



LEAP Social
Enterprise, Inc.



IMPACT REPORT



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago

The Future of Public Schools and the Need for Reconstruction and Transformation:

My academic career has been dedicated to researching, building, designing, and experimenting with new modalities for schools of excellence for poor children. The dissatisfaction with traditional public schools among underprivileged families is a pressing issue that demands our immediate attention. The failure of traditional urban public and rural schools to provide an equitable and efficient education for children is a crisis that is escalating, with alarming numbers of families opting out of the public school system.



Families of color cite many reasons for this exodus:

- Curriculum that doesn't reflect their experiences, histories, or cultures
- Biased school discipline policies and practices
- Low grades and test scores
- Toxic relationships with educators
- Bullying and tracking, course assignments, and special education designations that are racially biased and, at times, not appropriate.

We decided two years ago to upscale the LEAP Academy schools of excellence in Puerto Rico because we knew that parents were very dissatisfied with what was happening in traditional public schools on the island. As a result of the global pandemic, public schools are also facing a mass exodus of educators. The reasons for this include low pay (leading many educators to need second and third jobs to support themselves and their families), endless hours, disrespect, lack of safety, frustrations with standardization, unfair evaluation systems, old and deteriorating buildings without air conditioning, and a lack of autonomy. This has led to a decline in pursuing education as a career.

Our initiative: Expanded Puerto Rico is intentionally redesigning the public school system in ways that are aligned with equity and justice; that consider the best research about what children need physically, emotionally, and psychologically; and that deliver the skills and knowledge they will need to deal with the effects of

climate change, polarization, and globalization. We want these schools to be in alignment with universities and industry.

We need to reorganize the teaching profession, education, student schedules, and school buildings. We are proposing that new school buildings be flexible. Schools should be hubs for energy-resilient, vibrant, dynamic meeting places and emergency shelters. We will feature what is today called "flexible seating." Schools will look more and more like community spaces. Our schools will feature maker and engineering

spaces so students can use their hands and learn valuable skills.

The schools of the future must integrate cutting-edge technologies such as XR (extended reality), encompassing virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR). These advancements redefine the interfaces between humans and computers, enhancing the learning experience. Our minority children need to be part of this technological evolution. Each student will have an AR voice-controlled device and the 2030 version of personal computing devices to engage fully with our maker spaces and engineering labs. Experts are predicting that by 2030, adaptive learning software will replace direct instruction. Adaptive learning software is computer software that uses AI to move students up and down through a grade level's content based on student performance on assessment questions. Most research suggests that adaptive learning is faster and more efficient than even the best teachers.

The teacher of the future is a motivator, facilitator of knowledge, coach, curriculum designer, and mentor to the students. With adaptive learning software accelerating academic instruction, the future will allow schools to condense pure academic work to three hours per day, using the other three a day to teach life skills or let students explore personal interest projects. This means the teacher's role as a motivator is one of the most important advancements in the future of education.

There is an exciting future ahead of us, and with the right strategies and focus, we can ensure every student has a pathway to success.

LEAP SOCIAL ENTERPRISE'S MISSION

Leading Transformative Change Through the Replication and Expansion of Quality Schools

The LEAP Social Enterprise, Inc. (LSE) is a non-profit organization, created as a vehicle to upscale and expand the successful LEAP Education model that originated in Camden, New Jersey under the leadership of Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago. Operating as a Charter Management Organization (CMO), the LEAP Social Enterprise provides leadership, oversight, and management for new school development and improvement in communities where children and families are underserved by poor educational options and where new schools are strategically positioned as anchors for broad community development efforts.

The new schools build on the successful school model of the LEAP Academy University Charter School, a comprehensive school in Camden City, New Jersey that has operated for the last 30 years. The flagship LEAP Academy in New Jersey has been very successful in impacting the educational attainment of African American and Latino children as measured by the 100% graduation rate of all its 18 high school graduating classes since 2005. The rate of college retention and graduation is approximately 90% with hundreds of students entering successful careers.

As a CMO, the LEAP Social Enterprise is forging a new pathway in Puerto Rico, focusing on geographical territory for expansion and replication. Puerto Rico has sustained tremendous challenges that impact directly in the educational outcomes for children. The nature of Puerto Rico's unitarian system of public school governance makes innovation and targeted instruction almost impossible and the charter schools, called Alianza Schools in Puerto Rico, are meeting the challenges by offering an alternative. The nature of non-profit CMOs is promising, particularly in challenging locations where the need for school innovation and improvement is imperative for the future of the children. LEAP Social Enterprise is the first official CMO working

The LEAP Social Enterprise, Inc. was created to accomplish six main goals:

1. Manage the innovation, evaluation, and overall growth of the LEAP school model from local (Camden, New Jersey) to global.
2. Codify innovative practices generated through the LEAP schools to upscale a replicable model for expansion and growth.
3. Lead and manage efforts for expansion and replication in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other international sites.
4. Provide overall management of operations and incubation of new schools.
5. Develop and implement strategies geared at curriculum development and innovation, teacher and school leaders training and development, parent engagement and development, community based planning and organizing, design communities of practice in each site, and real estate development and school site design.
6. Fundraise and develop a funding base to support innovation and sustainability.

LEAP Grows in Puerto Rico



to accelerate schools by amplifying quality and sustainability. Its portfolio of schools is grounded in three organizational imperatives:

- **QUALITY** by developing schools around a common brand and educational model, which allows for the creation of a performance—driven system that meets the needs of its customers—parents and children. By using a common brand, the LSE is able to institutionalize common systems that support all the schools on its network through talent acquisition, common instructional and assessment strategies, and ongoing professional development for teachers and school leaders.
- **SCALE** by leveraging the LSE’s expertise and resources across multiple schools, which in turn results in more schools that can meet community’s demand for quality school options. By focusing on creating networks of

schools within a target area, the LSE CMO is in the best position to demonstrate high student achievement at scale, which results in a greater impact on the surrounding communities and the entire Island of Puerto Rico.

- **SUSTAINABILITY** by tapping on external start-up funding, cultivation of innovation and a financial model that ensures the local per pupil follows the students they serve, while supplementing financial and other resources through private investment, creative financing, and resource sharing.

The LEAP Social Enterprise is in route to becoming the largest CMO operating in Puerto Rico with five flagship schools. Our expansion plan includes 10 additional schools across the island. Federal grants through the Charter School Program at the US Department of Education have raised over \$72 million to support its expansion.

