

SEA Newsletter

January 2026

Happy New Year!!

January Highlights: Community, Creativity & Career Growth

Paint, Pizza & Connection

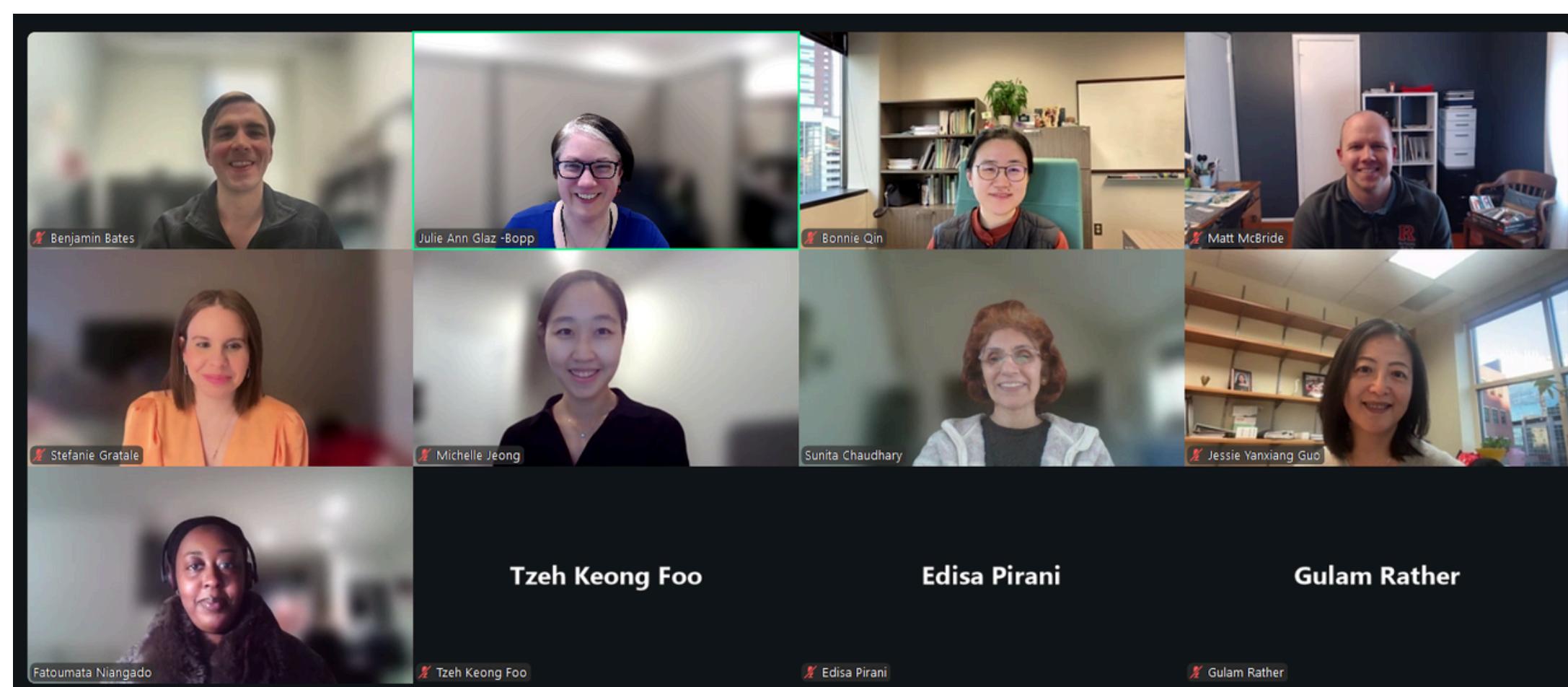
To close out the year on a creative and restorative note, the Scholars and Early Stage Advancement Initiative (SEA) partnered with Rutgers Youth Enjoy Science (RUYES) for a Paint and Pizza networking event. The event was led by Cassandra Gabriele, Program Coordinator for RUYES, who guided participants through the painting experience while fostering connection across programs. Scholars from SEA, the Oncology Physician Training Initiative to Maximize Community Health Outcomes (OPTIM), and RUYES gathered in an intentional space to unwind from the stress of the academic year, build meaningful relationships, and connect beyond the lab and classroom. The evening was filled with creativity, conversation, and collaboration, strengthening our broader scholarly community.



SEA, OPTIM, and RUYES scholars connected and unwound during a collaborative Paint and Pizza networking event, October 22, 2025.

