

## Reorganization of Political Science at Rutgers

A Personal Retrospective by Gerald Pomper

The reorganization of political science at Rutgers (New Brunswick) had little to do with theories of education or attitudes toward the discipline. Changes in the Rutgers' departments and revised roles for the persons involved essentially came as inevitable effects of developments in the nation and the broader educational environment.

Population growth was the most significant direct influence. By 1960, the first members of the baby boom generation were nearing college age, and hordes of new students were on the way. Rutgers, still new to its position as New Jersey's state university, would have to expand rapidly. The vibrant postwar economy would provide the resources, expanding graduate programs would provide the ambitious faculty, the federal government would provide land, and young veterans and spouses would provide the children.

Political science was prepared neither intellectually nor organizationally for its coming role. In New Brunswick, the undergraduate program was divided among three units. The largest was Rutgers College, the all-male descendant of colonial Queens College, including a political science department of less than ten faculty which had separated from the department of History only in 1962. Although offering a variety of specialties, it had no intellectual coherence, other than distaste for the "behavioral revolution" that was quickly becoming dominant in the national discipline. (In my recruitment interview, illustratively, I was asked for assurances that I would be able to teach voting behavior without reliance on quantitative data.)

Douglas College provided the Rutgers home for women, including a small political science unit with a small contingent of young innovative scholars. University College provided evening instruction for older and returning students, with only one or two full-time political scientists. The three teaching units (occasionally aided by research centers, particularly the Eagleton Institute of Politics) had literally no contact or commonalities. In the summer of 1962, as I came to Rutgers College, a first step was taken to lessen these gaps through a three-day "retreat" at a Catskills summer resort. There, faculty (including members from Newark and Camden) – all male and white – were introduced to each other (e.g. often learning their names for the first time) and to their differing research and teaching interests. No effort was made toward bridging intellectual differences.

At the University level, expansion was clearly the first agenda item. It was possible that growth would come simply by enlarging the existing undergraduate units, with corresponding increases in the size of each of the separate political science departments. The adopted program was to create entire new colleges, to be located on the former U.S. Army base at Camp Kilmer in Piscataway. The first of an intended three new colleges was designated Livingston College. A brilliant physicist, Ernest Lynton, named Dean in 1965, soon recruited younger persons already at Rutgers, and attracted prestigious faculty from other institutions to head new departments absent from Rutgers, such as Anthropology, Chinese, and Computer Science, or departments with

different foci, including Political Science. In 1968, a year before the formal opening of Livingston, I transferred there and became its first Chair of political science, initially recruiting five faculty members (and others over the years, most memorably Gordon Schochet, transferring from Rutgers College, Carey McWilliams, Dennis Bathory, Dick Wilson, Barbara Lewis, Mike Aronoff, and, tangentially, Milt Hermann).

Soon, there were not three but five undergraduate units in New Brunswick, each ambitious to expand its program and increase its faculty. Rutgers, Douglass and University colleges competed with Livingston and the new-old Cook College, transformed from the long-standing College of Agriculture. These departments had no common structure, no single designated leader, no budgetary authority independent of their colleges, no common office spaces and not even regular meetings outside of the limited graduate program.

And the world was changing, too. The civil rights revolution changed administrative appointments, faculty recruitment, courses and majors, and student behavior. The women's movement has similar effects. At Livingston, co-education and sex-inclusive dormitories were assumed from the beginning, and were soon established at the other units aside from the special arrangements at Douglass. Hiring of women faculty and staff, and new curricula on gender and women's studies soon developed. All of the units - particularly Douglass and, to some extent, Livingston - responded by recruiting women and non-white faculty.

As students of factional politics and international relations and others will appreciate, the result of the competition between autonomous departments was politics without power. Duplication and wasted effort were widespread. For example, the outbreak of racial conflict in the U.S. and the rapid shifts in the developing world aroused Rutgers political scientists to recruit faculty in the field of African Politics. Competing, four of the separate departments recruited Africanists – but only four students came to major in the subject.

Political science departments reflected conflicts among their colleges, battling with University officials for budgets, lines, curricular authority, and prestige. Overlaying these conflicts were the particular battles in the discipline over research approaches and methodology. These battles were particularly fervent on issues in the graduate program, which was shared among all of the units. The stakes here were small but real – awarding of fellowships, teaching slots, admission of favored applicants, course approvals. Sometimes, the conflicts seemed to be an intellectual division between “behaviorists” and “institutionalists”; sometimes a clash of vanities; sometimes a rhetorical battle between would-be modernizers and traditionalists - “the seven dwarfs” to their opponents. (All of the contenders remain anonymous here to protect the innocent.)

