

**PRESIDENT RICHARD L. MCCORMICK'S PLAN
FOR ALUMNI RELATIONS AT
RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
DECEMBER 6, 2007**

Alumni are essential members of any great university community. They are lifelong stakeholders in the institution, and their passion for and loyalty to their alma mater inspire devotion that is second to none. These bonds of affection are very special, and institutions such as Rutgers cannot achieve their goals without them.

Rutgers has a responsibility to support its alumni for a lifetime. In their achievements and worldwide impact, our graduates validate the mission of the university and embody what Rutgers produces—an educated citizenry. They play a critical role in helping its leaders realize their aspirations for Rutgers' future. They must see that the institution at which they were educated and made lifelong friends holds to its enduring values and principles. Our Rutgers alumni must be recognized, respected, and supported as an institutional asset.

Just as the transformation of undergraduate education improved the student experience at Rutgers, the alumni experience must also be enhanced. For Rutgers to reach its place among the top tier of America's research universities, its alumni must have a strong and engaged presence within the institution. It is in such partnerships that universities flourish and alumni thrive.

The plan I am presenting to the Rutgers University Board of Governors creates a strong new partnership between Rutgers and its alumni. It is the product of advice from independent consultants, deliberation by those charged with proposing improvements, and discussion with the university community. It represents a model of excellence that will inspire alumni loyalty and involvement and help Rutgers to achieve its boldest dreams.

THE ALUMNI TASK FORCE REPORT

In September 2006, I appointed an Alumni Task Force consisting of 27 members and reflecting the diversity of the alumni body. The Task Force was charged to review the Rutgers alumni experience by asking the following questions:

- What is Rutgers University's relationship with its alumni?
- What is the relationship of the Rutgers alumni body with its alma mater?
- Is Rutgers' alumni relations program properly organized to achieve the highest benefit to both the alumni body and the university?

The Task Force, ably led by former Board of Governors Chair Gene O'Hara UCN'62 as chair, and Board of Trustees Chair Gerald Harvey RC'72 as vice chair, began meeting in September 2006. During their year of deliberations, the members considered all aspects of alumni relations at Rutgers with the assistance of the alumni relations consulting firm eAdvancement. The Task Force submitted its report to me on August 28, 2007.

The Alumni Task Force Report, titled *The Imperative for Change*, calls for significant improvements in five critical areas:

- a stronger partnership between the university and its alumni, with shared management and shared priority setting;
- a new, single, all-encompassing alumni association to include all Rutgers graduates from all campuses;
- a new staff structure for the Department of Alumni Relations organized around the core functions of alumni relations;
- adequate university funding of alumni relations in the central university budget; and
- expansion and upgrading of alumni programming to engage alumni more deeply in the life of the university and to enhance their lifelong experience with the institution.

The report and the recommendations have received my careful review, and I have listened to the comments of alumni who care deeply about Rutgers. Four public forums held during the fall provided valuable input from alumni of our Camden, Newark, and New Brunswick campuses, and an online forum allowed me to hear the viewpoints of Rutgers alumni residing outside the New Jersey area. The email messages the university has received, and the many conversations I have had with members of the alumni community, have also been helpful in determining this plan.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT TO A NEW DIRECTION

I wholeheartedly endorse the Alumni Task Force Report and applaud the members of the Task Force for their vision and clarity. Implementing the changes recommended in the report will allow all Rutgers alumni to interact and engage with their alma mater in a way that is mutually rewarding, while achieving the highest standards in advancing the university. In endorsing these recommendations, however, let me also acknowledge the many comments and concerns expressed during my listening period.

Today I am pleased to announce the following university commitments to the success of this historic new direction for alumni relations at Rutgers:

- Alumni relations is an essential function of the university and must be treated as such. Just as we could not thrive without academics, the arts, or athletics, we cannot succeed without a vibrant and engaged alumni body. Executive Vice President Phil Furmanski will work with Carol Herring and Donna Thornton to provide a funding program that will enact the recommendations in the report. I agree that every Rutgers graduate should be a member of his or her alumni association—the Rutgers University Alumni Association—and that we should eliminate the membership dues program immediately while taking special care to ensure that current dues-payers have a smooth transition to our new alumni experience.
- Elevating the presence of alumni relations within the university community is an important element of the Task Force Report. With the support of the Board of Governors, we will charter the Governors' committee on university relations to include alumni relations and, as the Task Force Report suggests, then create a joint committee of the Boards of Governors, Trustees, and Overseers to give the alumni body unprecedented access to these university governing boards.

- Effective December 6, 2007, Donna Thornton will hold the position of vice president for alumni relations and will serve as a member of my cabinet. In addition, I am promoting Carol Herring to the position of executive vice president for development and alumni relations. These two promotions are further evidence of the university's commitment to bring alumni relations to the highest level of governance.
- A most important recommendation in the Task Force Report is to establish an alumni center or presence on each campus. Creating a place for alumni to gather and celebrate special events is critical to the success of a well-rounded alumni program. It is my hope that Rutgers and members of the alumni community will develop a shared vision for such centers in which the university will contribute parcels of land and the alumni will financially support the project. By July 2008, my administration will appoint an ad hoc committee to begin a feasibility study for this initiative.
- *Rutgers Magazine* is an important tool by which we communicate with our alumni, and it should be seen by all Rutgers graduates. I have asked the Departments of University Relations and Alumni Relations, the Foundation, and Dr. Furmanski to develop a plan to fund the magazine so that every alumnus and alumna receives *Rutgers Magazine*. Additionally, the Departments of University Relations and Alumni Relations should collaborate closely to ensure that the editorial content in the magazine advances the university's communication with its alumni.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Today I am appointing an Implementation Team to lead the next phase of this alumni transformation. I have asked Robert Stevenson ENG'65, to chair the Implementation Team. Bob is a former RAA president, a member of the Board of Trustees, and a member of the Alumni Task Force. He chaired the subcommittee that drafted the Alumni Task Force Report. He is deeply committed to the success of these plans, and I know he will provide outstanding leadership.

