

“Jersey Roots, Global Reach”
Annual Address to the University Community

President Richard L. McCormick
September 28, 2007

Professor Rabinowitz, members of the Senate, fellow members of the university community, and distinguished guests: Thank you for this opportunity to share my plans and goals for Rutgers.

I also take this opportunity to boast a little about some of our recent successes: the 65 percent increase in visits to Rutgers by prospective students and their families, the 61 percent increase in licensing income generated by our entrepreneurial faculty, and surpassing the \$100 million mark in annual fundraising. These are all positive reflections of a robust and growing university.

Let me thank the members of our governing boards who are here, including Board of Governors chair Bill Howard, Board of Trustees chair Gerald Harvey, and Board of Overseers vice chair Ron Wilson. We also welcome our special guests, including Assemblymen Upendra Chivukula and Patrick Diegnan and executive director of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education Jane Oates.

Earlier this week at a reception at my home I welcomed 100 new faculty members to Rutgers. Their fields of expertise run from art history to genetics, school psychology to environmental science. Their talent and enthusiasm are further reason to be excited about our future. In that spirit, let me introduce three of the newest academic leaders at Rutgers, all of them beginning their work this semester. I ask them to stand and be recognized:

- Michael Cooper, dean of Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick;
- Adam Graycar, dean of the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice; and
- Philip Yeagle, dean of the Newark Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

It is also my privilege to announce that we have a new dean for the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy: Chris Molloy, who, after a distinguished career as a senior research leader at Johnson & Johnson, is returning to Rutgers where he received his degree in pharmacy. Chris will be taking the helm from John Colaizzi, who is the longest-serving dean in the history of Rutgers—and one of the most admired and respected. John, I hope you will always know how much your leadership has meant to Rutgers.

We also take pride in the accomplishments of our students: Those who took their winter break to help Katrina victims rebuild. Those who are doing exemplary research on autism, economics, and race relations through the Aresty Research Center for Undergraduates. Those at Rutgers–Newark, coached by Professor John Graham, who beat 50 teams to win a national business case competition. Those who are pioneering our Ph.D. program in childhood studies, the first doctoral program at Rutgers–Camden and the only one of its kind in the nation. And, of course, we couldn't be prouder of our talented and inspiring women's basketball team—or of our football team, whose number 10 ranking in the polls is topped only by its number seven ranking in academic progress. We celebrate their victories, and those of all our Rutgers teams, because these successes are emblematic of all our ambitions.

Since coming to Rutgers as president I have often expressed a vision for the transformation of Rutgers: first of undergraduate education, then of our campuses as places of learning—and always a vision of how Rutgers through its research can better serve the people of New Jersey and the world. Today I want to extend and elaborate on that vision of change and ambition for Rutgers.

I do so at an unsettling time for higher education. On the one hand, enrollment is higher than ever, and university researchers with access to unprecedented tools, techniques, and insights are contributing more than ever to new knowledge and new solutions to human problems. On the other hand, public investment in us is shrinking and public scrutiny is growing, as colleges and universities face increasing pressure to demonstrate the value of what we do and to reduce our costs.

I welcome the scrutiny because higher education has never been more important to the future than it is today. Let me explain why.

Our nation and the community of nations are confronting enormous difficulty coming to grips with the major problems of our time. Today we are struggling with global issues—such as climate change, human migration, the delivery of health care, and the challenges of the global economy—that are tremendously complex and will not succumb to simple solutions.

On top of that complexity is the problem of inequity. The gap between rich and poor in the United States is growing, and an even wider gap exists between developed nations and those of the third world. As former president Bill Clinton recently stated, for all the opportunity in the world, “half of the world’s people live on less than two dollars a day.” A billion people go to bed hungry each night, and a billion mouths will never take a sip of clean water in their lives. The vast disparity between rich and poor deepens the difficulty of solving already-intractable problems.