Career Development Panel: Pathways Forward

We concluded the year with a dynamic, panel-style Career Development Workshop featuring faculty panelists Benjamin Bates, MD; Bo Qin, PhD; Matthew McBride, PhD; Stefanie Gratale, PhD, MPA; Michelle Jeong, PhD; Jessie Guo, PhD, and Salma Jabbour, MD. Panelists shared practical and candid insights on navigating academic career pathways and preparing for the transition from postdoctoral trainee to junior faculty member. The discussion provided scholars with valuable perspective on career planning, professional growth, and the realities of academic advancement, leaving attendees feeling informed, supported, and empowered as they consider their next steps.



Career Development Panel featuring faculty across medicine, public health, pharmacy, and oncology, December 11, 2025.

SEA Spotlight: December & January

Join us in celebrating our December and January SEA Spotlight scholars and the incredible work they are doing across research, leadership, and service.



Caitlin Weiger, PhD, is a social and behavioral scientist using neuroimaging, eye-tracking, and other psychophysiological measures to complement traditional survey research and interview methods to deepen our understanding of how people process health communication. Her work has largely focused on tobacco-related beliefs and perceptions, tobacco marketing, tobacco prevention communication, and relative harm communication. Caitlin was awarded a K99/ROO to develop and test messaging about the relative risk of e-cigarettes compared to cigarettes among adults who smoke using a multimethod approach, including neuroimaging.



Samuel Tundelao is a Rutgers Presidential Fellow and Epidemiology PhD candidate at the Rutgers School of Public Health. His research interest focuses on addressing cancer disparities among marginalized populations such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, adolescents, young adults, and sexual and gender minority groups. Sam's dissertation, funded by the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research, investigates the genomic and epigenetic changes associated with fatigue among older male cancer survivors.

Featured SEA Event

The Science of Unconscious Bias and Inclusive Decision Making

Featuring Maria L. Soto- Greene, MD, MS-HPEd, FACP & Manasa Ayyala, MD

Wednesday, January 28, 4-5 pm
Virtual, Zoom

SEA invites you to an engaging, interactive session designed to uncover the science of unconscious bias and how it subtly shapes our decisions at work and beyond.

Other Upcoming Events

iJobs Seminar:

Advice from an Immigration Attorney

Featuring Michael Goldstein
Wednesday, February 12, 12- 1:30 pm (Zoom)

SEA Career Development Workshop:

How to Put Together a Well-Rounded Fellowship Application

Featuring Carol Lutz, PhD
Wednesday, February 19, 3- 4:15 pm (Zoom)

RUYES Workshop: Emotional Regulation, Stress Management & Cultivating Resilience

Featuring Dana Simons, MA, LPC, NCC
Wednesday, February 25, 4-5:30 pm (Zoom)

RUYES Workshop: Time Management & Life Balance Workshop

Featuring Dana Simons, MA, LPC, NCC
Wednesday, March 25, 4-5:30 pm (Zoom)

Explore the SEA Canvas Page!

Your one-stop hub for career growth, funding, and community. The SEA Canvas page offers resources to help you advance your career, find funding opportunities, and connect with peers and mentors. It also features wellness content to support your work-life balance, along with access to essential Rutgers programs and services to help you thrive. Join us on Canvas to stay connected and make the most of your SEA experience!

To join, please send an email to fn130@cinj.rutgers.edu to express your interest!

Interested in Joining SEA?

For more information on the SEA initiative, please visit cinj.org/SEA

If you are interested in joining SEA, please click on the link [here](#) or scan the QR code below



SEA Travel Awards

SEA offers travel grants of up to \$2,000 per year to support trainees who are presenting research at professional conferences with funds available to cover registration, travel, and hotel expenses.

Eligibility

- Demonstrated interest in a career in biomedical research
- U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident (LPR/green card holder)
- Actively presenting (poster or oral) at a professional conference
- Mentor is a member of Rutgers Cancer Institute
- Participation in community outreach or professional development at Rutgers Cancer Institute (e.g., peer mentoring, trainee seminar attendance)

How to Apply

1. Complete the [SEA Initiative Qualtrics](#) survey.
2. Submit a letter of support from your PI/faculty mentor.
 - Email letters to Dr. Sunita Chaudhary at chaudhs4@cinj.rutgers.edu.

2026

We hope you find this space both engaging and informative. Thank you for being part of the SEA community – stay tuned for more exciting updates in the months ahead!