Personal Statement
Ana Paula Centeno - January 2020

When I started as a Part Time Lecturer in the fall of 2014 I never dreamed that I would find such a fulfilling career as an educator. Teaching Computer Architecture gave me the opportunity to teach a subject that I enjoy and also the opportunity as a graduate student to try a different career path other than research. I thought research was exciting; what I didn't know was that teaching would give me goose bumps. I find it extremely invigorating to partake knowledge with students and to watch them learn with excitement about a science field that I love.

Once a Teaching Professor I also engaged with students as an Academic Advisor and SAS mentor, which gave me the inside look of the student's life at Rutgers and some of the hardships students face. That changed my approach to classroom teaching and assignments. Assignments are not solely a way to solidify a student's understanding of a subject. A carefully crafted assignment will motivate student learning and is likely to improve major retention. That is specially relevant as the Computer Science community looks to retain women in the major.

My role as the coordinator for the Introduction to Computer Science course allowed me, together with my colleagues, to reorganize the course. One of the improvements was the creating of a detailed set of learning objectives that closely relate to the curriculum. By providing students with learning objectives, they are able to assess their own learning progress throughout the semester.

I am now part of the Advancing Women in Computer Science initiative. DIMACS, the Department of Computer Science, and the Douglass Residential College, partnered up to undertake an integrated initiative aimed at increasing the percentage of undergraduate women majoring and minoring in Computer Science at Rutgers and elsewhere. The initiative has recently received gift from the Gates Foundation to continue with the reorganization of the core courses in the Computer Science major.

As I continue my journey as an educator at Rutgers I would like to continue to have a positive impact on the Computer Science curriculum and student's lives.