For these reasons—the complexity of our global challenges and the dire needs of so many people in the world—our colleges and universities are more essential today than ever. The next generation, and the next, will need to be the best educated generations of all time. They will need not only technical knowledge to succeed but also problem-solving skills, multicultural awareness, and the interdisciplinary learning that is essential to practically every important human initiative. If ever men and women needed the benefits of a college education, and if ever the world needed the benefits of university research, it is now. And, frankly, we need the voices of our college students, whose activism on societal and global issues has helped shape public debate from the civil rights movement to the Vietnam War to South Africa to the environment.

Higher education is not a magic bullet. But as our global challenges are more complicated and more demanding than ever, and inequalities deeper than ever, the university—and, yes, *our* university—has much to contribute and a global imperative to do so.

The place to start fulfilling this demand is with our undergraduates. Earlier this month we welcomed nearly 7,000 new students to our university. Whether they will make their lives in New Jersey or around the world, over the next four years Rutgers must prepare them for a global economy and for dealing with the urgent problems of our time. Getting that kind of preparation means more access to our great faculty, more opportunities to conduct research, and more immersion in real-world experiences through internships and service learning. It means, in other words, precisely the kind of education that our recent undergraduate changes are making possible.

Our Camden students now have a wide array of opportunities to conduct undergraduate research, and Provost Margaret Marsh and Dean Michael Palis are working to increase funding for student travel to conferences and other research-related activities. In Newark, Provost Steve Diner and his colleagues are pursuing ways to enable students to take full advantage of their campus’s rich diversity and to become prepared for the global marketplace.

In New Brunswick, the reorganization of undergraduate education is historic. A system that confused and sometimes disenfranchised students has been dismantled. In its place is a new one, with equality of opportunity, closer student-faculty interaction, a core curriculum that defines a Rutgers education, and greater opportunities than ever for research and experiential learning.

Arts and sciences faculty now determine admissions, general education, and graduation policies for their students, something that hasn't been the case for 25 years. Student advising in the School of Arts and Sciences is available on every campus. We have opened Douglass Residential College with 350 students and all the history and traditions of Douglass. Cook College has a new identity as the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.

Student affairs programs have been reorganized to better serve undergraduates. We now have an office dedicated to increasing opportunities for students to compete for nationally competitive scholarships such as Rhodes and Fulbrights. And undergraduates have joined together to create, for the first time, a New Brunswick-wide student government. Jim Kline is the first chair of the Rutgers University Student Assembly, and I ask him to stand so we may congratulate him on behalf of his fellow students. I applaud them for bringing strong student voices for change and improvement—and for ensuring that Rutgers will always remain a place of open dialogue and the free exchange of ideas.

There are literally hundreds of people at Rutgers—faculty, staff, and students, many of them in this room—who have worked tirelessly over the past 18 months on the reorganization of undergraduate education, and we owe them enormous thanks.

But make no mistake: our work is unfinished. The curriculum will continue to be reshaped in the years ahead. We must develop the capstone courses and experiences through which seniors will draw upon all they have learned at Rutgers. And through the Middle States reaccreditation process that is now under way, we will face up to the question of whether these changes are truly improving the education of our students. Critics of higher education are demanding more rigorous assessment and a greater emphasis on learning outcomes, and while we may quibble about the measures, we cannot escape the basic challenge. You will be hearing much more about Middle States and will have an opportunity to review and comment on our self-study report later this fall.

We have made a good beginning on our undergraduate changes, and already Rutgers is a different place. For the first time ever, all our newest undergraduates in New Brunswick came together for a year-opening Convocation at Rutgers Stadium on September 1. Hundreds of students are being welcomed into the intellectual life of this university through our first-year seminar program. In classes of no more than 20, they are learning from some of our most noted faculty about topics from the historic Dracula to the economics of incarceration to experimental mathematics. I am proud of this program and happy to be teaching one of the seminars myself.

We are indebted to the many alumni and friends who made contributions to support the program. And we owe thanks in particular for the generous lead gift of \$3 million from an alumnus who made the most of his Rutgers education a half-century ago: Jack Byrne, Rutgers Class of 1954, and his wife, Dorothy Byrne.

This transformation also strengthens student learning outside the classroom. We have created five distinct campus communities, each with its own identity: Busch in the sciences and engineering, College Avenue in the arts and humanities, Cook in our environmental and land-grant missions, Douglass in women's leadership, Livingston in opportunity and access, with a new mission on the horizon.

