

December 2024

Award for “Innovation and Economic Prosperity” Presented to Rutgers-New Brunswick



L-R: Francine Conway, Chancellor; Amy Mandelbaum, Snr. Program Administrator, NJAES; Peggy Brennan-Tonetta, Snr. Director and Director Resource & Economic Development, NJAES; and Jacqueline McGlynn, Director of Administration, Office of the Chancellor.

The Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU) [presented its Innovation and Economic Prosperity University award to representatives of Rutgers-New Brunswick](#) during its annual meeting in FL, in recognition of the university’s substantial and sustained commitment to economic engagement in the region. The prestigious APLU designation, awarded to only about 80 higher education institutions in the U.S., highlights [Rutgers role as an economic catalyst through transformative innovations](#) in academic initiatives, pioneering research, and impactful community outreach programs, including business incubators that have launched thousands of startups as well as technologies addressing societal challenges.

Senior NJAES Director Peggy Brennan-Tonetta Retires After 28-Year Career at Rutgers



Peggy Brennan-Tonetta, Senior Associate Director of NJAES/Director of Resource and Economic Development, [will retire at the start of 2025](#). Among her many impactful roles at Rutgers, Brennan-Tonetta established the first university-wide Office of Economic Development, which she led as Associate Vice President for Economic Development from 2010 through June 2019. She also had oversight of the internationally renowned business incubators—Rutgers Food Innovation Center, which she helped establish in 2000, and the Rutgers EcoComplex. In 2020, she launched NJAES “Vision 2025,” a comprehensive strategic investment plan to modernize NJAES facilities, equipment, and operations. These improvements built greater capacity and capabilities at NJAES for innovative research, education, and outreach to address current and future needs of New Jersey and the broader society.

Senior NJAES Director Wendie Cohick Appointed New Vice Provost for Research



Wendie Cohick, who has served as the NJAES Director of Research and the inaugural Dean of Research and Graduate Education for SEBS/NJAES, will [begin a new role in January 2025 as the Vice Provost for Research for Rutgers-New Brunswick](#). Since 2020, Cohick has been primarily responsible for overseeing the SEBS & NJAES research portfolio, including enhancing research administration to facilitate successful submissions for NSF, NIH, USDA, and other federal funding, including USDA capacity funds, with the

goal of achieving research excellence for both. Cohick has also worked closely with SEBS graduate program directors and staff to develop best practices and establish policies and procedures to help shape successful graduate education.

Of Interest

The following updated and new fact sheets are available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[FS993: Getting to Know Portion Sizes](#)

Kairios, R., Ensle, K., Collins, C., and Lytle, Joan G.

[FS1362: Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program: How to Apply for Benefits & Tips for Healthy Eating](#)

Hughes, L., Livesay, N., and Colanzi, M.

Rutgers Hosts Leadership from Federated States of Micronesia

A Rutgers interdisciplinary food systems science team, led by **Jim Simon** (Plant Biology), in concert with **Ramu Govindasamy** (Agricultural and Food Resource Economics), **Dena Seidel** (Plant Biology) and **Oscar Schofield** (Marine and Coastal Sciences), began its work with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in 2020, supporting FSM's sustainable food production goals on several projects that include food security policy and assessing climate change's impact on FSM's farming families and strategies for the development of local food processing. Two distinguished guests from this vast island nation in the North Pacific [recently visited the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences](#), touring the school's premier plant and marine science labs, research fields, and greenhouses that showcase Rutgers' advanced research facilities and innovations.

Grant

Thomas Molnar, associate professor in the Department of Plant Biology, is the principal investigator of a four-year grant totaling \$170,000 from the Ferrero Hazelnut Company (Ferrero HCo), a division of global sweet-packaged food company the Ferrero Group, [to support the development of hazelnut varieties that can resist Eastern Filbert Blight through genetic improvement](#). New Jersey has emerged as a leader in introducing hazelnut growing to the East Coast, supported by research and breeding programs at Rutgers. This new funding, on top of \$100,000 from a partnership with Ferrero that started in 2020, will enable the continuation of the long-term disease study to develop disease-resistant hazelnut varieties for cultivation by growers, thereby increasing hazelnut productivity and sustainability in the U.S. and around the world.

Recent Honors

AJ Both, professor and extension specialist in the Department of Environmental Sciences, and colleagues on the North Central Extension and Research Activity (NCERA-101) Committee on Controlled Environment Technology and Use received the [National Excellence in Multistate Research Award](#) at the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities meeting in Orlando, FL, on November 10.

Karl Matthews, professor in the Department of Food Science, [was appointed as a Fulbright Specialist](#) by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and World Learning. Matthews worked with Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in the Philippines to evaluate its culinary and food processing programs and to engage in capacity building and outreach activities centered on food safety. As part of this appointment, Matthews will also continue his international engagement with MMSU on a project to enhance product development for a coffee plantation operated by indigenous people of the Ilocos Norte region of the northern Philippines.

Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.