

THE DAILY TARGUM

SERVING THE RUTGERS COMMUNITY SINCE 1869

[Login](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Program preps high schoolers for leadership

By Gisella Gutierrez

Contributing Writer

Published: Wednesday, April 28, 2010

Updated: Wednesday, April 28, 2010

New Brunswick's center for higher education and its high school have joined forces to raise political awareness and foster student leadership.

RU Ready, a program at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, led the Young Leaders Conference on Tuesday at the Eagleton Institute of Politics on the Douglass campus, where 20 selected New Brunswick High School seniors learned about the importance of politics and leadership.

The RU Ready project team members developed and conducted a series of in-class workshops and administered lessons in New Brunswick English classrooms throughout the school year to prepare for the conference.

"The kids are learning what it means to be civic-minded," said Mary Egan, assistant superintendent for curriculum at the high school. "I think it does the students a world of good."

The organization, founded by Project Director Elizabeth Matto three years ago, intended to reach out to the entire senior class of New Brunswick and to teach the students how to become leaders and participate in the political process.

"I created this program with the motive of reaching out to vulnerable students who may not be interested in creating something but have the ability to," Matto said.

The conference consisted of several workshops, including a leadership building icebreaker called "Lost at Sea," where students were placed in separate groups and given a list of 15 items to list in order of importance.

"The whole point of 'Lost at Sea' wasn't to get the right answers," said Digisha Bhavsar, a RU Ready Project volunteer. "It was to notice how groups work and what kinds of people will take charge. The purpose was to figure out what kind of leader he or she is."

Another workshop drew on what leadership is and what it means in the eyes of students compared to what leadership means to some of the world's most prominent leaders.

"There will always be that one person who will start taking control and others who are submissive," said Bhavsar, a Rutgers College senior.

Students focused on research topics such as the Millennial Generation and learned methods of speaking out, voting and volunteering and presented posters to their classmates on the topics.

“This was my favorite workshop because it really stressed how teenage groups affect politics,” said Juan Turcios, a New Brunswick High School senior. “I learned that our votes do matter and showed it through clippings and pictures.”

Turcios and his teammates presented a poster with clippings of charts, statistics and pictures to show their findings on the Millennial Generation and how they matter to the political process.

The conference included a panel of young leaders at the University and in Middlesex County College who encouraged the students to get involved in their communities.

Panelist and New Jersey In-State Tuition Bill advocate Marisol Conde-Hernandez told students while it might seem difficult to get involved, it is easy when you have passion for an issue.

“Kids who haven’t been involved think it’s far from their reach, but it’s the complete opposite,” said Conde-Hernandez, a School of Arts and Sciences student. “I’m trying to make students aware that they can be a leader, despite their age.”

RU Ready intern Yousef Saleh said the program aims to inspire the students to become leaders.

“A lot of New Brunswick students have the potential to grow up to be leaders, but they’re just not aware of it,” said Saleh, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. “Today’s conference [showed] them how much they matter in the community.”

After the workshops, students came together and performed a skit depicting a situation where students were forced to deal with a conflict as a “good leader” would.

“Today felt like a good way to end the RU Ready project,” said Dulce Sanchez, a New Brunswick High School senior. “It’s always fun, and I learned stuff today just like I did when they visited me in my classroom.”

