

## Chapter 6

### **The Transformation of Rutgers into a Major State University**

The transformation of Rutgers University into a major American state university began in the 1960's when the state of New Jersey started providing fairly stable funding for physical expansion, for competitive faculty salaries, and for graduate and professional training. With the steady infusion of funds from the state for the growth of the university came the necessity to plan how to expand its academic and residential facilities.

Several plans were considered for meeting the growth of student enrollment, estimated to double in 15 years. One possibility was simply to expand the two main colleges, Douglass College and the College of Arts and Sciences. This was not a realistic possibility, however, given that the College Avenue Campus of the College of Arts and Sciences was located in urban New Brunswick with little room for the enormous expansion envisaged by the university. The university chose instead to add more residential undergraduate colleges. Favoring this plan to add new residential colleges was the unexpected opportunity that presented itself to the university in 1963 when the Defense Department closed Camp Kilmer and declared the land as "surplus." The camp was adjacent to the University Heights Campus (renamed Busch Campus in 1971). The university obtained 540 acres of the Camp where it planned to build several co-educational colleges, each with a special focus.

Livingston College, built on the Kilmer site and with a focus on the social sciences and urban studies, admitted its first class in 1969. A second college at Kilmer, with its focus being "man's relations to his physical and biological environment" was also in the early planning. For various political and financial reasons, which need not be elaborated here, only Livingston College was built.

The expansion of graduate and research programs in the academic disciplines was also essential for the university to transform itself into a major state university. But how would Rutgers organize the faculty and other pertinent resources of the colleges to develop such discipline-wide programs? There was no simple answer to this question because of the autonomy of its undergraduate colleges, each with its own budgetary control of resources for the academic departments at the college, including hiring and promotion of faculty.

The university-wide section, established in 1956 for each academic discipline, was the university's first attempt at a structure that would co-ordinate the activities of the several college departments within a discipline, and thereby also promote the development of a graduate program within the discipline. (Chapter 5 describes the early role of the Psychology Section in the post-war revival of the graduate program in psychology.) However, it was apparent by the mid 1960's that the sections were rather ineffective in doing so because the colleges still retained much of their autonomy. University planners now considered several alternatives.

At one extreme was the idea of leaving things as they are. There was much to say in favor of this alternative. Diversity among undergraduate curricula (including psychology's) thrived under these conditions. There were also sharp differences among the colleges — particularly between the men's college and the women's college — in student life and in extracurricular activities, differences that derived from the needs and preferences of an all male or an all female student body. Indeed, each college had developed a unique identity, derived from long traditions associated with the college, traditions staunchly defended by faculty and students alike. The two colleges were also residential and geographically separate from each other. Even the newly-established co-ed Livingston College found college autonomy congenial to proclaiming its unique image as the university's "experimental" college, suited to the new zeitgeist of the '60's and early 70's in higher education. University College, the adult evening school, had also long since tailored its curricula to the needs of its student body.

At the other extreme was the idea of abolishing college autonomy and combining each of the disciplines into one university-wide department with a single faculty that staffed all the undergraduate and graduate offerings — the model actually extant on the main campus of major American universities. Rutgers academic organization with its autonomous colleges was in fact unique among the major universities in America.

In 1967, the university chose a middle road, by inaugurating the Federated College Plan as an organization that would (presumably) have the advantages of both extremes. The plan called for a New Brunswick chairman for each discipline. The function of the chairman was to coordinate the academic activities of the discipline on the New Brunswick Campus. Funds for graduate programs were to come from the Graduate School.

There was significant concern and even strong opposition to the Federated College Plan among the faculty on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, the faculty of the men's college (renamed in 1967 with the historical title "Rutgers College") felt that the Federated College Plan gave neither the New Brunswick discipline chairmen nor the dean of the Graduate School adequate budgets to strengthen the graduate and research programs in the several academic disciplines. They also argued that to build a coherent graduate program, the discipline as a whole needed more of a voice in faculty hiring and promotion. On the other hand, the Douglass faculty felt that the plan went too far in reducing college autonomy.

It soon became clear that the initial plan of 1967 would not really achieve much for the disciplines. Over more than a decade, the university gradually modified the Federated College Plan, experimenting with various organizational structures to expand discipline-wide authority, and yet retain the significant elements of college autonomy. (Richard McCormick's 1978 unpublished monograph, *Academic Reorganization in New Brunswick, 1962-1978* gives a detailed historical record of the deliberations — often quite agonizing — that took place between 1962 and 1967 before the plan was instituted and the various modifications that were made of the plan in the ensuing decade. The monograph is available in the Rutgers University Archives.)

In 1981 the Federated College Plan was scrapped and a plan for consolidation of each of the disciplines was put in place. College departments were abolished. The faculty members of a college department for each of the major disciplines were now members of a single department with a chair and governance for administering all of the undergraduate offerings as well as the graduate program of the discipline. These university-wide departments under the aegis of a newly established position of Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, not the college deans, were now responsible for initiating the hiring and promotion of faculty. College deans continued to administer many college functions such as residential student life, extracurricular activities, and the honors program. The academic organization of Rutgers now conformed to that of other major American universities.

By the late 1970's, the size and mission of Rutgers also conformed to that of a major American university. A few statistics that illustrate the transformation of Rutgers in the 1960's and 1970's was proffered by McCormick in his 1978 monograph:

In the academic year 1962-3, there were 7,100 daytime undergraduate students in New Brunswick; last year [1977] there were 21,000. Over the same period Graduate School enrolments rose from about 1,800 to nearly 4,800. State appropriations to the University soared from eighteen million to over one hundred million dollars. Capital funds from four state bond issues, federal agencies, student fees, borrowing, and other sources financed the construction of more than one quarter of a billion dollars worth of new facilities.