LEAP MODEL

Building on a Proven Model—The LEAP Academy, a Blueprint for School Development and Equity



The LEAP Social Enterprise is committed to developing a network of great schools in Puerto Rico. Its approach and model have been perfected through the work of successfully implementing the LEAP Academy University Charter School in Camden, New Jersey. The LEAP model emphasizes the core elements of academic excellence, community development, stakeholder engagement, and governance that promotes entrepreneurial leadership in schools as well as equity, access, and community development.

The first salient design element of the LEAP Model is that the schools are built on the premise that building pipelines to support children from infancy through college and career is fundamental for its success. The LEAP pipeline links early childhood education with college access as the school provides the continuum of academic, social, and emotional support to lift children and families from poverty and set them on a pathway to prosperity and academic success. This pipeline is strengthened through long-term partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education and the growing network of institutional partners and parents.


Rutgers-ELRA


LEAP Lower Elementary


LEAP Upper Elementary


STEM


STEAM


Early College


College and Career

Birth–
Preschool

K–3

4–6

7–8

9–11

12

13–18



Organizational Factors

Entrepreneurial Governance
Sustainable Educational Pipelines
Accountability Systems for Results
Evidence-based Research Practices
Ethics, Equity & Transparency



Stakeholder/Alliance Factors

Parental Engagement
Multy Sectional Partnership
Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education and Industry
Workforce Development



Student Factors

STEM/STEAM Curriculum
Early College
Careers/ College Preparedness
Socio-Emotional Learning
Extended learning time
Data-driven instruction



Teacher & Staff Development Factors

Performance Based Compensation
Professional Development & Capacity Building
Culture of Excellence

Second, LEAP’s academic focus is centered on college preparation and the development of global citizens. This is facilitated by an opportunity-based curriculum that focuses on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), college preparedness, and achievement.

Third, LEAP has a focus on community building that is fundamental to sustaining the LEAP model and is anchored by five practices: (1) Schools aligned to community development efforts to improve local conditions; (2) Parental engagement and community ownership at the core of the school’s sustainability; (3) Schools as the best nexuses for community engagement; (4) Schools as service hubs and places for human capital development; and, (5) Schools as contributors to the overall local economic development as real estate developers and hubs for innovation.

Fourth, LEAP is committed to the integration of multiple factors that together make the schoolwork work well and be sustained, as portrayed on the diagram on the left. When organizational, student, teacher, and stakeholder factors combine seamlessly to support children, youth, and families, the school’s goals for excellence, equity, and achievement are reached.



STRATEGIC PLAN: PILLARS FOR EXPANSION IN PUERTO RICO

EMPOWERING FUTURES:

A DYNAMIC STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION IN PUERTO RICO

In the pursuit of a brighter future for Puerto Rico, our strategic plan for expansion aims to foster innovation, compassion, and global citizenship. Through the establishment of four approved schools and strategic partnerships, we envision a holistic approach to education that caters to the diverse needs of our communities. Let's delve into the five strategic pillars that will shape our priorities over the next five years.

STRATEGIC PILLAR #1:

EXPANSION OF INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Our commitment to growth extends beyond mere numbers, focusing on developing schools and programs that truly meet the needs of families and students. By forging collaborations with mayors, universities, and industry leaders, we seek to align our educational vision with the evolving needs of society. For our students we emphasize early college, college access, and internship programs. Hand-in-hand, we also strive to create nontraditional education opportunities for parents and staff through professional development.

2024 SCHOOLS : LEVERAGING EXPANSION

- **STEAM + Arts of Carolina (K-8):** Nurturing creativity and critical thinking from an early age, this school will offer a comprehensive STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) curriculum.

- **STEAM + Medical Arts of Carolina (9-12 early college with UAGM):** Partnering with the Universidad Ana G. Méndez (UAGM), this early college program will prepare high school students for careers in the medical field.
- **STEAM + Sports Science of Carolina (9-12 early college with University of Carolina):** In collaboration with the University of Carolina, this early college program focuses on Sports Science, blending academics with practical experiences for aspiring athletes.
- **STEM School of Bayamon:** the Bayamon STEM School will serve as a hub for technological innovation and academic excellence.

STRATEGIC PILLAR #2:

TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT SUCCESS

We are dedicated to providing unique experiences that foster academic excellence, social and emotional readiness, and a foundation for future success. Through collaboration with local and domestic entities, we intend to build a strong academic and workplace readiness foundation. Empowering communities and students to achieve holistic wellness skills, we seek to expand on college and career readiness opportunities.

STRATEGIC PILLAR #3:

RESILIENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL HUBS

We envision our schools not just as places of learning but as resilient community hubs.





These hubs will serve multifaceted roles, acting as emergency and rescue sites, centers for workforce development, and professional development. Community engagement is at the core of our approach, and we incorporate the community in the design and planning of new schools and hubs. By fostering a sense of ownership and belonging, we aim to drive retention, enrollment, and recruitment, and to create partnerships with local industries for workforce development opportunities.

To further this vision, we plan to expand and grow the Parent Institute, empowering them as agents for community transformation, advocacy, and policy change. Additionally, we recognize the importance of developing infrastructure to support all our new schools' programs, staff needs, and families. This includes investing in resources and facilities conducive to community engagement and growth.

Furthermore, we are committed to building collaborative agreements with local organizations to bolster emergency efforts. By forging alliances with these entities, we can better respond to crises and serve as reliable pillars of support within our communities. Through these concerted efforts, we can solidify our schools as resilient hubs that not only educate but also uplift and empower the communities they serve.

STRATEGIC PILLAR #4: HOLISTIC ENVIRONMENTS AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Our commitment to holistic development includes creating public spaces that cater to the diverse needs of students, families, staff, and stakeholders. These spaces will serve as centers for wellness, talent cultivation, and community leadership opportunities. By fostering spaces for applied research, community mapping, planning, and evaluation design, we plan to build a robust foundation for community and economic development. In line with this commitment,



we will prioritize securing space for family wellness initiatives, enhancing the well-being of both students and their families. By providing such spaces, we aim to strengthen the student’s sense of belonging within the school community.

Moreover, we recognize the importance of recruiting and cultivating talent from universities, offering internships and practicum opportunities to enhance career readiness. This initiative not only benefits students but also enriches our workforce with fresh perspectives and expertise. Through this we aim to build capacity for student, staff, and community leadership opportunities, empowering individuals to take on active roles within their communities. To foster creativity and innovation, we plan to establish fab labs and maker spaces accessible to students, faculty, and the wider community.

