

PROVOST's PAGE

Testimony of Dr. Steven J. Diner, Provost of Rutgers-Newark, at Hearings of the New Jersey Legislative Task Force on Higher Education, January 26, 2007

Chairman Lesniak, Chairman Caraballo, distinguished members of the committee: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my views on the proposed reorganization of Newark's research universities. I am Steven Diner, Provost of Rutgers-Newark. I have headed Rutgers-Newark for four and a half years, and before that served for four years as dean of our Faculty of Arts and Sciences. I also served as the co-chair of the committee that planned a unified research university in Newark in 2002 and 2003 under the leadership of Dr. Roy Vagelos.

Rutgers-Newark has over 10,000 students, the largest enrollment of Newark's three research universities. It has long been an institution committed to making first-rate education with an outstanding research faculty available to students from low-income and modest family backgrounds. For ten years in a row, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Rutgers-Newark the most diverse national university in America. A newly announced assessment of doctoral universities ranked Rutgers-Newark twelfth in the country among small research universities. Rutgers-Newark has six colleges: arts & sciences, business, law, nursing, criminal justice and public affairs & administration.

Let me get right to the point. I believe the unification of Newark's three research universities could bring tremendous benefits to the city of Newark and the people of New Jersey if it is done right and planned carefully. Like President McCormick, I believe that the planning for this major restructuring of our research universities should be done carefully with extensive participation of academic leaders; that a concern with academic quality must drive everything else; that the state's universities should be governed in a way that will protect them from partisanship; and that adequate funds be allocated to enable this restructuring to succeed. Within this framework, the unification of the research universities of Newark offers tremendous potential.

The research universities of Newark already have extensive collaborations and joint programs. Each year, approximately 1200 students from Rutgers-Newark or NJIT take courses at the other institution. Rutgers students in computer science take their major courses at NJIT. NJIT students take their biology courses at Rutgers. NJIT biologists and bioengineers have their laboratories at Rutgers, and Rutgers environmental scientists have laboratories at NJIT. Rutgers and UMDNJ jointly operate a neuroimaging facility. Rutgers and UMDNJ jointly offer a PhD in neuroscience and a Masters in Public Health. All three institutions participate in a PhD in Urban Systems. And these are just a few examples of the extensive collaborations that already exist.

One might ask, then, why is it important academically to bring these three institutions together if so much collaboration already exists? First, it is very difficult to sustain collaborations over time, and administering cross-campus collaborations is complex and time-consuming at best. Secondly, there are a few areas of duplication where consolidation could bring great benefits – nursing schools at both Rutgers and UMDNJ, business schools at Rutgers and NJIT, chemistry departments at Rutgers and NJIT, among others. Thirdly, students will get a wider range of course selection, greater program depth and more comprehensive services for their tuition dollars in a single, comprehensive and well-integrated university of 21,000 students. Finally, our strength and competitiveness in the biomedical sciences would be greatly enhanced by bringing together in a one institution the medical and dental school faculties of UMDNJ, the bioengineering and computational science faculties of NJIT, and the basic science faculties of both Rutgers and NJIT. Leveraging these strengths in the biomedical sciences to enhance economic development in Newark and New Jersey will also require the expertise of the business school in entrepreneurship and of the law school in intellectual property and commercial law.

But even more important than these specific benefits, a comprehensive university with schools of arts and sciences, law, business, medicine, dentistry, engineering, computing, architecture, nursing, criminal justice and public administration would have the elements of a major research university. With strong leadership and adequate state financial support, in fifteen to twenty years Newark's university could become known around the world. It could help transform the reputation of the state's largest city, solidify Newark's role as a college town, and provide the foundation for economic growth in Newark and New Jersey in the future. A unified institution in Newark could be one of the nation's great urban universities. We need only look to Chicago to see the potential. In 1982, the old University of Illinois at Chicago Circle was merged with the University of Illinois medical center located ten blocks away. The University of Illinois at Chicago has gained wide recognition as one of the nation's top universities with an explicitly urban mission and deep engagement with the city of Chicago. I believe we can do the same, or even better, in Newark.

So what are the conditions necessary for a unified university in Newark to succeed?

First, academic considerations must be paramount, and the process must be driven by a vision for the next generation, not by current self-interest. Restructuring will be enormously complex, and must be very carefully planned and then gradually implemented over a period of several years. Budgetary issues, governance, reorganization of academic units, debt service, allocation of endowments, tenure, union contracts, the status of university hospital and numerous other matters would have to be studied carefully before consolidation could go forward. Moreover, the work of the federal monitor overseeing UMDNJ would have to be completed before we could start merging administrative structures.

If academic opportunities of the next generation are paramount, then all units that are currently in Newark must be part of the consolidated Newark university. I believe the suggestion to exclude the law and business schools is poorly conceived. A major purpose of consolidation is to eliminate the barriers to scholarly collaboration across units. Why, then build in a new institutional barrier to collaboration with law and business? Even if one argued that the sole purpose of the consolidation was to advance economic development around science, technology and medicine, the business school and the law school would have crucial roles to play in fostering entrepreneurship and technology transfer. Rutgers Business School, for example, has an MBA concentration and research center in pharmaceutical management, a valuable resource for any effort at economic development in the biomedical sciences. On a more operational level, 32% of Rutgers-Newark undergraduates major in business. If the business school was removed from the university in Newark, its enrollment would decline immediately by approximately 2100 students and several of its most popular majors would disappear. If the freestanding Rutgers Business School in Newark decided to give its own undergraduate business major, where would the students take their non-business liberal arts courses? Right now, undergraduate business majors takes at least half of their credits outside the Business School.

A second condition for success of a unified university in Newark is adequate funding. There will be significant short-term costs in consolidating the administrative structures of three separate institutions. There will be some long-term economies in combining three registrars, three financial aid offices, three police forces, three housing offices, three purchasing offices, and even three Provosts, and this will ultimately make more efficient use of scarce public funds. But there will be significant costs at the start, and without a substantial initial investment the new university in Newark cannot succeed.

Finally, I would argue that the university in Newark should be named Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey at Newark and operated as a part of Rutgers. The Rutgers name is an enormous asset, and it would take decades and millions of dollars to achieve the brand recognition that Rutgers commands. Rutgers University has been located in Newark since 1892, when the School of Pharmacy was opened. In 1946, what was then the University of Newark was taken over by Rutgers and became Rutgers-Newark. Across the country, the name of the flagship university is used by multiple institutions in the same state: The University of California at Berkeley and The University of California at Los Angeles, The University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign and the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and dozens more. Likewise, New Jersey's research universities should carry the name Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey at New Brunswick, at Newark, and at Camden.

The name of the unified university in Newark is a matter of utmost importance in recruiting students and faculty. In the surveys we have conducted, students who attend Rutgers-Newark tell us that they chose our institution because they know that a Rutgers education is recognized by prospective employers and by graduate schools as a top quality degree. If the Rutgers name were abandoned in Newark, I predict we would face a

significant decline in applications and enrollment, at least in the early years. This would create budgetary problems for the new university, and would therefore slow or halt the growth of new resident students who are so important to the revitalization of downtown Newark. And the prestige of the Rutgers name has also been a great asset in attracting top faculty.

A Rutgers University system with two or three enlarged campuses would also make possible the coordination of programs that currently span multiple campuses, including business, social work, nursing and pharmacy. It would also allow for more efficient development of statewide resources like the library and computing systems. It would, of course, raise questions about governance and the extent of local autonomy. But there are many models around the country. If we agree that the name Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey will add significant academic value to the university in Newark, then we can certainly devise an appropriate governance structure.

Thank you.