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#### **FOUR ROGERS CENTER EARLY CAREER FELLOWS ARE CREATING INNOVATIVE MEDIA PRODUCTS**

LATROBE, PA – Inspired by the late Fred Rogers who used the medium of television to educate and entertain children, four Early Career Fellows of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College have chosen to carry forward his legacy by creating educational media in the form of smartphone apps and video shorts to promote early literacy.

This year’s Fellows were selected in November 2010, through a national competition that drew nearly 30 applications from across the U.S. The four Fellows first met last December for a weekend-long orientation and project planning session at the Rogers Center in Latrobe. They have spent the last nine months developing their projects.

Working both individually and as a team, the Fellows are creating media products specifically for the Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment™, a website set to launch by the end of this year as a resource in early literacy and media literacy for teachers, home-based caregivers and parents.

The Early Career Fellows for 2011 are LaToye Adams, a master of arts student at Teachers College, Columbia University and a senior research associate at Michael Cohen Group in New York; Niloufar Behrouz, a freelance animation, web, and graphic designer living in Pittsburgh; Adam Blau, a music composer and producer based in Los Angeles; and Craig Schatten, head kindergarten teacher at The Calhoun School in Manhattan and a musician, puppet designer and illustrator.

The Fellows recently met again at the Rogers Center for a project design session. Over the next three months, work will be completed on their apps that will include a variety of activities, such as a scavenger hunt, daily routine reminders and games to learn about nutrition and to promote the fun of household chores.

“This is my chance professionally to use what I learned in my animation studies and in my work as a researcher in a way that is just mine. My goal is to find a balance between the two,” Ms. Behrouz commented on what the Early Career Fellowship means to her.

Mr. Schatten admits to being personally inspired by the late Fred Rogers. “As a kid I watched Fred Rogers,” he said. “There was this amazing block of programs – Sesame Street, Mister Rogers and the Electric Company – that was my daily routine. Fred was a big part of my childhood. When I was in college, I used to tell people I wanted to be the next Mister Rogers. I sort of forgot about it until I won this Fellowship. It’s amazing.”

According to Rita Catalano, executive director of the Fred Rogers Center, “We are thrilled with this year’s cohort of Fellows. Each is extremely talented and all are perfect examples of our hopes for the Early Career Fellows program as a career development opportunity for new generations of media creators who, like Fred Rogers, always “think of the children first.”

The Early Career Fellows Program is one of the national, signature programs of the Fred Rogers Center. In its first year, 2009-2010, the program supported eight Fellows from Boston, New York and Pittsburgh.

The Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College ([www.fredrogerscenter.org](http://www.fredrogerscenter.org)) was established in 2003. The Center houses the official archive of Fred Rogers’ work including scripts, videos and artifacts from *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. The Center’s national programs include the Early Career Fellows; the Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment™ under development as a web-based resource for teachers, home-based caregivers and families; and the Fred Forward Conference Series and issues roundtables.

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**Photo:** *The four Early Career Fellows of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College are, from left, Craig Schatten of New York City, Adam Blau of Los Angeles, LaToye D. Adams of Brooklyn, New York, and Niloufar Behrouz of Pittsburgh.*

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