We see the renewal of these spaces as opportunity to transform disregarded and unappreciated buildings into dynamic hubs for collaboration and growth. Through these initiatives, we aim to create holistic environments that support the well-being and development of all stakeholders while contributing to the broader prosperity of our communities.

**STRATEGIC PILLAR #5:
SECURE FISCAL, OPERATIONAL, AND ACADEMIC
SUSTAINABILITY**

To ensure the sustainability of our mission, we prioritize securing fiscal, operational, and academic sustainability. This entails engaging federal, state, and local stakeholders to strengthen our governance profile. Additionally, we seek to recruit and attract leadership talent capable of elevating our organization.

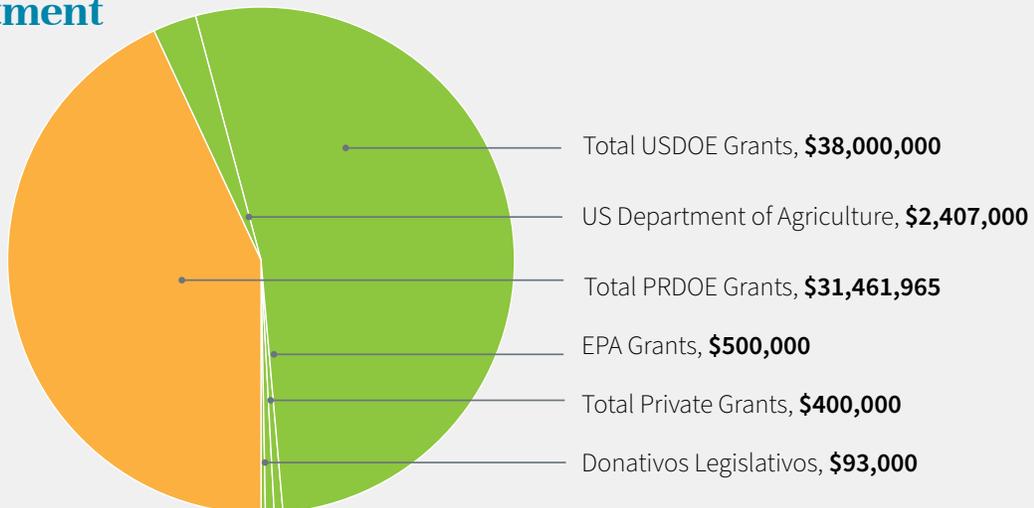


Furthermore, we will focus on raising brand awareness through a comprehensive communications strategy. This includes leveraging annual fundraising events as part of a capital fundraising campaign to increase visibility and support. We are committed to acquiring new recurring donors and cultivating long-term relationships with them.

Our goal is to increase the average recurring donation yearly, double our donor base in size and increase the average one-time gift size on a yearly basis to ensure sustainable financial growth. Additionally, we aim to grow the number of gifts received per communication channel, maximizing our outreach and engagement with supporters.

This dynamic strategic plan is not just a roadmap for expansion but a commitment to empower futures. With concrete details on four approved schools and a comprehensive approach to community engagement, resilience, and sustainability, we are poised to reshape Puerto Rico’s educational landscape, leaving an indelible mark of growth, compassion, and academic excellence.

Total Investment



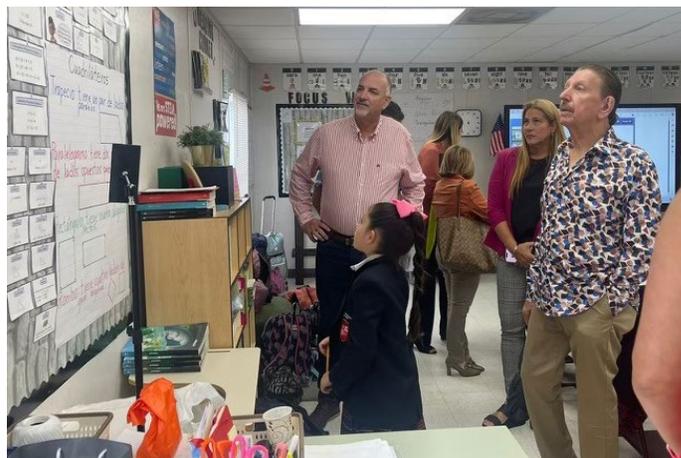
USDOE: U.S. Department of Education
PRDOE: Puerto Rico Department of Education
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

\$78.86 Million

USDOE Awards CMO \$47 Million to Support Expansion and Replication Efforts in Puerto Rico

In March 2024, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) announced the award of \$22 million to support the LEAP Social Enterprise's effort for expansion and replication in Puerto Rico. This award increases the amount of grant support for the LSE's expansion strategy to \$30 million and builds on an expansion grant received in 2023, a Charter Developer grant received in 2021 and special ESSER appropriation for pre-construction activities for its new school building in Sabana Llana.

The latest grant is named LEAP Grows Puerto Rico project and it builds on the successful opening and operation of the largest self-standing charter school in Puerto Rico—the LEAP STEAM +E Academy of San Juan, serving 720 students in grades K-11 and growing to 780 students through an approved grade phase-in strategy that extends the academic offering to 12th grade. This latest expansion strategy compliments the ongoing efforts through Expanded Puerto Rico which is already approved to open three additional schools across Puerto Rico. The first schools are earmarked to open in August 2024 in Carolina. These will have three LEAP schools that will serve students in K-12, with a K-8 STEAM + Arts, and two specialized high schools, one with a focus on Medical Sciences and one with a focus on Sports Sciences.



Mayor of Trujillo Alto, Pedro A. Rodríguez visiting LEAP

These federal funds bring the LSE CMOS's capacity to a wider reach by expanding its geographic footprint to an additional 10 locations, while providing needed regional staff to sustain daily operations in the new communities. Communities to be impacted include Trujillo Alto, Ponce, Mayaguez, Isabela, Sabana Grande, Dorado, Fajardo, Guayama, Utuado, and Humacao. Within the next 10 years we project our expansion to include 50 schools on the island.