We have entrusted these communities to members of our faculty who have demonstrated a strong commitment to undergraduate education. In addition to their faculty responsibilities, these men and women now serve as campus deans, charged with building academic communities beyond the classroom. They are working closely with deans of students who have likewise accepted critical leadership roles. These women and men bear a heavy burden for ensuring the success of the changes under way and for defining what it means to have a Rutgers education. But they are not alone, and they will depend on the active engagement of their faculty and staff colleagues across the university.

In thanks for their commitment, I want to recognize our campus deans and deans of students by name. They are Jeffery Rankin and Michael Stillwagon on the Busch Campus; Matt Matsuda and Tim Grimm on College Avenue; Lea Stewart and George Jones on Livingston; Rick Ludescher and Francine Corley on Cook; and Carmen Ambar and Michelle Jefferson on Douglass. Michelle is also serving as acting dean of students at Cook as Francine Corley battles to return to health—and our thoughts today are with Francine. We also welcome back to Rutgers Sue Schurman, who serves our nontraditional students as acting dean of the University College Community. Please join me in recognizing all of these fine leaders.

Rutgers has much to offer its undergraduates, but as a public research university it has particular strengths for New Jersey and the world. Our faculty members across multiple disciplines are seeking solutions to some of the most significant challenges of a global society. It is exciting work, captured in the simple phrase you will see again and again in Rutgers communications: “Jersey Roots, Global Reach.”

The proof is in our faculty. For example: Professor Linda Bosniak is one of the nation’s leading experts on immigration law and has written about citizenship and the experience of aliens. Professor Nydia Flores’s research on bilingualism will inspire stronger literacy education in our state. Professor Dan Tichenor has appeared before Congress to provide expert testimony on U.S. immigration history. Professor Kathryn Uhrich’s polymer discoveries will lead to “smart drugs” that apply their full benefits precisely where they are needed in the human body. Professor Bruce Franklin has recently written about the ecological value of menhaden and the consequences that will ensue if it is fished into extinction.

Our best work crosses disciplines and wraps our minds around a challenge from every angle. Let me illustrate this point through the prism of a new collaboration at Rutgers: dozens of our faculty combining their research strengths to study climate change and its effects, starting here in New Jersey.

Climate change is not just a scientific challenge, although it certainly is that. It is also a political challenge that is taking us far outside our comfort zone as a society and as a global community. As philosophy professor Martin Bunzl has articulated, it will demand not only major technological solutions but also a renegotiation of the social contract, and it will require more than ever before from economically developed nations like ours.

The Rutgers climate change initiative is led by Professors Anthony Broccoli and Jennifer Francis. It merges the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, and it combines both fundamental and applied research. Seven working groups are identifying potential research directions—from impacts on coastal and freshwater resources to human health effects to education and outreach.

Much of the research focuses on what we need to do to prevent global warming from becoming worse—how we can reduce greenhouse gases or, at the very least, stem the increase in those gases. But Rutgers research is also focused on another equally important area: how to adapt to the changes in the climate that are *already* coming, including rising sea levels. The title of a lecture in our new football pregame seminar series puts it whimsically by asking: “Will Our River Dorms Become Ocean Dorms?” The serious question for our scientific and public policy research is how different the world will look even if we can stop the growth of global warming. What can we do to help society adapt, including those poorer, more vulnerable communities in low-lying regions? These questions are as apt for New Jersey, a densely populated coastal state, as they are for Bangladesh or the Niger River.

The climate change initiative is paralleled by the work of another group of Rutgers faculty from many disciplines who are studying alternative and renewable forms of energy. Led by Professor Paul Falkowski, last year these faculty formed the Rutgers University Energy Institute to move America toward energy independence. Their research touches the spectrum of energy options, including wind, hydrogen, nuclear, and solar, with a particular focus on biotechnology. Their goal is to promote energy that supports economic growth while sustaining the environment and avoiding easy solutions that disproportionately harm the poor.

