Norman Samuels
CELEBRATING 20 years OF VISION AND LEADERSHIP

AT THE NEWARK CAMPUS OF Rutgers, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
A TRIBUTE TO
Norman Samuels

ON THE OCCASION OF
HIS RETIREMENT AS PROVOST
OF THE NEWARK CAMPUS OF
Rutgers

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW JERSEY

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For 20 years, Norman Samuels has fostered cutting-edge research and teaching of the highest order on the Newark campus, championed the revitalization of Newark and its integral connection to the campus, and insisted that Rutgers-Newark represent fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Newark and New Jersey. His visionary leadership will be sorely missed. | STEVEN J. DINER, DEAN, FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES-NEWARK; ACTING PROVOST DESIGNATE, RUTGERS-NEWARK

At a conference a couple of years ago, I overheard an audience member, who had just heard a rousing speech by Norman about our campus, say: “I don’t know how he does it every time—he always finds exactly the right words.” I actually know how Norman does it, and it’s not complicated—he believes in Rutgers-Newark’s mission and that firm belief has guided his actions as the campus’s leader. There’s been so little change in Norman’s message about the campus, and such a complete lack of pretentiousness in his style of leadership, that one might think it could all get a bit boring—unless, of course, one looks around campus and sees that it has been completely transformed and matches, pretty close to perfectly, the vision that Norman had the courage and brilliance to articulate and fight for. | HARVEY FEDER, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The campus that I have called home for 24 years now is, in remarkable measure, the creation of one man, Norman Samuels. Rarely does one person get to leave so great a mark on a school, a neighborhood, a city. Paris had its Hausman, New York its Moses, and Rutgers-Newark, its Samuels. We expect university administrators to be educators; we do not expect them also to be architects. In the years that I have been at Rutgers-Newark, the school has not simply grown, but it has also transformed itself, in the process realizing, embodying Norman’s vision. The bricks, the mortar, the flowering trees on the plaza at the center of the college, the most diverse student body in the nation, the grit, the drive, the energy, all of these are Norman’s creation and his legacy to this campus. He built something in Newark at a time when others ran away, and he stayed until they came back. The campus is a monument to his vision, a living monument, filled with students, scholars, resolve, and hope. | JAN LEWIS, HISTORY PROFESSOR
How for 20 years Norman Samuels consistently managed never to seem harried or haunted, yet also avoided the blandness of the stereotypical administrator, is one of the benign mysteries of my Rutgers experience. I doubt if it’s a mystery that will ever be fully solved, though perhaps the next few years may be the best time to learn more about my distinguished colleague, perhaps by sitting in on one of his political science classes. He will certainly have much to teach about balancing conflicting demands and temperaments on a cramped yet diverse urban campus and in a richly varied, feisty urban/suburban community. | RACHEL HADAS, ENGLISH PROFESSOR

Norman Samuels has been a visionary leader and provost extraordinaire for two decades. He has been the leader in building an excellent educational institution in Newark, one that has become the most diverse among national universities. The campus has become a premier academic center in many areas of research and study. It demands excellence and commitment from its students, faculty and staff because of Norman’s leadership and example, and we are all motivated to try to meet that high standard of performance. From the viewpoint of the law school, Norman has been a good friend and strong supporter. He has helped the law school create the high quality school it has become. From a more personal point of view, Norman has been a superb boss, providing support and good advice. He has never accepted easy answers and has maintained a steady expectation of excellence that has required me always to ask whether we are doing the best that we can. He is a terrific role model and shows the combination of insight, warmth, toughness and caring that makes for a great leader. We will miss Norman’s leadership. | STUART DEUTSCH, DEAN, SCHOOL OF LAW–NEWARK

When I first interviewed for the position of dean, I remember Norman Samuels as being gracious, honest, and sincere. But he also pulled no punches in informing me of the many challenges that I would face and left me with the impression that he was a man of strong convictions and soft glove. There is something about his collegial style and his gentle but firm manner that is immensely attractive. I sensed then that with Norman as your partner, you could build something grand. Certainly the Newark campus and the many ways it has changed under his tenure as provost are testament to this fact. | HOWARD TUCKMAN, DEAN, RUTGERS BUSINESS SCHOOL
Norman Samuels has truly been a role model and an inspiration to all of us who have happily devoted our professional lives to Rutgers University and, in particular, to the Newark campus. At least for me, the identity of Rutgers-Newark is synonymous with his personal vision, energy, and enthusiasm—it’s difficult to imagine one without the other.