\$400,000

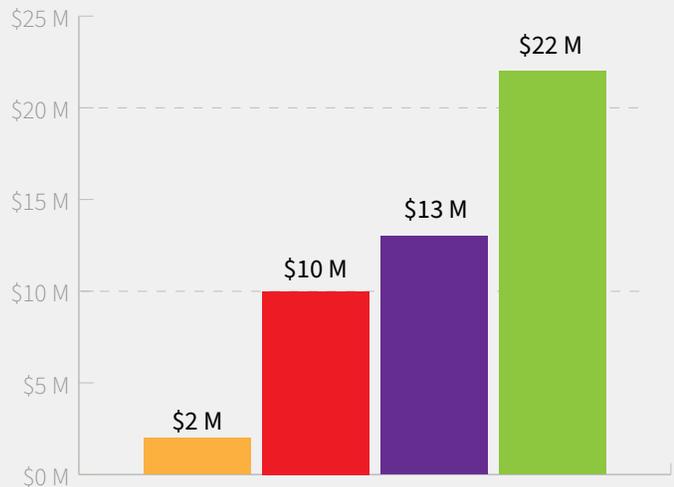
Private Grants Raised

\$750 Million

Public Grants Raised

Increase in USDOE Grants

USDOE-Developer Grant USDOE-CMO Expansion Grant
USDOE - ESSER Fund USDOE - CMO Growing Grant



\$47 Million

Total Grants from USDOE

Grant support also offers the opportunity for creating and cultivating human capital for the schools in areas of teacher development, school leadership coaching, higher education partnership for Early College and college access, parent training, community development, and system wide improvements in terms of data, technology, facilities development and management systems.

The impetus for the advancement of the LSE CMO network is anchored on broad community development spearheaded by local residents and local leadership in communities plagued by high levels of poverty, decay/abandonment, high rates of crime and violence, and inexcusable rates of under-education. The development of the LEAP schools is capitalizing on the genuine desire of its residents to provide children and youth with quality education options that can be life changing and alter the future trajectory of entire neighborhoods. One aspect that is notable on this plan for expansion is that all schools are being developed in partnership with local mayors. This is an important strategy to ensure that there is local ownership for the schools, that the schools are part of a municipal strategy for improving educational options for its residents, that the schools become part of the larger economic development strategy for the city, and that there are opportunities for shared resources between the city and the charter school.

The CMO's Theory of Action is anchored on the following concepts:

- **Benefits:** Opportunities for collaboration across schools and avoiding the challenges faced by stand-alone charter schools; economies of scale
- **Approach:** Replication of successful school models; ability to expand rapidly; increased market share
- **Outcomes:** Greater educational opportunities for more students; systemic change as regular schools in a public education system must compete to attract students; greater opportunities for collaboration and shared services; greater chances to attract the private sector, higher education, and philanthropies

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

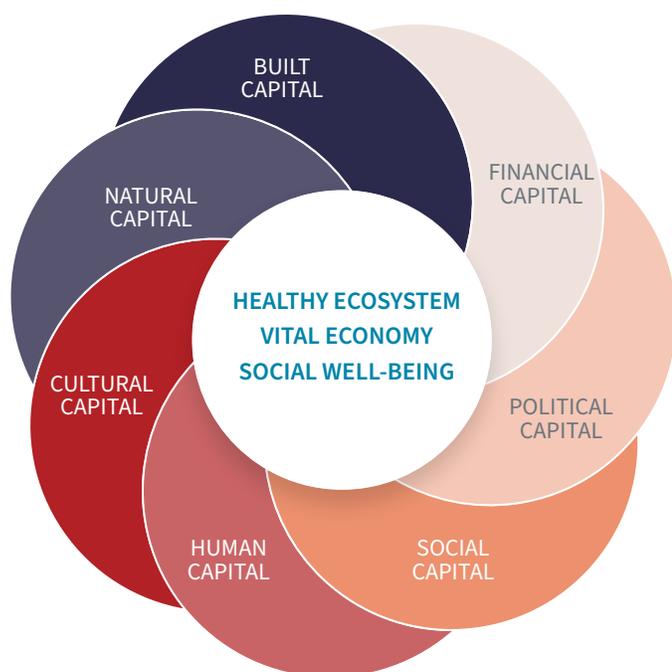




Asset Mapping

On October 18-21, 2023, Dr. Bonilla-Santiago led a group of doctoral students from her course, *Practicum on Sustainable Community Development* from Rutgers University, on a fact-finding mission in Puerto Rico to help get a clearer sense of the resources currently available and the tools still needed to continue the progression and advancement of the LEAP STEAM+E Academy schools on the island. This exercise, known as asset mapping, targeted neighborhoods including Parcelas Falu in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The information gathered during this trip will assist in the preparation of the new Community Development LEAP STEAM+ E HUB, which is being built in this area. The input from the community in asset building is crucial for developing this new project.

The practical goal of asset mapping is to document a community's existing resources, incorporating these strengths



“Asset Mapping is not just another list of resources. It is a strategy to identify assets that are available from within the community. More importantly, it’s a process for connecting and engaging the community and unlocking the talents of people to help solve problems and build a better community.”

Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, *Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor*

into community development work. The process of asset mapping can include identifying the institutions, individuals, and citizen associations existing within communities that serve as positive resources. The team will be utilizing the resources deemed as the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) as a tool for intervention.

Capital, in the context of the CCF, represents a range of resources found within the community that can be invested in to grow other capitals and benefit the community (This framework was developed by Cornelia and Jan Flora and is explored in their book, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*, which was updated in 2013).

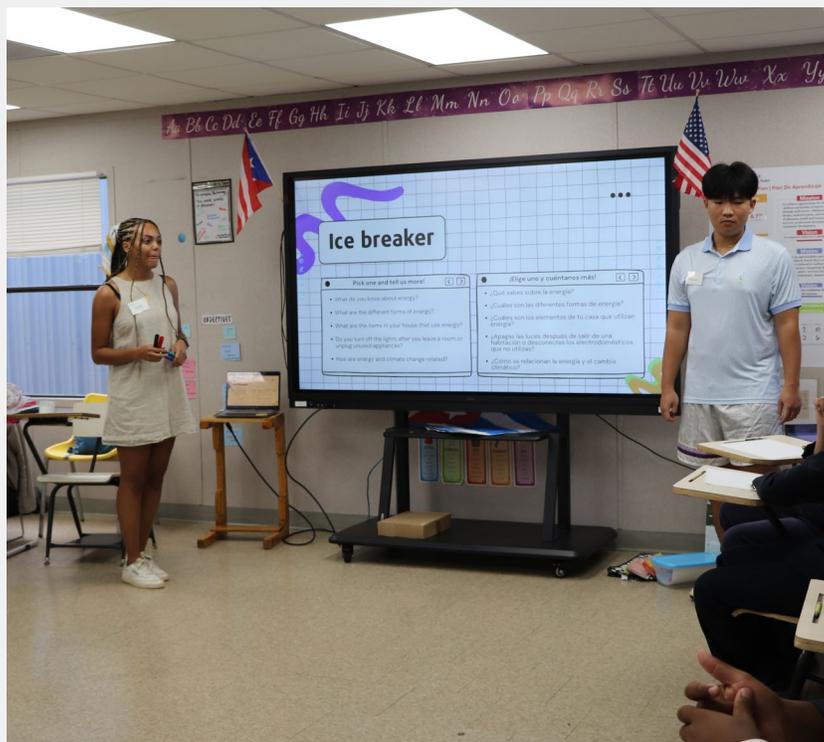
While on their trip to Puerto Rico, the doctoral students used two types of methodologies to complete their fact-finding mission. The first was a community walking asset assessment tool and the second was convening focus groups and appreciative inquiry with community ambassadors, parents, stakeholders, and teachers.