Perhaps most significant in this period was the clash of cultures between departments, reflecting their styles of academic life more than the substance of their political science. University College, the smallest unit, was essentially a one-man show, its chair the only long-term full-time member. Inevitably unchallenged, and personally resistant to any challenge, he both embodied and defended tradition. In contrast, at emerging Cook College, a single young political scientist in a cross-disciplinary department would have no influence on the campus-wide political science program.

The basic axis of cultural departmental difference was drawn between (most members of) Rutgers College and the loose allies of Douglass and Livingston. The first group's members were older in age, had been at Rutgers considerably longer, and had completed their doctorates before the behavioral revolution. Their focus tended to be institutional, qualitative, and legalistic, their work in comparative politics was more likely to be in the tradition of area studies, their work in international relations more likely to concentrate on state actors, their work in political theory to be organized more by historical chronology than by analytic concepts. Contacts in the national discipline were limited, with recruitment of new faculty confined in breadth and, in large measure, to personal contacts of senior members and their previous institutions. The context of the department was traditional and hierarchical. Important decisions were clearly reserved for tenured members; junior members were expected to concentrate on building a case for their promotions, specified as the publication of one book; teaching assistants had no significant roles beyond their teaching responsibilities.

*Inevitably, these cultural differences both reflected and exaggerated personality clashes. Veterans like myself can still get aroused by repeating "war stories" Here are some autobiographical examples. I came to Rutgers College in 1962, needing a new job as we were expecting our second child. I was assigned the basic American Government course, and told that I must use the atrocious textbook written by two senior colleagues. Having just published my first book, I became "eligible" for promotion to tenure. But, despite a commendation from the immortal V.O. Key, my senior colleagues gave me only grudging approval. Four years later, Livingston was emerging, and I was invited to be its founding chair of Political Science. Having published extensively, I was also promised promotion to full Professor at Livingston. But the Rutgers department insisted that they must keep control of the process and, again grudgingly, approved.*

*The same narrowness was evident in other personnel decisions. Gordon Schochet – always a free spirit and open critic – was denied tenure at Rutgers College because his dissertation had been published and therefore, somehow, the book didn't "count." (Schochet became my first colleague at Livingston, enthusiastically supported by its Dean.)*

*Recruitment of new faculty or promotion of existing members was handled only by tenured faculty, no formal presentations were required, and outreach was limited to their friends. Steve Salmore of Douglass was initially excluded from teaching quantitative methods, absent from the graduate program, because "that can be handled by the Statistics department."*

*In contrast, at Livingston recruitment was open, unconfined by any disciplinary model, almost free-wheeling, and involved all teaching members, including T.A.s. My departmental assistant, a graduate student, told me that a brilliant scholar might be interested. That person was political theorist Wilson Carey McWilliams, possibly the smartest and most skilled teacher ever at Rutgers. So we hired him. He in turn suggested a former student now at Harvard. He too was brilliant, so we hired Dennis Bathory – and we undesignedly had a fantastic subgroup in political philosophy. Responding to the evident turmoil in the real world, we hired an Africanist, himself an African. Then we met a bright woman Africanist finishing her dissertation at Northwestern. So we cobbled together a package that brought Barbara Lewis to us. The*

*Dean hired an Associate Dean who had just completed his dissertation on Chinese politics at Princeton. So we hired him too, and now we had a core of comparative politics, and intersections with Livingston's emerging Anthropology and Chinese departments. And so it went in those salad days – we had jobs available, and all we looked for were smarts and a commitment to innovative undergraduate education.*

*Livingston had only a small department at first, but it clearly would expand rapidly, and inevitably challenge the other units. Structural factors encouraged cohesion among the faculty. Everyone lived in the immediate area – Lewis in the dorms as resident advisor – and there were close relationships. (Bathory and Lewis later married, as nepotism rules ended.) Sometimes, we taught joint courses (McWilliams set a sterling example.) While the quality of students varied, there was a strong segment of talented, ambitious and upwardly mobile, often the first in their families to attend college. And we had the help, eventually, of an exceptional secretary, Mary Wilk, and the simulation of world-renowned scholarly colleagues from other disciplines, such as Irving Horowitz in Sociology, Robin Fox in Anthropology, and George Levine in English.*