Rosa Oppenheim, Associate Dean, Rutgers Business School

Everyone knows about Norman’s integrity, hard work, and organizational skills. He is relied on to provide the pithy comment, the new twist on an idea, or the reasoned argument. All of these traits make him remarkable, but what takes him above the crowd, into a small group of one, is his ability to put all of these together in the role as unconditional leader. How has he run a university campus for so long while receiving universal acclaim for fairness and compassion? He has done it by taking the time to understand peoples’ needs and by making every effort to meet them. Anticipation is the hardest thing to teach but is the key to successful leadership. I have never met anyone who uses anticipation so astutely.

Leslie Kennedy, Dean, School of Criminal Justice

I recall with fond affection his strong leadership and advocacy of the needs and interests of the students who attended the university in Newark. Faculty don’t always appreciate how critical that advocacy was for the Newark campus. Norman Samuels also helped persuade me to give highest priority to access through the opportunity fund programs, student aid and the establishment of academic scholarships for our students.

Ted Holland, Professor, Rutgers Business School; Former New Jersey Chancellor of Higher Education

Norman Samuels is truly a remarkable administrator, one of the very best I have seen. He treats faculty as equals by providing information relevant to our concerns. He does not hide the facts, whether they are favorable or unfavorable. He does not hide his opinion, though he never forced it on us when there was a choice. He can cut to the heart of an issue or a problem in a heartbeat and see immediately how everything is connected to everything else. He is sure-footed in a job that could easily inspire tidiness. And he uses his charm and wit to make the good better and the bad endurable.

George Thomas, Professor, School of Law-Newark
Provost Samuels recruited Dr. Ian Creese and me to Rutgers-Newark from the University of California, San Diego, 15 years ago. In the beginning, our colleagues often asked how in the world Rutgers convinced us to leave beautiful San Diego for Newark. However, after visiting the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience that we co-founded with the complete support of Norman Samuels, our colleagues fully understood our choice. You can share many things in life, but sharing a mutual vision, and working together to build that vision into a reality is truly special. Norman has taught us the meaning of trustworthiness, the power and integrity of keeping one’s word based on a handshake, and the value of unwavering support.

PAULA TALLAL, CO-DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MOLECULAR AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Provost Samuels’ legacy on the Rutgers-Newark campus is profound and I join with others as we recognize and celebrate his vision and accomplishments. His leadership and outstanding contributions will always be remembered with deep appreciation by all of us. I have been especially privileged to have had regular one-to-one sessions with Dr. Samuels and I will never forget his personal caring, wise guidance, supportive listening, patience, encouragement, and outstanding mentoring. His abilities to inspire, motivate, communicate, strategize, counsel, and portray warmth and caring are phenomenal. He was always considerate, never rushed, and he greatly contributed to my growth and development as a dean. In my estimation, he portrays extraordinary leadership characteristics and enables subordinates to reach their highest potential and beyond. I will miss my association with Dr. Samuels and am sorry that the next dean at Rutgers College of Nursing will not benefit as I have from his leadership.

HURDIS GRIFFITH, DEAN, COLLEGE OF NURSING

The key word about Norman Samuels is consistency—consistency of purpose and long term strategy, consistency in support of the Newark campus and its faculty and the most remarkable consistency of courtesy and understanding. I have acquired the deepest respect for his achievement: he has undoubtedly been the most effective head of a university I have worked with—on two continents—and I am deeply sorry he is going to leave the office of provost.

RICHARD LANGHORNE, CO-DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR GLOBAL CHANGE AND GOVERNANCE

The expanded 38 acre campus includes significant new construction over the past 15 years: undergraduate and graduate residence halls, expanded recreational facilities, the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, the Management Education Center, and the Center for Law and Justice, the largest building project in the university’s history.