The information collected by the students will be developed into projects, the information and of which will be shared with the community members, architects, and ambassadors. The information will then be incorporated into the Community Development LEAP STEAM +E Hub Project.

Case Studies Developed by Doctoral and Graduate Students

Melissa Thompson and John Paul Rosewater

completed a case study on “Navigating barriers and harnessing assets for nutrition security in Puerto Rico.” This case study sought to answer the following questions: What are the existing barriers to addressing nutrition security in Puerto Rico? What community assets exist in Puerto Rico that could be leveraged to address and improve nutrition security, and what potential strategies or development areas could be effective in overcoming the identified barriers? What is the current state of nutrition security in Puerto Rico, considering available data and observed trends within the community? Findings indicate that Puerto Rico currently depends on the U.S. for nearly every aspect of nutrition security and that the U.S. often fails to deliver relevant services. Puerto Rico has no meaningful way to engage with the U.S. political system and must solve its problems on its own. Communities have durable social capital networks internally but there is little collaboration between communities. Daily life in Puerto Rico is not conducive to nutrition security, as people lack the time, money, and knowledge to provide for themselves in a healthy manner.



Nelson Zhong and Oriana Holmes-Price

focused their case study on “Puerto Rico Energy and Colonialism” with an emphasis on gaining a better understanding of Puerto Rico’s energy needs and the ways in which residents can be empowered to lead PR’s clean energy future. Students sought to answer the following question: How do residents’ lived experiences and community assets illuminate the local impacts of energy colonialism in Puerto Rico?. Students on the study introduced two key concepts: energy oppression and energy consciousness. They define individuals lived experiences of energy colonialism as examples of energy oppression. They concluded that by existing in a constant state energy oppression, residents must find ways to adapt to, mitigate, and resolve their energy problems.

Kandance Diedrick, Xiao Liang and Prakash

Kandel focused on “More than Just a School: an education hub as a capacity-building tool in community development: An exploratory case study in Parcelas Falú, San Juan, Puerto Rico”. This case study sought to answer the following questions: What are the barriers to quality education in Parcelas Falú, Puerto Rico? What forms of community capital are currently available in Parcelas Falú, Puerto Rico? What assets are needed to build capacity toward better education in Parcelas Falú, Puerto Rico? Overall study findings suggest that a comprehensive approach focused on community capacity building is needed to rebuild a sustainable education system in Parcelas Falú, San Juan. As Parcelas Falú seeks to rebuild and advance, a nuanced investigation into the role of educational institutions becomes crucial for fostering resilient, empowered communities and steering the area toward a more prosperous future.



James McCahill and Aditya Gahlot

focused on “Housing Issues and Assets in Parcelas Falú Sabana Llana, Puerto Rico.” This is the first study that explores housing issues and community assets in Parcelas Falú. Parcelas Falú is a low-income neighborhood in Puerto Rico, in which the majority of the population can barely afford housing. In addition, residents face crime and insecurity in the neighborhood. Therefore, the case study sought to answer the following questions: What are the housing issues related to safety, affordability, and accessibility within Parcelas Falú Community in Puerto Rico? What assets exist in the Parcelas Falú community that influence or help mitigate these issues related to housing?” To do so, the research team employs community asset mappings and focus groups with residents of the neighborhood. Three main themes that emerged from this case study as primary concerns of residents: (1) safety (gun violence, presence of drugs, hurricanes); (2) infrastructure (housing quality, broken appliances, limited cooling, accessibility); and (3) affordability and accessibility issues (limited information, bureaucratic hurdles, short term rentals, home ownership).

Community of Practice and Research in Puerto Rico







Extending the Academy Reach for Puerto Rico

As pioneered by the LEAP Academy University Charter school a true cradle-to-career pathway is being carved for the Puerto Rican students who attend the LEAP STEAM+E Academies. Through the Rutgers Community Leadership Center (CLC), efforts are being made to develop a strategy to recruit Puerto Rico LEAP graduates to attend Rutgers University. This is contributing directly to Rutgers-Camden's efforts for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, as well as amplifying the work in cultivating first-generation students.

Dr. Santiago's ongoing strategy aims to bring the graduates from Puerto Rico closer to Rutgers-Camden. Among the support opportunities that have been made available to students, the Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla Santiago Scholars Program contributes to the Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund at Rutgers. This sets the foundation for offering scholarships to graduates of the school to attend college in New Jersey at Rutgers University--Camden.

The benefit is mutual, as an ongoing effort is being made to foster the exchange of ideas between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland. Research agendas are being developed at universities in Puerto Rico as well as with research centers on the mainland. Areas of research interest include health, law, corruption, economic development, environmental justice, and education. Funding opportunities are being pursued on the federal level. By welcoming a myriad of academic perspectives, all academic institutions involved will benefit from the creation of new ideas, the integration of different cultural viewpoints, and the contextual application of new approaches to other territories outside the United States as we continue to enhance our global reach.

The Program's Commitment to Parents and the Surrounding Community

1. We recognize that all parents, regardless of their income, level of education, or cultural background, want to participate in their children's education and want the best for their children.
2. We link family and community engagement efforts to student learning.
3. We create initiatives that support families to guide their children's learning from kindergarten to high school.
4. We are committed to building the capacity of school staff to work with families.
5. We work with families to cultivate relationships based on trust and respect.
6. We believe in collaboration with families.
7. Our school serves as a community hub to serve all families and community members.

This initiative holds personal significance for Dr. Bonilla-Santiago having been born in Puerto Rico, where people of the Island hold a special place in her heart. When Dr. Bonilla-Santiago developed and launched the LEAP Academy in 1997, her hope was to expand the reach of the program beyond the borders of Camden, New Jersey. She and her team are committed to establishing systems that support children both locally and within developing countries.

