalists. *PEP will offer hands-on training for those who wish to communicate social knowledge to different publics, including activists, journalists, thought leaders, public policy professionals, and the general public. PEP, led by a multidisciplinary team of scholars, writers, editors, and media professionals, has two core components.* 1) Skills-training for Rutgers graduate students and faculty who wish to write for broader audiences (blogging, op-eds, magazine articles, general interest books), to share their work on TV and radio, or communicate directly with policy makers. 2) An online magazine of popular social sciences and humanities (working title: *Public Engagement*) that would involve faculty and graduate students at Rutgers but would be open to the participation of others. We seek funding to launch the project, yet would look for continued revenue and support from the American Association of University Publishers (AAUP) and private foundations include Doris Duke, Geraldine R. Dodge, and Ford.

**Full Proposal Description** (5-page limit)

See proposal attached below.

**Proposed Measures to Mark Progress or Determine Success**

Our success would be measured using two main indicators: (1) an ongoing count of the number of media contributions made by Rutgers faculty and graduate students pre- and post the start of PEP. Media Relations currently obtains some of these data, but we would document the extent to which the number of op-ed articles, quotes, and featured research by Rutgers faculty and graduate students in major media increases following the development and implementation of our program; (2) we would conduct both closed-ended and open-ended evaluations of the quality and impact of the media training workshops offered as part of the PEP program. These subjective and objective data will provide early benchmarks as to whether PEP is meeting our intended goals, and the goals of the faculty and graduate students who participate in PEP training and enrichment programs.

## The Public Engagement Project

**Submitted by Arlene Stein (Sociology) and Deborah Carr (Sociology), in consultation with Brittney Cooper (Women’s and Gender Studies), Jocelyn Crowley (Bloustein School), David Greenberg (History and Journalism), Angelique Haugeraud (Anthropology), Deepa Kumar (Media Studies), Jackson Lears (History), Leslie Mitchener (Rutgers University Press), Michael Rockland (American Studies), Marlie Wasserman (Rutgers University Press), and Virginia Yans (History)**

Social scientists and scholars in the humanities are ideally suited to analyze and engage with pressing public debates, yet their voices are too rarely heard. Recently, columnist Nicholas Kristof, writing in *The New York Times*, criticized professors for upholding a “culture of exclusivity” that “disdains impact and audience.” Kristof blamed dense academic prose, obstructionist professional associations, scholars’ scant social media presence, “hidden away” academic journals, and a reward structure that privileges technique and abstraction over relevance, clear thinking, and broad dissemination.

While many academics, including Rutgers faculty, disseminate their work widely by writing op-eds in leading newspapers, informing policy makers, blogging about their research, and offering their expertise to journalists — our influence could be more sweeping and profound. As Ezra Klein, writing in *Bloomberg News* explains, “The relationship between academics and journalists should be a happy symbiosis” but “journalists are often frustrated by academics, while academics often feel ignored and dismissed by journalists.”

Scholars across multiple disciplines – from sociology to public policy to history – are spearheading efforts to make their voices heard. For example, leading sociologists have spoken of the importance of fashioning a “public sociology” that could address varied publics and cooperate more closely with journalists; similar discussions have taken place in other disciplines. But the tools needed for communicating with multiple audiences and across varied formats, and practicing public scholarship, are difficult for scholars to access. The **Public Engagement Project (PEP)** will be a clearinghouse at Rutgers for scholarly engagement in public issues. *It will offer hands-on training for those who wish to communicate social knowledge to different publics, including activists, journalists, thought leaders, public policy professionals, and the general public.*

A number of our peer universities in the New York area, including NYU and CUNY, have already established such initiatives. Rutgers, too, is home to scholars and professionals with the skills and experience to help their colleagues and students take center stage in national conversations. Sociologists Arlene Stein and Deborah Carr have considerable experience in communicating scholarly work to broad audiences — Stein as editor of *Contexts* magazine and as a blogger and op-ed writer, Carr as an author of general interest books, and as a frequent commentator in media ranging from *The New York Times* to popular health magazines. Women’s and Gender Studies professor Brittney Cooper is a well-known blogger and commentator for *Salon*, *Ebony*, *MSNBC*, and other media outlets. Bloustein School professor and public scholar Jocelyn Crowley is at the forefront in establishing a Rutgers chapter of [Scholars Strategy Network](#), an organization that helps researchers to communicate their work to policy makers and the media. David Greenberg, History and Journalism & Media Studies, is the author of a number of award-winning books, and has written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Atlantic Monthly*, among many other publications. Deepa Kumar, Media Studies, is an active and

widely-followed blogger and “Tweeter.” Historian Jackson Lears and American Studies professor Michael Rockland have contributed op-eds to the *New York Times*, *The Nation* and other influential publications. Angelique Haugeraud is a leader in the “public anthropology” movement and is editor-in-chief of the scholarly journal *American Ethnologist*; she has also shared her research findings via documentary films and other media. Historian Virginia Yans has produced a prize-winning documentary PBS Special and has served as a consulting historian for major national history museums. Rutgers University Press editor-in-chief Leslie Mitchener and director Marlie Wasserman have decades of experience helping academic book authors to share their ideas with lively and engaging prose. We have also reached out to one representative from Rutgers’ Media Relations, who responded enthusiastically that he and his colleagues could play a vital role in media training and further strengthening their role as liaison between Rutgers faculty and the major media.

