



World of Academia Opened to Scholars at Rowan



Panelists talk about life as an academic.

On Saturday, December 10, the Governor's STEM Scholars held its conference on academia at Rowan University. The conference introduced 70 of New Jersey's best and brightest high school, college, and graduate students to some of the state's top STEM academics.

The day began with a panel discussion among four professors from different disciplines. The purpose of the panel was to bring down the barrier between students and teachers so that the scholars could get a glimpse of what it is like on the other side of the lectern. The professors talked about their own professional journeys and the challenges and opportunities of working at a research university. The panelists included R&D Council member Dr. Robert Prezant of Montclair State University, Dr. Jay Meegoda of NJIT, and Drs. Katrina Cooper and Thomas Ferraro of Rowan University. Following the panel, many of the scholars spoke individually with the professors about their own ambitions.

After the panel discussion, the scholars broke out into their individual groups where they continued their



Dr. Kathy Scotto of Rutgers talks about seeking out a mentor.

year-long STEM research project. Among the research the groups are pursuing are investigations into water treatment in developing countries and breakthrough alternative energies. At the end of the program, the projects will

be judged by a team of STEM professionals, and the winning team will be invited to the 38th Annual Edison Patent Awards, New Jersey's premier event celebrating its inventors.

The scholars were then treated to a presentation by a living legend: paleontologist Dr. Ken Lacovara of Rowan. Lacovara, who discovered the world's largest dinosaur in Patagonia, took the scholars on a tour-de-force presentation detailing the lives of the dinosaurs in New Jersey and their extinction. Lacovara then fielded questions from the group for 30 minutes, who he said presented some of the most intelligent questions he'd heard in such a setting.

Following the keynote, the scholars were treated to three "STEM classes." In these 30-minute sessions, the scholars got an overview of different STEM areas, participated in research experiments, and learned about the importance of seeking mentors. In Dr. Diana Thomas's (Montclair) class, she spoke about her work using mathematics to



Paleontologist Dr. Ken Lacovara talks about the extinction of the dinosaurs.

quantify obesity. In Dr. Mary Staehle's (Rowan) class, the students learned about her work in biochemistry. In Council member Dr. Kathy Scotto's (Rutgers) class, the students learned about her work as an oncologist and the critical importance of finding a mentor in one's career.

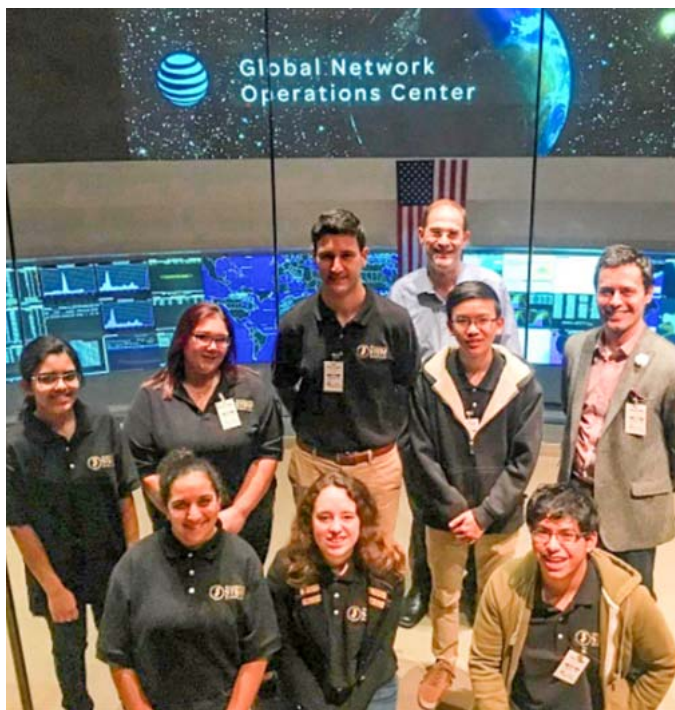
Finally, at the day's end, the stu-

dents were treated to a trip to the Rowan University Fossil Park. Situated a few miles north of the campus, the yard takes the students to an area where they can discover the fossilized remains of life on earth that have not been seen for 65 million years. For many of the students, this was the absolute highlight of the day.



Left: Students get ready to dig in the Rowan University Fossil Park. Above: A STEM Scholar shows off her findings during the fossil dig.

Also in the News...



Past and present scholars went on field trips to the AT&T world headquarters in Bedminster (pictured) and the BASF chemistry facility in Union.



College STEM Scholars got to chat with Chief Scientific Officer of Janssen Dr. Anastasia Daifotis about her life and career.

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