Our Flagship School: LEAP STEAM + E Academy San Juan in Action

The LEAP STEAM + E Academy of San Juan is the largest Alianza School in Puerto Rico, serving 660 students in grades K-10 and expanding to 780 when its student cohorts reach 12th grade.

Rooted in a mission to empower the children and families of Sabana Llana, the academy pioneers collaborative approaches to education, entrepreneurship, and career readiness. At LEAP, students embark on a journey of discovery, guided by a multifaceted curriculum that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, and entrepreneurship (STEAM + E). Through hands-on learning experiences and project-based initiatives, students not only excel academically but also develop essential skills for the future workforce.

LEAP STEAM + E Academy features many innovative programs designed to foster creativity, critical thinking, and social responsibility. These unique programs include:

- Extended Day and Year to ensure that students are taking advantage of every opportunity to learn and prepare. School opens at 7:00 am and is serving student through 6:00 pm every day.
- Small Classroom sizes (20 students per classroom) to ensure that students are given individualized attention and that instructional routines better organized.



Visit from Jose Luis Dalmua, President of the Senate of Puerto Rico

- A focus on entrepreneurship through an integrated curriculum that capitalizes on project based learning and access to a Fabrication Lab so students can apply skills and learn through invention and experimentation.
- Every student receives a computer to use at the school and at home when engaging in virtual learning opportunities.
- LEAP STEAM + E students participate in Early College beginning in grade 10 to ensure that they earned dual college credits and graduate already ahead as they begin their college careers. Students are attending classes at Sagrado Corazon University, UPR Carolina, Ana G. Mendez University and Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.
- The school focuses on building solid and positive relationships with parents and community members and the school ensures that they have access to quality teachers and staff. Families have opportunities for learning through access to social and emotional services, training and job readiness.
- Teachers at LEAP STEAM are valued and supported and our school compensates our teachers at the highest salary in Puerto Rico with teachers making twice as much as other public school teachers in the Puerto Rico. This level of pay equity is matched by opportunities for professional development.



LEAP STEAM+E Academy of San Juan Staff

- Ongoing assessment and evaluation are in place to ensure high levels of accountability for all.
- Program for students to support their social and Emotional development.
- On Site food and nutrition program that serves breakfast and lunch, and snack every day.

An integrated catalyst for social change and economic development: The STEAM + E Academy integrates an educational pipeline that sustains students from K through 12th. Our academic and visionary focus for the school emphasizes the need to foster fundamental initiatives such as bilingual instruction and educational methods based on STEM and entrepreneurship.

Together, we are setting in motion a collective education process guided by a common vision of achievement and success for the children in Sabana Llana that is grounded on the belief that schools are the best community settings for providing children with the necessary academic, social, and emotional support for them to thrive and be prepared to meet the challenges of the future. This belief also encompasses the entire community with the school becoming the nexus for linking families and children to opportunities and an environment that also strives for improving the entire community.

It is an exhilarating and empowering experience to help bridge the academic gaps of our students. At LEAP STEAM + E Academy of San Juan, we serve 27 communities and have a total of 735 students, with 22% of them enrolled in the Special Education Program and 92.2% from low-income families. Hearing the success stories of our students is the fuel that drives us to replicate the LEAP model in other areas of Puerto Rico.

Sheila Y. Vélez Nieves, Ed.D.

Academic Director



Our faculty is highly committed to the educational transformation of our students. Aligned with the LEAP framework, the continuous monitoring of best practices within each classroom will reflect at the end of the school year the academic growth and proficiency of our students.

Dra. Madeline Vargas Landró

Chief Academic Officer



*LEAP STEAM + E of San Juan
2025 Graduating Class Visits
University of Puerto Rico.*

EARLY COLLEGE



Investing in College Preparation: Strategies for Early College Access and Readiness

At the core of LEAP schools is the purposeful and intentional effort to prepare students for college and careers from kindergarten through high school and beyond. LSE's commitment is simple yet profound—empower students with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of a college career and connect them to lifelong career options. The college preparedness approach for the LEAP schools concentrates on the following elements:

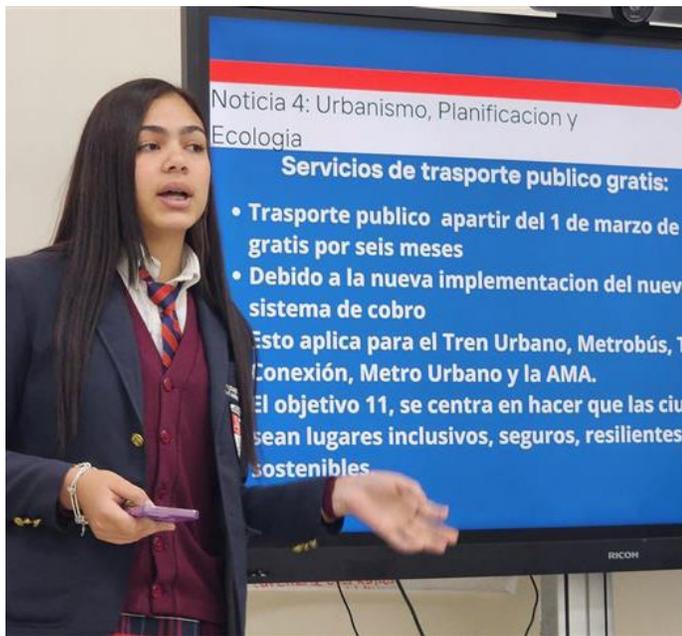
Early College for all students beginning in the 10th grade. Through this effort, LEAP high school students take college level courses at a partner higher education institution. Students take all of their courses through 12th grade at this institution. The courses are created following the guidelines of requirements for high school graduation and also include college level courses for which the students receive college credit. These courses are taught jointly by a university professor who partners with a high school teacher to deliver an exceptional academic experience while ensuring that every student is processing the information.

College Readiness is offered to the students through a variety of

programs and services. This prepares the student for academic work beyond high school. It can also provide them with credentials that will make them competitive applicants in the job market. The schools are offering a variety of opportunities through College Access Centers located on site. These include: exposure to enrichment programs, seminars and clinics addressing important skill development such as study skills, writing skills, public speaking, and time management.

Career Readiness through opportunities to first learn about the different career pathways and what it takes to successfully enter a career field, and exposure to careers through visits of actual industry settings; leveraging mentors to work with the students; accessing career inventories; embedding career pathways into the school curriculum; and collaborating with local industries to determine demand and develop pathways that would guarantee them successful jobs.