Skateboarders lament as much concrete has been replaced by lawns, brick walkways and benches. The campus has 7.5 landscaped acres, and a second campus plaza, located on what was formerly New Street, invites visitors from downtown Newark.
As an undergraduate at Rutgers-Newark, and an editor of the student newspaper, I took great joy in confronting Provost Samuels in our student newspaper. Lacking a sophisticated understanding of the complexities of the environment in which he worked, I often wondered why Dr. Samuels used such an understated approach … Despite my adversarial approach, Dr. Samuels took the time to meet with me and other student leaders, to listen to our concerns and to discuss the issues we felt were important. He was patient and respectful. I even felt that he enjoyed the fact that we were questioning him, even if we were not making his job any easier. I graduated with that lasting impression, and great respect for him.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to come back to campus as a staff member. I had always tried to stay informed about the changes here, but I must admit that I was shocked and delighted to see how much had actually been accomplished. Since then, it has become very clear to me that Dr. Samuels is a true visionary. From the start, he recognized the potential of Rutgers-Newark, and he has slowly and carefully built that vision … I’d like to thank him for helping to make Rutgers-Newark a truly extraordinary place.

I most appreciate Norman’s emphasis on research in building the Rutgers-Newark faculty. This, even more than the physical plant, will be his enduring legacy. He has put in place a high-quality faculty, with the integrity to insist that recruits in the coming decades be of equal and even higher stature. Norman’s contribution to improving the quality of the Rutgers faculty goes beyond what he has accomplished on the Newark campus. As provost, he has continuously served on the university’s Promotion Review Committee, where he has had a strong and pivotal role in setting high university-wide standards for research. This fact might surprise some of my New Brunswick colleagues, and I must confess that I have come to understand it fully only as a result of my own recent service on this committee.

GLENN SHAFER, PROFESSOR, RUTGERS BUSINESS SCHOOL
The addition of the dormitories, tennis courts, an athletic field and a swimming pool, as well neuroscience, management and law buildings, are all testimony to Dr. Samuels’ determination and ability to build a campus. However, it is his respect for and support of people that have resulted in the sense of community that is unique to Rutgers-Newark.

**Rosa Zamora, Golden Dome Athletic Center**

Shortly after I arrived at Rutgers as a new faculty member, I called the office of the provost to set up a meeting with Norman. Apparently this was not the norm because after the usual questioning of why I, a new assistant professor, wanted to meet the provost, no appointment was made. However, I got a call from the then-dean’s office questioning why I wanted to meet with the provost. I explained that I wanted to meet the head of the organization for which I worked; I knew the presidents of my alma maters and the president and CEO of the corporation for which I had worked and I would like to meet Provost Samuels. I got a 15 minute appointment.

I met Norman and we started talking and ended up chatting for close to an hour. I offered to leave since he had someone waiting, but he continued the conversation and I stayed a while longer. That was the beginning of our relationship. I find Norman to be a warm and giving person of great intellect who cares deeply about people, issues, social justice, and ethical conduct. He has been and will continue to be a mentor and a friend. But more than that, he has been an inspiration and a role model. — **DT Ogilvie, Associate Provost for Information Technology**

Norman Samuels was the first faculty member and administrator par excellence on this campus who constantly pushed the association of Rutgers with Newark whenever any formal or informal reference to this campus was ever made, including recruiting. It was widely regarded as a negative association at first, but Norman Samuels managed to make “Rutgers-Newark” into a well known symbol of diversity and excellence. — **Andres H. Vassiliou, Geology Professor**

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**STUDENTS**
- Rutgers-Newark is named, for the fifth year in a row, the most diverse national research university. Students from more than 70 nations are part of a culturally rich campus community.
- Women outnumber men, 54% to 46%, and about 10% of the student body lives on campus. Among the newer student organizations are the Chinese Graduate Student Association, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, Pakistani Students Association, Os Lusiadas Portuguese Club, Organization of African Students, and Latinos United Networking America.
- Dining facilities annually serve over 350,000 meals to students, as well as faculty, staff and visitors.

