

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH J. SENECA

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Dr. Joseph J. Seneca on October 23, 2012 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Paul Clemens: Paul Clemens.

SI: Dr. Seneca, thank you very much for coming in.

Joseph Seneca: It's a pleasure to be with you again.

SI: Last time, we left off talking about your Ph.D. work at the University of Pennsylvania. How did the opportunity to come to Rutgers come about?

JS: Well, it was a colleague from Penn, Paul Davidson, who moved to Rutgers, a mentor of mine at the University of Pennsylvania, and he encouraged me to apply for an opening that Rutgers had. I did so, and I was fortunate to get the appointment. I started in, I think, the fall of '67, 1967, as an assistant professor, finishing up my thesis that academic year 1968 and getting an appointment, a three-year contract as assistant professor, in the Department of Economics of what was then Rutgers College.

SI: At that time, which of the other colleges had economics departments? Did they all have them?

JS: They all had them, yes. The newest one was Livingston College, so there was the structure that we know as the federated structure then with separate majors and requirements and faculties. There was an overarching institution called the section which met across the university, I think, on personnel decisions. I was not involved in that as a junior faculty member but was aware of it. [Editor's Note: The federated structure refers to the system at Rutgers-New Brunswick in the late 1960s and 1970s in which each of the undergraduate colleges, Rutgers College, Douglass College, University College, Cook College and Livingston College, retained its own faculty, academic departments, mission, admission and graduation standards, student body, and campus. Livingston College opened in 1969 as a coeducational undergraduate college dedicated to diversity and the study of social sciences.]

SI: Last time, you said that two of the courses that you taught early on were macroeconomics and environmental economics.

JS: Yes, and to that I also [taught] "Introduction to Microeconomics," "Introduction to Macroeconomics," "Environmental Economics," and I also taught "Econometrics." Those were the staple of four courses, and then I picked up now and then other courses, "Public Finance" and a graduate course in econometrics from time to time.

PC: I have just a curiosity question. When you started teaching in the late 1960s, did something like econometrics require calculus from your students?

JS: No, it did not require calculus as a prerequisite. The department now has a requirement for one semester of calculus and I think even a second semester for econometrics.

SI: Can you characterize the state of the department when you joined it?

JS: Yes.

SI: What was its size? What was it known for?

JS: It was relatively small, certainly given to what's happened since. There were some senior distinguished faculty that were teaching traditionally macroeconomics from perspectives of the Keynesian approach and what was a very traditional economics department. It was very collegial. We had seminars, and there was good exchange and good relationships between the junior and the senior faculty. There was some [laughter] discussion of the type of economics people were doing, and there was a schism at one time or the other about the nature of what to teach and how to teach it. They were traditional types of academic disputes. It was a very, as I recall as a junior faculty member, very exciting. I was excited to have the position. I was excited by the students. It was all male at the time that I joined. My classes were all male. The students, I remember them as diligent and earnest and hardworking, and I just enjoyed teaching those classes and then being part of a large university. I had been familiar with a large university at Penn and took full advantage of all the intellectual opportunities here that replicated the type of environment at Penn with the seminars and the different events, and I tried to do that. I was single when I came and just was very pleased to be part of the university.

SI: You mentioned last time that you had met your wife while in graduate school. When did you get married?

JS: We got married in 1970.

SI: Okay.

JS: And remain married. [laughter]

SI: What was the teaching-to-research ratio at that time?

JS: Well, it was expected that you would publish. That was clearly communicated. Publishing was the coin of the realm in economics for junior faculty members; journal articles and as good a journal as you could get into. That's what I and my junior colleagues spent our time doing, in addition to our teaching responsibilities. I was able to do that successfully and was eventually promoted to associate professor. It was fully expected that you would do research, and I recall colleagues that weren't able to meet that standard, as determined by the department. It was a big shock that people left, but that was the coin of the realm then when expectations were clear and firm about that.

PC: I have a couple of follow-up questions.

JS: Sure.

PC: You probably came up for promotion in the early 1970s right after Edward Bloustein became Rutgers president in 1971. Did you have a sense that the shock of young professors not getting promoted was relatively new and was a change in the culture here? Or was it just a shock because the individuals were not getting promoted?

JS: I think it was a shock on the individuals, Paul. I guess I was not beyond the economics department, I was not aware of the larger issues within the university.

PC: You mentioned it was an all-male student body at the time in Rutgers College. Were there women at that time on the Douglass economics department?

JS: Yes, there were.

PC: Okay.

JS: Yes. It was all-male students.

PC: Right.

JS: There may have been, as I don't recall, some female faculty members on the Rutgers College faculty as well.