A strong curriculum from K-12 that embeds important thinking skills and strategies that enable students to learn, apply, and use knowledge and information to solve problems. Teachers



are trained to be able to address the important elements of problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision, and accuracy to ensure that students are getting the applied skills that are necessary for college and career success.

Excitement about learning is a critical element and one that integrates what happens in classrooms with other enrichment opportunities. The focus is on ensuring that students have the motivation, time, energy, and effort that are so critical to be successful.

Individualized Attention is a must as we apply differentiated approaches to support the academic work of students through tutoring, extended day, and summer programs. The commitment is to ensure that all students from an early age develop not only the academic foundations but also the critical skills of time management, study skills, test taking skills, note taking skills, strategic reading, collaborative learning, and technological proficiency that are crucial to be successful in college and career.

Transition Knowledge and Skills are taught to guarantee a smooth transition from high school to college and career.



The focus of this component includes knowing how to apply to college, exploring and choosing a career path, choosing a desired college that meets their career aspirations, securing financial aid, and learning how to advocate for themselves.

**Early College
University
Partnerships**



SAGRADO
Universidad del Sagrado Corazón



PARENTS INSTITUTE



ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES AS AMBASSADORS

At the heart of the LEAP mission lies the vital engagement of our parents. We are steadfast in our dedication to collaborate with all families, offering a diverse array of programs and opportunities. Our vision is to empower each parent with the means to actively participate in their children's education, fortify their familial bonds, integrate into the community, and positively shape both their children's futures and their own paths. Our suite of initiatives encompasses various avenues for parental involvement, spanning from volunteering within schools to enhancing educational and career prospects through college and job readiness initiatives. Additionally, we provide support services and facilitate connections to community resources, ensuring that parental voices resonate at every level within our institution. We take pride in acknowledging and commemorating the achievements and contributions of our families, recognizing them as the bedrock of our school and essential stewards of our mission's continuity and significance.

The Parents Institute works with the school in developing and providing programs that are geared at building the capacity and opportunity for parents. The aim is to invest in making parents effective participants in the overall educational development of their children. This investment, in turn, can translate into the enhanced academic achievement of their children. Our approach includes an emphasis on:

- Encouraging parents to be introspective about their strengths and areas of improvement in terms of effective parenting, collaboration, and leadership
- Parents are encouraged to consider what roles they can play to improve the school and the community
- Parents are trained to provide leadership for change that is beneficial to the school and the community
- Parents are prepared to think about future possibilities and expectations, for both their children and themselves



FOSTERING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SUSTAIN THE VISION FOR NEW SCHOOLS



Visit at LEAP STEAM+E Academy of San Juan from Senator Thomas Rivera Schatz

Currently the LEAP Social Enterprise model promotes partnerships with mayors from local municipalities, academia, and industries in order to develop sustainability for its Schools' Community Hubs. LEAP has two municipality cooperative partnerships in San Juan and Carolina, and more than three additional municipalities interested in entering in these partnerships (Bayamón, Ponce and Isabela), expecting more to come as part of LEAP's expansion through Puerto Rico.

Since 2020, LEAP shares a cooperative agreement with the Municipality of San Juan for the use of the space housing the school's temporary education modules, while the construction of the new community hub is completed. It also holds a cooperative agreement with the Municipality of Carolina which includes the use of the three most important schools in this municipality; the School of Fine Arts, The Duro's STEM School, and the Sport School which will now be home to the new Alianza Publics Schools LEAP STEM+Arts Academy of Carolina, LEAP STEM + Medical Science Academy of Carolina and LEAP STEM + Sport Science Academy of Carolina.



Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of State, Omar Marrero discussing LEAP expansion plans.

LEAP also holds a memorandum of understanding and cooperative agreements with local anchor institutions from programs such as LEAP STEM of Bayamón and all LEAP Schools' Early College Programs with higher education institutions such as University of Sagrado Corazón, the University of Puerto Rico, the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, and the Ana G. Méndez University Systems. LEAP is also supported by the Rutgers Community Leadership Center and LEAP Academy's University Charter School.

CAROLINA SCHOOLS

LEAP STEAM + Arts University School, LEAP STEAM + Sports Science University School, and LEAP STEAM + Medical Sciences

In terms of school development, the focus during the first year has been on the planning of 4 schools in Carolina and Bayamon, scheduled to open in August 2024. The process for planning addressed six main areas: 1) Securing local municipality support and developing a partnership with the Mayor's Office; 2) Conducting a needs assessment with community members and stakeholders to ensure that the school was customized to their needs and that ample local support was cultivated; 3) Developing a teaching and learning modality, and establishing a strategy for the school; 4) Preparing, submitting, and obtaining approval of a charter application to the Puerto Rico Department of Education, which has now been granted; 5) Developing the school's operational structure, including identification of facilities and implementation of a facilities plan to ensure that classrooms and the school environment are adequate; and 6) Recruiting and enrolling families and the selection of students through lotteries.

One important outcome of these efforts has been local partnership with the mayor providing three school facilities to house the schools and embedding the schools into his vision for local economic and community development. This decision led to a realignment of the school by splitting them up into three schools (each school was granted a charter) to serve K-8 through the STEAM



Dr. Gloria Bonilla Santiago and Jose Aponte Dalmau, Mayor of Carolina

Federal Investment through the CSP grant for Expansion:

\$9,519,193

Number of Schools to be developed:

3

Number of Students to be served over 5 years:

2,280

per year at full enrollment.

curriculum with an emphasis in the Arts; a 9-12 school with a focus on Medical Sciences; and a 9-12 school with a focus on Sports Science. Each high school will have an Early College component with students completing dual college credits. Three partnerships with local universities, Ana G. Mendez, UPR, and Polytechnical Institute have also been established.

Changing Public Discourse through an Information/Marketing Campaign:

Charter schools are a new school modality in Puerto Rico and as such, there is a need for educating people and public officials about the nature of our schools and their place in



LEAP STEAM +Arts University School of Carolina

improving public education choices and outcomes for an island that is in dire need of educational transformation and improvement. The intent is to change the narrative about our charter schools; the community needs to be informed that these schools are an excellent academic choice for families and children.

Cultivation and Strengthening the Capacity of Parents:

In our model, parents are fundamental for the development of the schools. Multiple community meetings, focus groups, and interactions were implemented and have continued to be at the core of the parental engagement component. A Parent Ambassador Training Institute was developed and implemented providing parents with an opportunity to develop leadership, self-efficacy, and advocacy skills. These parents are becoming ambassadors for the schools. As part of the parent engagement strategy, the project staff has been developing



LEAP STEAM + Medical Sciences of Carolina

the integrated LEAP model centers of excellence for family support.