**FACULTY & STAFF**
- Many careers have been made at Rutgers-Newark. Faculty achievement is at an all-time high, with internationally prestigious grants, awards, publications, and media citations.
clockwise from top: Norman Samuels at the 1991 groundbreaking for expansions to Robeson Campus Center and the Golden Dome Athletic Center; with the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana at R-N in 2000; with NJIT President Saul Fenster, UMDNJ President Stanley Bergen and Essex County College President Zachary Yamba, 1992; with Governor Christine Todd Whitman on a NJ trade mission to Israel in 1996; with History Professor Clement Price in 2001; and at R-N commencement ceremonies in 1982.
clockwise from top: Norman Samuels with R-N Provost Scholars in 1999; with U.S. Senator Jon Corzine at R-N in 2000; with Dean Steven J. Diner, 2002; with MBA student Pei-yu You and NJ Secretary of State DeForest Soaries at a dinner celebrating Rutgers-Newark's diversity in 2001; and at the dedication of the Center for Law and Justice in 1999, with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Rutgers President Francis Lawrence, then-NJ Senator Donald DiFrancesco, NJ Chief Justice Deborah Portz, and Deans Leslie Kennedy and Stuart Deutsch.
Over the years, Dr. Norman Samuels has retold a story that resonates with poignant memories of an era now finally relegated to the distant past. It also serves as a marker for significant changes in the cultural and moral terrain of the university. The story goes something like this: As a recently hired assistant professor of political science, Dr. Samuels made his way to the Newark campus for the first time in the summer of 1967. From Penn Station he took the westbound Newark subway to the margins of the downtown area, where Rutgers is located. Like all young faculty members, he looked forward to stepping onto a campus of hope and purpose, a wholesome place to begin a career as a professor. But it was Newark’s summer of 1967, now well remembered as an extraordinarily sad season of rage, violence, destruction and death. Coming out of the subway stop located near the intersection of Washington Street and Raymond Boulevard, young man Samuels’ earliest impressions of Rutgers-Newark were of tanks rolling down University Avenue and of national guardsmen in full battle gear. The beginning of his career at the university coincided with the Newark riots of July 1967!

I joined the Rutgers faculty two years later. Although the tanks and troops had long ago left the city when I stepped onto the campus, the legacies of what Norman Samuels saw were still much in evidence. They would remain for nearly a full generation. Students from different cultures, especially American students, avoided each other as if they were cultural strangers. And at times, Newark seemed to be far beyond the boundaries of the campus, despite our location within an area deserving of the university’s concern and its resources.

Over a career that spans 34 years, more time within the university than any senior member of the Rutgers administration, Dr. Samuels has chartered a steady course gently informed by his convictions of decency, compassion, fairness, and trust. He is among the most admired members of the university community. He is also largely responsible for the well-documented ascent of the Newark campus as the bellwether campus for the university’s commitment to diversity and tolerance broadly defined, deeply adhered to. That the Newark campus is very much at peace with itself 33 years after a group of protesting black students took over Conklin Hall is attributable, in large part, to Dr. Samuels’ work in building a foundation for academic excellence informed by intercultural tol-
erance. He has gained the respect and admiration of a cross section of individuals on a campus where ethnic isolation was once the norm and in a city where racial and ethnic discord once brought disaster. And, too, he has stayed the course as an education reformer, never growing weary, even years ago when the ideals we now cherish were untested.

Perhaps Dr. Samuels’ first academic steps toward a morally endowed career in higher education were taken in his political science classes. Among his early students were some of the militant African American students who, in 1969, took over Conklin Hall and sparked a reform movement at the university that in retrospect honors them and Rutgers. Some of those students are now among the most admired of our fellow citizens and alumni of Rutgers. And all with whom I have spoken have an abiding respect and affection for Dr. Samuels. No wonder, because they encountered in his classes a bright and engaging young professor who accorded to all students their rightful place as members of the academic community.

