

Reflections on Fifty Years at Rutgers
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I didn't get off to a very good start at Rutgers. I arrived over 3 hours late for my job interview, because I had been given inaccurate instructions about how to get from the Newark airport to the campus. To make matters worse, God had not yet invented cell phones, so there was no way to notify anyone that I would be late. Despite this, everyone at the University was very gracious, and the interview (a lunch and a series of one-on-one meetings) went well. Then, however, at the end of the day, Jim Rosenau, the "New Brunswick Chair," informed me that, should an offer be forthcoming, they would not allow me to defer acceptance so that I could spend a year at the Harvard Center for International Affairs. It was, he said, now or never. Happily, that turned out not to be the case. The following year, after my having declined an earlier offer, Neil MacDonald, the Chair at Douglass College, called to renew the offer, and I accepted.

Notwithstanding this rather rocky beginning, the years spent on the faculty at Douglass College were intellectually intense and productive in all kinds of ways, and I believe they were essential to my subsequent professional growth. It was a small department: only four or five assistant professors and one senior person, Neil MacDonald, who acted as chair. But my colleagues at Douglass were very smart and engaging; and the college system further enriched our experience by bringing us into daily contact with colleagues from other disciplines – particularly History and American Studies, with whom we shared Hickman Hall.

Moreover, Neil was a benevolent and rather fatherly figure, who strongly encouraged junior faculty endeavors in both undergraduate teaching and research. Douglass at the time was the women's division of Rutgers, and the college had a choice of the top female students who wanted to attend the state university. Predictably, the undergraduates were outstanding, and the classroom was an exciting place. Notwithstanding (or because of?) a 3-3 teaching load, I learned a lot during the first couple of years from my colleagues at Douglass (Roy Licklider, Steve Salmore, Harvey Waterman, and Neil MacDonald) as well as my students, about both undergraduate teaching and about political science.

I also owe a lot to MacDonald for the evolution of my scholarly work. After publishing my first book – a case study of agrarian reform in Chile – I told him that I wanted to take several years to retool methodologically and to broaden the scope of my empirical work. My plan, however, implied at least a temporary pause in my scholarly "output." Someone else might have insisted on my maintaining a steady stream of publications on Chile, but Neil enthusiastically provided a green light and sent me on my way. The rest, as they say, is history.

The most glaring weakness of the University's college system was at the graduate level. Undergraduate departments (Douglass, Rutgers College, and Livingston) were semi-autonomous units with extensive control over hiring, recruitment, and promotions. The cultures of each college department were also quite distinct. In the small Douglass department, decisions were made collectively and very democratically, whereas the much larger Rutgers department was much more hierarchical and aspired to "hegemony" over the other poli sci units. The new Livingston department, established in the late 1960s, reflected a much more anti-establishment orientation than either of the other departments. The graduate program did not do well under these conditions. It was loosely coordinated by a "New Brunswick Chairperson" (Jim Rosenau, Chuck Jacob, and then Gerry Pomper) and by a "Combined

Graduate Committee," composed mainly of people from the different colleges who taught graduate courses. But with the faculty scattered across the different campuses and loyalties primarily at the college level, it was impossible to develop a fully integrated program. The curriculum lacked coherence (there was a huge fight, for example, over whether to offer a statistical methods course), and there was only limited support for faculty research or graduate instruction.

During the mid- and late-1970s, the college system was also encountering increasingly visible problems at the undergraduate level. From my perspective at Douglass College, the most serious problem was that both Rutgers and Livingston College became co-ed, and we lost our "monopoly" on the market for bright young New Jersey women who wanted to attend the public university. This did not necessarily invalidate the argument that Douglass should maintain its mission of providing an option for young women who sought to realize their full potential in a single-sex classroom environment. But both test scores and the quality of students did begin to decline noticeably at Douglass as more women chose Rutgers and Livingston.