Thanks to Governor Jon Corzine and the legislature, New Jersey has taken the lead on climate change and clean energy. Our state now has the most ambitious law in the nation and a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent before 2050. Rutgers stands ready to help achieve this goal. More than 70 faculty members are working in these areas—including several who contributed to the most recent report of the International Panel on Climate Change. Judging by their influence and their publications, Rutgers faculty stand among the best in the world.

The leaders of these initiatives are here today, and so I ask Professors Broccoli, Francis, and Falkowski to stand so we can recognize them on behalf of all those engaged in this critical endeavor.

In this work of conservation, Rutgers also has a role to play as an institution, and we have already made a start. We were the first university in the nation to commit to the EPA’s self-audit program. Our recycling programs win national awards. We have a lighting retrofit initiative that will save Rutgers money *and* reduce carbon emissions. And earlier this month our University Committee on Sustainability issued its first report on Rutgers’ environmental performance.

There is more hard work ahead. We have been losing money and wasting energy, for example, by using old and inefficient high temperature water lines on the Busch and Livingston campuses. It will be expensive to replace them, but we will recoup that money in just a few years through energy efficiency. Just as important, we won’t be using more energy than we need.

The spirit of sustainability also affects our land use decisions. Rutgers has thousands of acres of land across the state. Much of that land is undeveloped, and over the years we have looked at these parcels separately. I have asked for an inventory of all the university’s undeveloped acreage to ensure that we make the best decisions about its stewardship and accessibility.

This takes us directly to the subject of our campuses. The recent Task Force on Undergraduate Education—which made such an impact on our academic structure—also had important things to tell us about the value of campus planning. The task force report put it well: “The university is a learning community; as such, it must include friendly communal spaces that encourage people to linger and to participate in the life of the university.”

This is what we are seeking in the ongoing transformation of the College Avenue Campus. Ever since last year's competition to select a design team, we have been working with the winning team on landscape architecture. Next month you will have an opportunity to view and discuss the proposed design for the first phase of the project, which involves greening a portion of College Avenue. We hope to put shovels in the ground in 2008. Our goal remains the one I affirmed when we started thinking about College Avenue several years ago: a campus that will attract the finest students and scholars and build pride and affection among our alumni and the people of New Jersey.

One of the most neglected parts of Rutgers, as I acknowledged last year, is the Livingston Campus. This year the university will expand and renovate the student center and prepare for construction of a new dining hall. But those steps are only a prelude to a much more ambitious plan for redefining Livingston around a strong academic core.

Throughout its history, Livingston has focused on leadership and social responsibility in a diverse society. Our vision is to expand that focus by making Livingston a center for professional education. I want to bring together our schools of business, management and labor relations, education, and social work, which already share a commitment to professional education, continuing education, and executive education.

Consider everything Livingston offers us: easy access by both rail and highway, close proximity to our world-class science and engineering disciplines on the Busch Campus, and more under-utilized land than anywhere else at Rutgers. A cluster of professional schools and disciplines at Livingston has breathtaking potential for addressing state needs and generating economic and social progress. What a boost it would give Rutgers to remake Livingston as an attractive, environmentally sound campus that creates new academic synergies and becomes a magnet for outstanding students and faculty from across New Jersey and beyond.

To support this academic vision, we are exploring the potential for adding several complementary facilities including a hotel and conference center, residences for students and their families, recreational areas, a research park, and appropriate commercial enterprises.

To assist in our analysis and feasibility studies, Rutgers is enlisting outside expertise. We will also form an external advisory board with all the relevant stakeholders, including business, environmental, public policy, academic, civic, and community leaders, and we will invite a great deal of public discussion. Our hope is to gain consensus on a clear vision for Livingston during this academic year and to accompany that vision with a sound business plan.

I also have asked for discussion about the potential of a reinvigorated purpose for the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. The Board of Governors established the preserve in 1976 from a collection of properties including former farmland and old-growth woodlands. We want to explore how to integrate the Ecological Preserve more fully into the day-to-day life of the university in ways that respect its natural resources, protect its flora and fauna, and truly fulfill its educational mission.