The culture of Douglass and Livingston (in contrast particularly to Rutgers College and some distant allies) also reflected the spirit of the times, the 1960s. Obviously, as new and expanding departments, they had younger members, drawn from a larger and different variety of graduate schools, including the Ivy League. The research approaches of these faculty tended to be more cross-disciplinary, with attention to such fields as Anthropology, Philosophy, and Psychology. Quantitative and behavioral analysis was accepted, even emphasized. Douglass gave more attention to empirical theory, while Livingston built a core of researchers in political philosophy and showed greater interest in contemporary political disputes.

The atmosphere of these two emerging departments was clearly different, notably evidencing an egalitarian and participatory culture. Non-tenured faculty and teaching assistants were deeply involved, with a role even in appointments and promotions to tenured ranks. The two cultures within political science at Rutgers virtually assured conflict in its collective development.

The Eagleton Institute of Politics played an ambiguous role in reorganization. With its own faculty at the time, and with a considerable independent budget, the Institute at first was active in the evolution of the graduate program, fostered hiring of women faculty and led the innovative creation of a subfield in Women and Politics. Its participation in the subfield of American politics and its physical proximity was a major reason for locating the unified department in Hickman Hall. Over time, however, its involvement declined, as collaborative research declined and Eagleton changed its academic affiliation from Arts and Sciences to the Bloustein School of Public Policy.

As the University and the world passed from the prosperity and the political ferocity of the 1960s, new realities emerged. Budgets were not unlimited – there would need to be priorities and reduction of overlaps. The discipline of political science moved beyond its methodological and theoretical conflicts, accepting a more mature catholic approach. At Rutgers itself, fervent partisans of different views aged, retired and softened, replaced by younger, likely smarter, and more compartmentalized younger members.

Critically, the campus institutions changed. The first step came in 1968, when the University administration created the position of New Brunswick Chair to provide an institutional perspective covering all of the New Brunswick units. James Rosenau of the Douglass department, young and already a nationally recognized scholar, attempted to forge a new path for the department, enlisting allies particularly from the Douglass and Livingston units, while facing opposition from most of the tenured members at Rutgers College. Rosenau aroused both fervent support and angry opposition, but had relatively few resources available for the fights. He did have the authority of his office to administer the graduate program, and the personal support of the University President and Provost, but the Chair had no independent budgetary authority, and only an advisory role in appointments and promotions.

After Rosenau left for Ohio State in 1971, conflict abated. The powers of the New Brunswick Chair were increased, by-laws were adopted for the campus-wide department, and the position of Chair became an elected position, successively filled by Charles Jacob and Ross Baker of Rutgers College, and by me. Appointments and promotions came to be made through search committees drawn from the entire faculty in New Brunswick. Students were able to enroll in courses at any of the colleges as a “free-trade” academic market replaced previous “protectionism.”

Major reorganizations were made in 1980 and 1995, by creation of the Faculty (and then School) of Arts and Sciences. The separate departments were abolished, as the colleges were reduced to groupings of students largely for non-academic purposes. A single departmental curriculum was written to govern all of the undergraduate students in political science in New Brunswick. Previous college affiliations became irrelevant to the workings of the department, which now focused on the substantive subfields of the discipline, new faculty were ignorant of the previous structure, and memories of the different affiliations were easily forgotten. Empirical evidence of the change came in successive selection of faculty from all of the pre-existing units as departmental chairs and vice-chairs.

Perhaps most significant was the relocation of political science to a common home at Hickman Hall in 1982 (a story in itself). The single physical location made the department a living interactive group, not only a letterhead. Significantly, and deliberately, the designation of offices in Hickman was made without regard of previous affiliations, instead prioritizing common research interests and teaching subfields. The unified departmental home also enables graduate students to see all of their instructors in one building and surely builds collaborative relationships, although it also probably deters some significant interactions with undergraduate students.

The great impact of reorganization is seen in a simple behavioral test. I doubt more than a handful of present faculty can identify the earlier college identification of those faculty remaining at Rutgers. Institutional change can alter historical memory and even end historical enmities. Perhaps that’s an important lesson to pass on to the real world of politics.