In addition, the following individuals have agreed to serve as members of the Implementation Team:

Glenn Gnirrep RC'82, GSNB'89
 Anthony Marchetta RC'71, GSNB'78, MBA'83
 George Rears RC'89
 Jim Rhodes CCAS'94
 Louis Sapirman NLAW'94
 Donna Thornton, Vice President for Alumni Relations
 Christine Tiritilli DC'92
 Michael Tuosto SB'62, MBA'65
 Bernice Proctor Venable DC'62, GSNB'67, GSE'83

The Implementation Team is charged to follow the principles of alumni relations outlined in the Alumni Task Force Report and to consider four important issues that have emerged during the forums on each campus:

- First and foremost, the partnership between Rutgers and its alumni is essential to the future progress of this university. I strongly endorse the partnership model as set forth in the Task Force Report and call on the Implementation Team to ensure that all structural and programming changes reflect this principle.
- I enthusiastically support the Task Force recommendation to create a single new organization to be called the Rutgers University Alumni Association (RUAA). As the Task Force Report recommends, it is anticipated that the Rutgers University Alumni Federation will eventually cease to exist. The Implementation Team is directed to develop a constitution, bylaws, and operating procedures for the RUAA that pay close attention to the principles of a partnership between the university and its alumni. This is in the spirit envisioned by the Task Force and reflects that of successful alumni and university relationships around the country. The new Board of Directors of the RUAA and an operating structure should be created no later than March 31, 2008. The Alumni Relations department will continue to provide support to the alumni events and programs currently planned through this fiscal year ending June 30, 2008.
- The existing alumni associations and currently formed alumni clubs and chartered affinity groups have contributed in myriad ways to the support of Rutgers students and alumni and to the advancement of the university. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the alumni leaders who have devoted so much of their time and talent to keeping their fellow graduates connected to Rutgers. With appreciation for these groups and their dedicated leaders, we welcome and look forward to their continued active participation. The Implementation Team is directed to develop mechanisms that promote the roles of our proven alumni leaders and use the best alumni engagement practices of the existing alumni associations and groups under the auspices of the new RUAA.
- Additionally, I ask the Implementation Team to clarify the important roles that professional and graduate school alumni play in the university and to ensure that all aspects of alumni relations include this important constituency and provide programming to meet their specific professional needs.

THE NEW RUTGERS ALUMNI EXPERIENCE

The finest universities in the nation benefit from active and engaged alumni who interact regularly and deeply with their alma mater, who feel a strong sense of loyalty, and who invest themselves in the advancement of the institution's programs, values, and quality. We want the same for Rutgers, and I am confident that the changes we are implementing will accomplish these goals.

Graduates encountering our new and revitalized approach to alumni relations will find a Rutgers that seeks their participation, expertise, and involvement from their earliest years as alumni. They will be welcomed to full membership without the requirement of annual dues. They will enjoy maximum opportunities to participate in the life of the university and receive maximum encouragement to help and support Rutgers.

Imagine, for example, a 2004 alumna of Rutgers–Camden with a degree in urban studies who lives in Newark and works in Manhattan. In fall 2008, she receives a copy of *Rutgers Magazine* for the first time ever and reads about Rutgers’ new commitment to alumni. She finds it encouraging, and her interest is further piqued when she receives an invitation to a Charter Day celebration on the Newark Campus for all Rutgers alumni living in the area.

A few months later she is invited to an event sponsored by Douglass Residential College on women making a difference in urban areas. Though she has never been to the New Brunswick Campus, the topic interests her and she attends. In spring 2009 she attends her reunion in Camden and reconnects with classmates and sorority sisters. She registers for the Rutgers alumni online community and immediately learns about a social event for young alumni hosted by the New York City Rutgers Club. There she meets other Rutgers graduates working in the city and forms an informal online group for career networking. She also joins a group of her Camden classmates and other Rutgers alums with an interest in urban studies to form an affinity group, which later nominates her for membership in the Rutgers University Alumni Council of the university-wide alumni association. Along the way, she becomes a contributor to the Annual Fund and offers her time as a mentor for urban studies majors at Rutgers.

While this scenario may not be typical, it suggests the many points of entry to the university that we seek to make available through the bold plans I am announcing today. We are committed to engaging Rutgers graduates of all classes, all campuses, and all programs of study. We are determined to build an alumni program that serves their needs and interests and strengthens their financial and emotional commitment to Alma Mater. In doing so, we will form a dynamic partnership between the university and its loyal alumni that will allow Rutgers to achieve its greatest ambitions.