From a broader perspective, the college system restricted students' access to courses offered by faculty at other campuses. This meant that, at Douglass, students were limited in practice to courses offered by our four or five tenure-track faculty (and conversely, that students at other campuses had limited access to our courses). These problems were compounded by the turf battles that inevitably arose across the university. With budgeting based on student-teacher ratios, it is not surprising that colleges did not encourage advertising for "outside" courses, and were stingy in awarding credits earned off-campus. Moreover, with political science faculty scattered across the three campuses and poor inter-campus transportation, geographic constraints also weighed heavily on our ability to offer a full range of course options to undergraduate students.

The University reorganization that began in the late 1970s aimed at consolidating departments both administratively and geographically; and unless you missed taking polisci 101, you can easily understand why it generated enormous controversy among faculty and administrators within and across campuses and departments. Opposition was especially strong at Douglass, where deans, a powerful alumni association, and much of the college faculty argued strongly for the importance of maintaining a single-sex educational option for women. Roy Licklider and I disagreed (always in a friendly way) over how to weigh the tradeoffs between graduate and undergraduate education; I prioritized the improvements that I believed reorganization would bring to graduate education.

But the turf battles engendered by the reorganization were not always friendly. They pervaded the entire system, including the larger political science community. The "mandarins" of the Rutgers College political science department rightly feared that the reorganization would dilute their authority, while the Rutgers junior faculty generally maintained a nervous silence. The Livingston department, led by Gerry Pomper, was more sympathetic to reorganization, but was also anxious to preserve its distinctive identity as a center of critical political science analysis.

The challenges of integrating these diverse interests and college cultures persisted, or even intensified, as the reorganization itself went forward. The decision to move everyone into good old Hickman Hall (rather than to College Avenue) was itself very controversial, and in fact remains so to this day. There were also conflicts over the allocation of office space and perks. The Rutgers College senior faculty tried to insist that they should have first choice of offices, privileged access to long-distance telephone lines, and lighter teaching loads than junior faculty. Ultimately, however, more egalitarian views prevailed;

teaching loads and telephone privileges were equally divided, and office space allocated through a lottery.

I do not recall major conflicts over the drafting of departmental by-laws or curriculum, although maybe I have just suppressed it. I do remember that drafting the by-laws was a long and rather tedious process that involved extensive discussion over the procedures to select the Chair, the length of the term, committee structure, etc. There were also ongoing turf battles over resources allocated to the subfields, and debate over whether to create/maintain fields in political economy, women and politics, and public law. But much of that debate occurred well after the reorganization had been achieved.

The most painful fallout from the reorganization itself was suffered by non-tenured faculty who had been recruited prior to the consolidation of the department. Not a single person in this category was promoted to tenure after the reorganization. In some cases, the decision to deny tenure came within the department itself, but in the large majority of cases, favorable departmental recommendations were overturned at higher levels of the University. These decisions could always be rationalized in terms of alleged deficiencies in the records of individual candidates, but it is hard to avoid the impression that that the University policy was to deny tenure to anyone recruited through the old college system. Aside from the human costs of these decisions, we also lost some very talented people – included one or two whom we later attempted to hire back at much higher salaries.

Notwithstanding these severe transition problems and some of the longer-term costs, I believe that the reorganization was on balance a necessary and positive step. As I noted earlier, there were significant problems with the old college system, both respect to graduate and undergraduate education. The reorganization was undeniably a necessary step toward building a credible graduate program, which is a core feature of any research-oriented public university. Moreover, although there were tradeoffs in terms of the undergraduate program, I also believe that a strong graduate program is important for recruiting and retaining faculty capable of bringing cutting edge approaches into the undergraduate classroom. In any case, speaking personally, I probably would not have remained at Rutgers had the reorganization not gone forward.

Of course, we in the political science department continue to face significant problems at Rutgers, including – and perhaps especially – at the graduate level. Our faculty is aging, and we have not been able to completely offset attrition due to outside offers and retirements. There is not enough money to recruit and support the number of graduate students we need to fill and stabilize seminar offerings. Our PhDs have an increasingly difficult time competing in an academic job market, weighted strongly toward the graduates of highly-ranked private universities. And like public universities throughout the country, we have had to struggle with a sharp decline of public funding. These – and many other challenges not enumerated – are causes for considerable concern. But they are problems afflicting public universities in general, and are unrelated to the conflicts and achievements of the specific reorganization were experienced in past decades.