Sustainability for Fundraising and Development:

A strategic plan of action for fundraising has been developed for charter sustainability and success with a focused strategy for fundraising through public and private sources. The cultivation process with local funders has been a core element in ensuring that there is philanthropic support for the schools. The search for additional local and federal government opportunities to support the schools continues as well.

Building Data and Technology Infrastructure for Accountability:

Accountability is at the core of the schools' safeguard for top performance. At the end of the day, outcomes and results validate the work in the application of data-driven instruction. Investments were made to secure various digital, educational, and operational

platforms to improve efficiency.

Academic Performance and Teaching and Learning:

Teaching and learning are fundamental to every operational and academic area of the program. Investments are being made to select staff and institute a professional development strategy for all staff and teachers to ensure that the school leadership has the best qualified and motivated team and that everyone is focusing on student learning. Efforts are being made to establish career pathways for staff to safeguard that they receive graduate-level opportunities to strengthen their work and that capacity is built for the CMO network. We are furthermore training teachers and staff in our model and best practices to foster academic success for the students. A longer school year and extended school day have been added to the programs to support students from learning loss.



LEAP STEAM + Sports Science University School of Carolina

SCHOLARSHIP

RUTGERS-CAMDEN Community Leadership Center

Rutgers Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund

The purpose of the Rutgers Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund is to encourage students who have shown academic excellence and leadership qualities to excel in college. Students at LEAP Academy University School are eligible to receive a future scholarship to attend Rutgers University. The program honors students who have achieved success academically and demonstrated positive leadership and character skills, particularly maintaining a 3.5 GPA and fewer than 4 unexcused absences per year. This unprecedented program makes it possible to receive an education at a tier-one university: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. With this scholarship, students earn a college education with a reduced financial cost. The scholarship contributes towards tuition expenses not covered by federal or state financial aid.



Disbursement by Rutgers Campuses 2005-2023



Total Disbursed: **Over 1 Million Dollars**
 Total Scholars Graduate from Rutgers: **132**



For 19 consecutive years **100% of LEAP Academy Seniors** have been accepted to colleges and universities throughout the country.

Highlights of LEAP Alumni



Sofia Bermudez

*Temple University Class of 2015, Higher Education Administration
Stockton University Class of 2011*

Sofia is the Director of Career Development at Stockton University. She passionately supports students in achieving their career goals. She fosters innovative ideas within the campus community to ensure equitable access to opportunities.



Francisco Maldonado

*NJ State Police Academy 153rd Class (2014)
Stockton Class of 2012*

Francisco, a State Trooper I stationed at the NJTP Moorestown Station, is part of the 153rd class of the New Jersey State Police. This class stands as a testament to diversity, education, and service. Notably, it holds the distinction of being the most racially diverse class in the State Police's history.



Bielka Gonzalez

Rutgers 2020

Bielka Gonzalez, a graduate of LEAP with the class of 2016, continued her educational journey at Rutgers-Camden, earning her bachelor's degree in accounting in 2020. With a keen interest in financial matters, Bielka currently thrives as a consultant, specializing in Internal Audits, SOX testing, and Anti-Money Laundering work for various companies. Notably, she is a recipient of the Rutgers Alfredo Santiago & Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Scholarship, a testament to her academic excellence and dedication. Looking ahead, Bielka is diligently preparing to transition to Rutgers Law School, where she plans to leverage her accounting background to pursue a career as a financial law consultant, combining her passion for finance with legal expertise to make a meaningful impact in the field.



Javier Morales

The College of New Jersey 2021

Javier, currently in his third year of pursuing a Ph.D. in Plasma Physics at Princeton University, is part of the prestigious Princeton Program in Plasma Physics. This graduate program, housed within Princeton's Department of Astrophysical Sciences, focuses on fundamental plasma physics and collaborates closely with the renowned Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL). Graduate students receive interdisciplinary support and typically complete their thesis research in approximately 6.2 years.



Jennyfer Santana

Rutgers 2010

Jennyfer Santana's trajectory from humble beginnings in Camden, NJ, to her current role as Assistant Vice President Recruiter at Wells Fargo is a testament to resilience and hard work. After graduating from LEAP Academy and facing challenges at Rutgers Camden, Jennyfer joined Wells Fargo as a Teller to support her family. Through dedication and exceptional performance, she ascended through the ranks, ultimately achieving her current leadership position. Jennyfer's journey exemplifies the power of perseverance and seizing opportunities, inspiring others to overcome obstacles on their path to success.



Criston Young

University of Pennsylvania 2023

Criston's academic journey has been impressive, culminating in an honors degree in biology. Now, as he sets forth on a path to become a Medical Doctor, he plans to take two gap years. During this time, he'll make significant contributions to research at the Pohlschroder lab, where the focus is on unraveling the captivating intricacies of archaeal cell surface biology.



Melissa Edmond,

Howard 2014, South University 2018 & 2023

Starting out as a LEAP Kindergartener, Melissa graduated high school at the top of the class of 2010. Melissa then decided to call Howard University home, as a Nutritional Sciences major. After graduating from Howard in 2014, she moved on to the South University School of Pharmacy in Savannah, GA where she pursued her passion for pharmacy and earned her Doctorate in Pharmacy degree. In 2022 she went back to school to complete her master's degree in healthcare administration. She is now a full-time Clinical Pharmacist in the Baltimore, Maryland area.



Michael Espinosa

Rutgers School of Nursing - Camden Class of 2016

Michael studied nursing at Rutgers-Camden and studied public health in Cuba, Brazil, and Bolivia. He became committed to the field of medicine, and upon graduating started a full time position as a nurse in the Vascular & Plastic Surgery Unit at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Michael is now a traveling nurse, where his journey takes him for various medical facilities where he provides essential care, compassion, and expertise.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS



LEAP is committed to proactively researching and pursuing diverse funding opportunities from various sources, encompassing federal, state, local, corporate, and private grants and donors. Among the federal agencies supporting LEAP's initiatives are the US Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Department of Labor's Workforce Opportunity Act, the US Department of Agriculture, the US Housing and Urban Development, and the US Department of Energy's NEED Program (National Energy Education Development), among others.



Anticipating continued growth and expansion, LEAP is poised to welcome new donors and contributions in the near future.



WAYS TO SUPPORT LEAP



For inquiries regarding donations, please reach out to Luis Oscar González-Alvira, our Chief Development Officer, via email at lgonzalez@leapsocialenterprise.org or by phone at (787) 439-7157.





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