Drawing on our collective experiences, we propose the following components of PEP (Public Engagement Project):

1) Skills-training for Rutgers social science and humanities graduate students and faculty who wish to write for broader audiences (blogging, op-eds, magazine articles, general interest books), to share their work on TV and radio, or communicate directly with policy makers. We will cast a broad net, recruiting participants from SAS, Bloustein, SEBS, Social Work, SCI, the School of Education, and other units actively engaged in studying cutting-edge social and political issues. We will rely on both teams of professional media trainers, and members of the Rutgers community with relevant expertise (including the authors of this proposal). For example, professional consultants from the OpEd Project (<http://www.theopedproject.org/>) conduct workshops to help academics write and place in high-visibility publications their editorials, while IQ Solutions (<http://www.iqsolutions.com/>) provides media training workshop to academics. We will also elicit the participation of area journalists, such as those at New Jersey Public Radio, with which we already have contacts. Editors from Rutgers University Press (M. Wasserman and L. Mitchener) will also be instrumental in helping book writers to communicate with a general or “cross-over” audience. Jocelyn Crowley will serve as the liaison who helps to bring members of the Rutgers community into the Scholars Strategy Network, also leading sessions on ways for scholars to communicate with policy makers.

Because the acquisition of such skills is not part of graduate training or the culture of our academic disciplines, universities have started to form initiatives to address this need. Our model is CUNY’s JustPublics, which organizes a “media camp” that organizes skills-building workshops for area faculty at the CUNY School of Journalism <https://justpublics365.commons.gc.cuny.edu/mediacamp/>. We have good reason to believe that foundations such as the Doris Duke, Geraldine R. Dodge, and Ford may be interested in funding such a project at Rutgers in the future. The first two foundations have commitments to enhance public knowledge and participation, particularly in New Jersey, while Ford provides funding for Just Publics at CUNY.

2) An online magazine of popular social sciences and humanities (working title: *Public Engagement*) that would involve faculty and graduate students at Rutgers but would be open to the participation of others. *Discover Society* in the UK <http://www.discoversociety.org/> and *PublicBooks* at NYU: <http://www.publicbooks.org/> are models, as is *The Society Pages* <http://thesocietypages.org/>, a nationally known digital space based at the University of Minnesota, which is basically a blog. What we propose is a more formal, edited site that would draw from among Rutgers faculty, but be open to social

scientists and scholars of the humanities nationally and internationally. More and more intellectual exchanges are taking place in the digital sphere, but there is no social science publication of this sort in this country, one that occupies an intermediate space between blogs and print publications. This quarterly magazine would initially be funded primarily by Rutgers but would ultimately become self-funded by a consortium of university presses, and by other foundation support.

This e-magazine would provide an impetus for sociologists, political scientists, economics, anthropologists, historians, areas studies scholars, psychologists, and others to engage with each other's ideas, and offer a forum for discussing their work. It would incubate and disseminate a hybrid scholarly-journalistic style that would translate important university-based work more broadly. It would extend the work of *Contexts* magazine, published by the American Sociological Association, which has been edited at Rutgers for the past three years. The e-format, an intermediate space between a journal and blog, would enable us to be more nimble, timely, and broadly circulated than *Contexts*. We would develop a relationship with Rutgers University Press, and other university presses, which could incubate book ideas on the site, and publicize newly published books. RU Press belongs to the Association of American University Presses (AAUP), an association of university presses. If PEP receives funding, RU Press director Marlie Wasserman will contact the AAUP executive director, Peter Berkerey, to ask for support and to potentially host the site. The AAUP is committed to the same issues motivating the PEP project -- visibility for high-quality scholarly work, thus this partnership is very viable.

Our proposed PEP coheres with and will play an essential role in achieving at least two core missions of the strategic plan. First, the PEP project will *enhance the public prominence* of Rutgers. Many Rutgers faculty in the social sciences and humanities are world-class scholars; sharing their ideas with a larger public will enhance our University's visibility and prestige. Second, our efforts to encourage scholars to communicate with both academic audiences and the lay public will be an essential step toward sustaining a *vision of "tomorrow's university."* We believe that universities are and will no longer be isolated "ivory towers" but instead are key players in national and international conversations about social issues and public policies – a conversation enhanced by the flourishing of digital and social media.

**Proposed Budget:**

*Year 1 (2014-15): Initial phase of project will focus on media skills training workshops while generating interest in larger initiative.*

Media training for Rutgers scholars on such topics as writing op-eds, writing general interest books, and using social media. **A calendar-year project coordinator** will be responsible for inviting speakers, reserving rooms, recruiting participants, preparing materials for attendees, establishing project website, publicizing initiative. 12 hours/week at \$25/hour per 52 weeks.  
**\$15,600**

Honoraria and travel for five four-hour training sessions. \$2,500 honoraria per instructor; \$1,000 travel expenses; 5 persons @ \$3,500 =

Associated workshop costs (refreshments, etc.) **\$17,500**  
**\$500**  
**YEAR 1 SUBTOTAL \$33,600**

*Year 2 (2015-16): Continuation of media skills training; launch of Public Engagement e-magazine*

Media training for Rutgers scholars: honoraria for outside consultants 5 consultants @ \$2,500 honoraria per instructor plus associated costs (travel, refreshments, publicity).  
**\$17,500**

Media skills training: graduate student coordinator 12 hours/week at \$25/hour per 52 weeks.  
**\$15,600**

Web editor: (200 hours @ \$75/hour approx. start-up costs for designing website for *Public Engagement* e-magazine)

**\$15,000/CY**

Part-time managing editor for quarterly e-magazine— solicit articles, copyedit, choose images, upload content, publicize using social media. 20 hours a week @ \$25/hour  
**\$26,000/CY**

**YEAR 2 SUBTOTAL \$74,100**

<b>TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED \$107,700</b>
---