Making our campuses more inviting helps advance the goal I have stressed today, preparing our students for the challenges and complexities of the new century. This is true in Newark, which is fast becoming a residential campus that both contributes to the city's vitality and learns from it. The new residence hall there is filled to capacity with a waiting list. In Camden, a new law school facility is rising, the gym is getting a sorely needed renovation, and a beautiful public art project called Gateway will make the campus more welcoming.

Across the whole university, it is time to fix our classrooms. Outdated desks, inadequate lighting, and worn carpeting not only make a room ugly but also hinder learning. So today I pledge that under the guidance of a faculty, staff, and student committee chaired by Professor Carla Yanni, we will dedicate \$15 million over the next three years to renovate neglected classrooms on every campus.

Everywhere at Rutgers, we recognize a constant call to protect the safety and security of our community. It is a team effort—public safety working with student affairs, with faculty and staff, with our counseling centers, and with our students. All three campuses produced an emergency operations plan last spring, and we tested it with a major training exercise in July. We added text-messaging to our emergency notification system—and on that point, I urge everyone to sign up. Improvements will continue, for example, by expanding the use of security cameras on campus buildings. We cannot predict or prevent every scenario, but Rutgers will be as prepared as it can be.

Rutgers also has a call to diversity. New Jersey claims the widest array of nationalities, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. So should its state university, both for reasons of social justice and for the educational value that diversity brings. Perhaps more than any state university, Rutgers educates a remarkably diverse student body—socially, racially, economically, and with many the first in their families to seek higher education. Especially in New Jersey, the ability to interact with people from varied backgrounds is a critical life skill. I think of the student at Newark—the most diverse campus in America—who said the mix of cultures at Rutgers “can make a person believe they are studying abroad.”

So let us build on strength but also recognize that we must do better. Our student body may look like the people of New Jersey, but our faculty does not. Only 3.7 percent of the full-time faculty are African American and only 2.3 percent are Hispanic/Latino. We need more women on the faculty in many areas, and more faculty of color everywhere.

I take very seriously my responsibility for providing leadership in this area. I am therefore creating a President’s Council on Diversity and Equity, which I will co-chair with a senior member of the faculty. Its primary purpose will be to monitor our success or failure in diversifying our faculty, our senior leadership, and our curriculum across all three campuses. And we will hold the deans, provosts, and vice presidents accountable for real progress.

Next year Rutgers will plan and host a major national conference on the role of the university with regard to diversity throughout our society. It will examine how schools, colleges, corporations, and other institutions can join in promoting opportunity and ensuring access at all levels. Partners from Columbia University and the College Board, both of which have done important work on these issues, have agreed to cosponsor the conference with us. I would like to thank Vice President Jon Alger and Associate Vice President Karen Stubaus for their important leadership in planning this important event.

Finally, and most significantly, I am proud to announce a bold initiative to expand the pipeline of talented students coming to Rutgers from underrepresented communities. Our student body is diverse, but too few young men and women—and especially too few young men—enroll at Rutgers from our state’s large cities, including Rutgers’ hometowns. We know that many students give up on learning as teenagers (or sooner) because they don’t see college in their future. So we will establish the Rutgers Future Scholars Program, a pilot project aimed at reaching minority and low-income students who might otherwise never consider college within their grasp.

Rutgers will work with the school districts to identify the top cohort of eighth graders in each of our host communities: Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, and Piscataway. As they proceed through high school, we will give them all the support and encouragement we can. We will have workshops on gearing up for college, offer preparation for the college entrance exams, and host each summer an on-campus experience that will expose students to our finest academic programs. And we will promise each of these students who is admitted to Rutgers free tuition and fees.

Vice President Courtney McAnuff has my thanks for his leadership in developing this program, which we will begin next year. I am also happy to welcome and introduce the superintendents of these four districts, who have pledged their support for this program. They are: Marion A. Bolden, superintendent of Newark Public Schools; Robert Copeland, superintendent of Piscataway Township Schools; Richard M. Kaplan, superintendent of the New Brunswick Public School District; and from Camden City Public Schools, superintendent B. LeFra Young and assistant superintendent Ruben Mills. Thank you for being here and for your commitment to New Jersey's children.