From those early times on the faculty, Dr. Samuels went on to join the university administration as associate dean of the Newark Faculty of Arts and Sciences (1971–76), dean of the faculty (1976–82) and, since 1982, as provost. To be sure, this vast time period would mark an impressive achievement of endurance for any administrator, but it is much more than that. Dr. Samuels has been near or at the helm of the profound changes at the university’s Newark campus during times of central administration cynicism about Newark, when Newark was among America’s most despised cities, and when Newark, ill-served by American perceptions of old towns, was seemingly listless and doomed.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, these plight-riddled circumstances, Dr. Samuels placed before the faculty and the university administration a clear and compassionate view of Rutgers as a beacon of hope in a benighted city. To his credit, he helped to create an intellectual and social environment at the Newark campus that makes it one of the most remarkable places in New Jersey and in the nation. It is a place where young and minority scholars are welcomed into a circle of collegiality; where students from a wide swath of nation states, cultures, and historical narratives find
their uniqueness respected even as they are urged to step onto the common
ground of life at Rutgers, and it is a place, situated at the center of an old city,
that has helped Newark regain its equilibrium and its momentum. This last
point is important, I think. In many ways, Newark was crippled years ago by
the ill perceptions of race imagined in the color and the culture of Americans
of African ancestry. Those perceptions, and others that take us back to the
beginning of the modern age, have changed. Rutgers, under the leadership of
President Francis Lawrence and, to be sure, of Dr. Samuels in Newark, can
claim responsibility for making the university a place where race is studied and where its mytholo-
gies are challenged by collective pursuits.

Over the past five years, much has been made of the U.S. News & World Report designation of
the Newark campus as the most diverse in the nation. That is important, of course. And yet it is
also important to keep in the mind that Dr. Samuels has made that designation into a campus-wide
motif that now serves Rutgers' larger mission as a public research university with international and
intercultural interests. All the more, Dr. Samuels knows that diversity, which once was coded to
mean black, has taken on a more variegated meaning during an era when New Jersey is settling
thousands of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, Africa and the Caribbean, and
as the state has become a destination for New York and Philadelphia weary residents who want to
live in heterogeneous cities and towns.

The story of a campus community transformed by a vision of excellence and diversity is
enriched by Dr. Samuels' personal engagement in the community. At a time when the demands of
higher educational administration force far too many talented men and women to retreat from the
public sphere, he has remained an active participant in civic affairs. His membership on various
boards and commissions emboldens the good work of other civic leaders and carries the university
ideals far beyond the campus to circles of power and prestige. In this regard, Dr. Samuels is with-
out peer among the educational leaders of our metropolitan area. His is a voice of reason, a voice
taken seriously by a cross section of political, corporate, and civic leaders. And beyond the city's
elite, which has taken Dr. Samuels into the realms of the poor and ill-served, he is considered a for-
midable friend and good citizen. This is important, I think, because Newark’s history over the past
half century fostered cynicism toward leading institutions. Remarkably, Rutgers-Newark is seen in
the best possible light as an institution fairly disposed to all citizens and cultures. We can thank Dr.
Samuels for that most honorable perception of the university’s role in the state’s largest city.

The Human Dignity Award is unique; it is precious. It is endowed with the moral corpus of
the university. Norman Samuels knows well about the hard work required for moral duty aimed at
humanitarian issues at an institution as large and complicated as is ours. Quietly, without fanfare,
and certainly without self-promotion, he has guided the Newark campus onto higher ground. Over
his distinguished tenure the life of the campus has responded to his willingness to bear witness to
change and his ability to guide a diverse campus forward. And so there is now an array of diligent
faculty and administration colleagues working for the common good of the university’s diverse con-
stituencies. Academic and extracurricular units, such as the Institute that I serve, promote intercul-
tural discourse and wisdom. The old marginal relationship with Newark and its people has given
way to something quite remarkable: a campus that serves the communities that surround it in
health services, urban planning, educational reform, intercultural discourses in the humanities, and
social outreach to all those who used to be mere objects of our past prejudices.