I know you will ask: how can we afford to carry out all these plans and fulfill these aspirations, especially in a time of severe budgetary constraints? The honest answers are: we aren't sure, but we can't afford not to. Rutgers has an imperative to make a difference in the world, and we must find the ways. One thing is certain: it is unrealistic and unfair to place our future on the backs of our already-burdened students and their families. Instead, Rutgers must seek new efficiencies and new resources in advancing these goals.

One arena of efficiency is energy savings. The projects I have mentioned earlier are part of a plan that will eventually save Rutgers at least \$8 million per year. Another is on the financial side. Under the leadership of interim Senior Vice President for Administration Bruce Fehn, we are pursuing the next phases of automating all our key administrative functions and ensuring that our business practices are carried out with the highest degree of efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Finding efficiencies will help us stretch the dollars we have. But realizing our ambitions will also depend upon marshaling all the resources we can and promoting good will among everyone who has a stake in helping Rutgers reach its goals—starting with our most loyal constituency, our alumni.

Rutgers graduates—who number more than 360,000, half of them in New Jersey—are an enormously great asset for the university. They are making their mark on society in nearly every imaginable field, from corporate CEOs to world-class scientists to entertainment giants to acclaimed writers and artists. We are proud of them, and they are proud of Rutgers, but that affection has not translated into the strongest possible partnership between alumni and alma mater. We know the best universities have outstanding alumni programs and highly engaged graduates. We want the same for Rutgers.

Earlier this month I released the report of a task force on alumni relations led by accomplished graduates Gene O'Hara and Gerald Harvey. The recommendations will be the subject of discussion on each campus this fall, and the final outcomes may change as a result. But the central vision will remain this: a new structure giving our alumni maximum opportunities to participate in the life of the university and maximum encouragement to help and support Rutgers.

Last year, as I said before, we had a record year in private fundraising, for which I owe a hundred million thanks. This generosity fills us with optimism as we plan for Rutgers' largest capital campaign to raise funds from private donors, foundations, and corporations. Such a campaign will enable Rutgers to pursue opportunities we could not otherwise grasp. It will help us to create programs that will prepare our students for lives of achievement and to support research in areas of significance to New Jersey and the world.

This year, through the leadership of Rutgers Foundation President Carol Herring, we will get ready for the campaign by establishing a volunteer structure, outlining a communications plan, and hiring the staff we will need for success. Most important, the university community will complete the process of establishing the priorities for the campaign—a project led by Executive Vice President Phil Furmanski and involving, so far, more than a hundred faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Writ large, these priorities speak to the goals I have set forth throughout my remarks today: preparing women and men to address the most challenging issues of our age.

A vital source of support for Rutgers is—and will always be—the government. Our state and federal funding levels have ebbed and flowed over the years. Under the leadership of Vice President Mike Pazzani, we are working closely with faculty to increase funding from competitive grants and other sources, and to advocate strenuously for support for Rutgers. These efforts are already bearing fruit; this year we will exceed \$300 million in external research support, a tribute to the energy and productivity of our faculty and staff. This year we will also seek targeted state investments in Rutgers research projects that have the highest potential for economic development and social progress.

In making that case, we will point with pride to everything that Rutgers does in New Jersey. While the impact of climate change is global, Rutgers will first apply the findings of our research here in New Jersey. Our clean energy will be promoted and tested in New Jersey. Our research on gun violence finds its initial application in Newark. Our research on childhood issues will help children first in Camden. Our research on autism will help families first in New Brunswick. Our goals may be global, but those who benefit first are the citizens of our state. Jersey Roots, Global Reach.

That's what it means to be a state university, a place where the most important problems of our age are studied and where solutions are found—and where those who benefit the most are our own students and our own citizens.

Achieving these ambitions will not be easy. It will demand much from us: the vision to see how far Rutgers can go; the entrepreneurial spirit to create programs of distinction; the collaboration to build strength across disciplines; the leadership to communicate our goals clearly; and the stamina to achieve them. I know that together we are capable of all of these things. Please join me as we seek for Rutgers the programs and the resources that affirm the human spirit and contribute knowledge of enduring value.

Thank you.