For the past half a decade, we in Newark have placed an enormously important symbolic value
in the many national flags that are suspended from the ceiling of the multi-purpose room in the
Paul Robeson Campus Center. Each flag represents a sizeable number of enrolled students from a
particular country. Often when I enter the Center, I am reminded of the past that forged Norman
Samuels’ vision of the future, those days when prejudice, fear and the quickening pace of change
nearly overwhelmed the university’s higher purpose. Norman Samuels remembers those days better
than I do. And he has done quite a bit to move the Newark campus and the university out of the
reach of those days. He is the architect of the bricks and mortar and the spirit of a campus com-
munity that dignifies and honors the ideals of university.

_This article was written as a nomination of Norman Samuels for Rutgers’ Human Dignity Award, which he received
in February 2001. Clement Alexander Price is Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor of History, and
Director of Rutgers’ Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience._
On his early years at Rutgers and Medgar Evers College

“I started teaching at the end of the ’60s and it was a very political time—the country was in upheaval, and students were very much distracted. They were interested in the war, in the enormous social changes, fundamental changes in behavior, relationships and expectations. All of that made you very conscious of the need and the possibilities of changing the world around you …

“At that time the university wasn’t an ivory tower … the opportunity to actually effect change became very attractive, and I got involved. Our own campus here in Newark was a very active place. The campus was overwhelmingly white in the city that was rapidly becoming primarily African-American. The pressure for us to admit more students was very strong … The black student takeover of Conklin Hall had a statewide impact and, in connection with other protest movements, resulted in a tremendous opening up of universities … A lot of my own political science students were involved and I was very close to them …

“Malcolm Talbott, who was our first real provost, was a real leader in the city of Newark. He reached out to me, a lowly assistant professor. He told me that the first national conference on African-American studies was going to be taking place in Atlanta and would I go to represent the university because Newark was in the forefront … and I thought that would be a marvelous opportunity. With the student representative, a student of mine, a young black woman named Vicky Donaldson (who went on to get a degree from the law school and become a real activist in the city), I represented Rutgers University at the very first national conference on black studies. When I came back I was one of two faculty members who led a faculty effort to create a department of black studies here at Newark …

“I left Rutgers to become part of the team that put together Medgar Evers College in Bedford Stuyvesant … A good friend of mine, Richard Trent, at the time a professor at Brooklyn College, was asked by the Board of Higher Education in New York to become the president of the very first specifically black college, and he asked me to join him … ‘it will be the most terrific learning experience you’ll ever have.’ A half dozen of us met in a basement and we spent every day and every night in the community. We built a curriculum and hired a faculty from scratch. It was about a year and half, and more learning about how to create colleges, how to deal politically, more learning
occurred at that time than at any other period of my life … But Henry Blumenthal, who was dean of arts and sciences here, called me and said he needed an associate dean, and would I come back to Rutgers? … So I came back as associate dean and from that point on I stayed, becoming dean, and then provost.

“My sense of getting involved and my sense of the possibilities started out with an involvement here at Rutgers, then was deepened and extended by my experience in Brooklyn, so that when I came back I had a much clearer idea of what I hoped to accomplish. That was, if you really want to make a difference, in terms of providing education, and particularly a first class education—because it has always been my sense that anything less is to fool people and to rob them—the first thing you have to decide is that it should be thoroughly worthwhile and thoroughly of high quality. Then you’ll be making a real contribution … that has been the commitment ever since.”

**On how being a political scientist helped him (or not) as an educational leader**

“People always said, you’re a political scientist so you know how to get things done. But I’ve never noticed any real connection between people who get things done and any theoretical knowledge of political science. Getting things done is a combination of how you relate to people, and experience. I had a great deal to learn, and tripped up often enough, and had to learn how to accomplish things, sometimes with a lot of pain and sometimes with a lot of luck. My sense has always been that my biggest asset was the ability to identify and recruit … real quality people, and somehow seduce and persuade them to come to work for us, and then to give them the support they needed.”

**On achieving success**

“I don’t say this out of any false modesty but I have never thought of things here as any kind of personal success. They really are a combination of being in the right place at the right time, with the right people. I don’t believe that from a historical point of view all that much happens because some person made it happen. … It happens when you have the right combination of people in leadership roles, the potential and the resources. There’s no magic that creates success out of thin air … the art of it is, realizing what’s out there, and what the potential is and bringing it all together.”
On his longevity as a leader

“As long as I had the feeling of being able to build things, that there are new and worthwhile things to be created, my interest and energy was captured. … if you have a sense that the thing’s been done, the cake is baked, then there isn’t much interest. As long as you have the sense that there’s more to do, worthwhile and genuinely socially valuable things, and not just ego-tripping, then that keeps you going … I much preferred to get things done quietly. … I never did need headlines or pictures in the paper. It was always important for the president of Rutgers to get the credit—or take the heat—and leave me alone to just do what I have to do … presidents are much more subject to burnout and political pressure—I’ve been able to duck a lot of it.”

On his major accomplishments at Rutgers-Newark

“What I built (at Rutgers-Newark) was on the base of what was built previously by Jim Young, my predecessor as provost … and Malcolm Talbott, who created a political climate and a separate identity for the campus without which we could not have gone very far … The things that I feel most proud of are that this campus has achieved status and recognition as a major university research center, not as a branch campus of New Brunswick … but in its own right. Whether you measure that by ratings in *U. S. News & World Report*, or by external accreditation reviews, or just from the self-respect and pride that I find in our own faculty and our deans … that is at the top of my list. It’s an intangible, an outlook—something that you can’t point to, the way you point to bricks and mortar …

“Inseparable from that is that we managed to achieve this without ever betraying, indeed by continuing to maintain and expand, our commitment to access for everyone to this campus. I don’t separate the ranking from *U. S. News & World Report*—at the top of their diversity category, which we have been for five years in a row—from their ranking of us as one of the top 100 national research universities, *without* respect to diversity. The two go hand in hand. To me, to have lost the access and diversity dimension while achieving success on the academic side would not have been a victory. One without the other would have been less than half. But the two together, that’s extraor-
dinary, because that shows that what some of us hoped to accomplish at Rutgers, or for my brief period of time at Medgar Evers, can be accomplished. You can build first-rate quality in an intensely urban setting with a heavily minority student population. …

**On working in the city of Newark**

“The four CHEN (Council for Higher Education in Newark) institutions bring 35,000 college students a day into the city, employ thousands of people, and are a billion dollar business. … The campuses anchor a large chunk of the city right next to the downtown business district and built it up and invested money and provided stability and an audience and a clientele for a lot of other things that go on in the city. … One of the reasons that we created CHEN, and one of the things that made it an important institution, was the understanding that we all faced the same political challenges and that it was better to work together than to hang separately. We accomplished many things by working together. We started new housing in the city, we made it possible to have the first movie complex in the inner city, we started Science Park, which has transformed a whole section of the city. …”

**On the next generation of leaders**

“What’s going to happen to the CHEN group is what’s going to happen to this campus. You are going to get new and vigorous and energetic leadership that will take it to the next level. I think that these are now terrific opportunities and they will attract terrific new leaders. If you have a good place and it’s got great potential then it will attract people with energy, drive and vision—so I expect to see both this campus and CHEN flourish. The greatest disappointment for me would be to have a sense that when I leave, the structure isn’t strong enough to keep moving forward.”

**On thinking big**

“Anytime you try to do anything new and different, you upset apple carts, even if they are apple carts of the mind. I described this campus as being a major research university center in its own right, but deciding to go for real excellence involved careful planning. To me the symbolic effort there was the creation of the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience … I put together
a campus task force and posed them the question—we have built up some strength in the sciences; I think we can't be taken seriously as a research center unless we have a really strong science presence. Our own people came up with the idea of a neuroscience center … but the problem was that people thought small, and so what I brought to it was thinking big … I went to (Rutgers President) Ed Bloustein and (New Brunswick Provost) Alec Pond and said I wanted to build a neuroscience center which can take advantage of the strengths that we’ve already got, northern New Jersey’s standing as a major pharmaceutical center, and the need to move this campus forward … I said the reputation of Rutgers as a whole is not going to soar the way you want it to, if the perception is that you have weak legs in Newark and Camden …

“The original conception of neuroscience was that the university would invest a couple million. And through all sorts of strange and unexplained events the $2 million became $20 million and we built a major new center. … My contribution was first in getting people to think about it and then growing what was a central administration commitment of modest resources into something that was much larger than anybody envisioned, and I always have taken pleasure in that …”

**On the people who helped him succeed**

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with terrific deans—they are the key level of leadership. They are the ones who lead the schools, who hire faculty, who provide constant encouragement to build quality … and I’ve been able to keep terrific people in the provost’s office … Terrific people have to feel they are part of team, relating to others and working together. So I guess I can take credit for creating an environment where people could work together and people could create and build.”

**On some personal regrets**

“It’s always been a regret in the back in my mind … that here I am, I started as a political science professor, and what I was really going to do was turn the world upside down by bringing an understanding of political philosophy and politics to young people, and I was going to write all kinds of books. … but there simply never was enough time. And I’ve never had the superhuman energy to do both (the scholarship and the administrative work). So I’m going to do a little bit now. … I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to do much in the scholarship area, but I’ll do the teaching …”
“Scholarship is something that people build on, through the depth of their understanding and analysis over many years … I’m going to need to be persuaded personally that I have something truly worthwhile and fresh that’s worth saying.”

**On teaching**

“Teaching is marvelous, not only because you have the chance to talk about and explore your field, but you interact with young people who have none of the constraints that older people do. They’re not necessarily excessively polite — when you talk nonsense they sometimes let you know, and they ask incredulous questions. ‘But you just said this, now you’re saying that?’ You’ve got to keep on your toes … I found I learned an awful lot just from where students pushed me and pressed me and forced me to think through and rethink things that I said. So I’m hoping again to find real exchange in the classroom, real stimulus to my own thinking.

“I expect to find a very different student body now. I understand there isn’t the same political involvement, and the symbol of the modern student may be earphones over your head, listening to your own music, and not participating in the larger environment. But politics in every sense is so fundamental to how we live, to what our society is like, that I should be able to get them interested. If at the end of a year I haven’t gotten them interested, wherever they started, then I’m a failure as a teacher … Politics is very real, very directly and immediately important to them. Whether it’s war and peace, or quality of life in local communities, or honesty in government, those are things that they need to care about … if the students aren’t interested, then I haven’t reached them.”

**On enjoying the job**

“It looks like a tremendous amount of work, which it is, and intense, unrelenting pressure, which it is … But it’s also been exciting and it’s been fun. … I’ve just gotten a terrific charge out of it. I’ve enjoyed everything I’ve done, it’s been exciting to build, exciting to watch the city turn around, see these institutions come together and accomplish things. I can’t tell you what a kick I get watching some of the just first class faculty members that I’ve been involved in hiring, just watching them
succeed. … You take personal pleasure in other people’s success. I’ve watched some of them write books, make discoveries … it’s a great, great kick.”

**ON not taking higher education for granted**

“One of the great rewards of the job is sitting at graduation every year and watching this stream of faces coming at you. Students getting their diplomas after sometimes four years, and, with university college students, sometimes eight years. The faces are the map of Rutgers-Newark. People of all ages, races, men, women, disabled people, just this sea of faces, and everyone with a huge smile. They shake your hand or the dean’s hand, they wave to their families, their families are cheering. Because so many of these students are first generation, it’s not taken for granted …

“I was the first in my family to graduate from college … My mother went to the first year of high school. My father never went to high school. Years later, my father, who had a fruit and vegetable stand, retired, and he looked at my sister and me, and he said I’m going to go to college. And he did … He had spent all of his life working, carrying 100 pound boxes on his back to make a living, and he waited all this time to do what he wanted to do … He was an enormous influence on me. He’d say, ‘You’re not going into the fruit business! You’re going to work with your head, and not your back.’ I’ve always been able to identify personally with Rutgers-Newark students. They’re me, I’m them.”

*Excerpted from an interview with Helen Paxton, March 2002.*