PC: My next question was to ask you if you could remember who the first woman was hired in your department.

JS: No, I can't.

PC: Yes.

JS: There is a department history that you could look at.

PC: Okay.

JS: Yes.

SI: You said that all of the New Brunswick departments were united in this section, but was there much interaction between the members of the departments?

JS: There were seminars, I recall, on a weekly basis, and the faculty from the various colleges would attend those as their schedules permitted. We knew each other and we interacted with each other, but there was no, beyond that, there were no formal structures.

SI: You said in the last interview that you were already very interested in environmental economics, which strikes me as very interdisciplinary, that you would have to work with other departments in policy and in sciences. Were you doing that, at that point? Was there an opportunity to do that?

JS: No. Either I was too naïve, I looked at it purely as the economics of environmental protection and what economics had to contribute to understanding the causes and then assisting in the design of policies and how to evaluate those policies. In time, yes, we've certainly broadened out to make sure that you're engaged in other disciplines.

In fact, I may have mentioned it to you, I am co-principal investigator currently on a National Science Foundation award to social scientists, scientists within Rutgers and then externally some atmospheric and climate scientists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, and it's highly interdisciplinary, which is a microcosm of the way all the social science research has evolved to be interdisciplinary. We are linking our economic models of the region, which look at the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut region, and predict output and GDP, gross domestic product, and employment and prices and incomes and we are linking those with the climate models and asking the question, "How will climate change impact the regional economy and then conversely how will changes in the economy affect climate change?" So, it's a very major interdisciplinary award. We were pleased to get it. It's a three-million-dollar competitive award over multiple years.

That is totally different than the way I began my research, looking at narrowly the economic dimensions and the economic foundations of environmental quality issues. It was exciting to be in that field early, at that time, in the early '70s, because those were the dates of the federal Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, '70-'72, Senator Edmund Muskie campaigning on an environmental platform, the establishment in Washington of the Council on Environmental Quality. It was a very exciting time to be an economist and interested in environmental policy problems.

SI: Were there others at Rutgers who were interested in that area, or were you the only one?

JS: Within the department, I was the only one, although the types of work that I did, I did often collaboratively, because most of my work was empirical work and we would be dealing with data and estimation methodologies and trying to give empirical content to some of the conceptual framework of the economics of environmental quality. I worked with other colleagues, and we did a lot of collaborative work then within the department. It was fun.

SI: Again, I do not know that much about economics, so forgive me. Looking at what the University of Pennsylvania was known for, which you talked about last time, a lot of it relied upon heavy computer use and studying models. At Rutgers then, was there the computer equipment and systems here that would help you do that sort of thing?

JS: Yes.

SI: Were you into that?

JS: Yes, Shaun. It was a different world that you wouldn't recognize. We took computer cards, eighty-column punch cards, down to the computer center, and we had these big Fortran programs that we wrote, no can packages, to do your analysis. You wrote the Fortran to do the

calculations. It was basically large-scale regression analysis with different degrees of sophistication. On the way, you would drop the cards, and you would have to wait or you would notice that you made an error in the Fortran statement. You would transpose letters, so you got to run back the following morning or twenty-four hours later. It said, "Syntax error," and you submitted it again. Yes, we had state-of-the-art computer capabilities, but by what came later, it was very primitive. It was inefficient, took a lot of time, but it was powerful, computered work. We were able to do it here. I was a Fortran programmer. I became an econometrician by doing it and actually writing out the programs.

PC: Just as a memory question, do you still, to this day, have boxes with the cards still in them?

JS: No.

PC: You had the courage to throw them out.

JS: Well, that's right.

PC: Okay.

JS: I moved offices several times ...

PC: There you go.

JS: ... And didn't take them with me, [laughter] but you recalled them right, big boxes. [laughter]

PC: Yes.

SI: You said you had a great relationship with your students and that you were very enthusiastic to be in the classes. At that time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Vietnam War was occurring. Did students ever bring that to you in office hours and talk about what was happening on campus? What did you observe of that?

JS: I remember very engaged students. Rutgers was an epicenter of issues; Professor Genovese. It was all very exciting as part of the national debate and national movement and if not the epicenter here, it was one of the epicenters. I was impressed. There were very fiery discussions in the faculty meetings, and I took it all in as a junior faculty member with senior faculty giving very impassioned speeches and the state government got involved. We became politicized, and there was criticism of the university until President Gross stood up for the university. It was heady times, and I remember it vividly being at the time pretty exciting and also sobering in what was happening and the interface of the university with the national political scene. Just to observe it was exciting. [Editor's Note: On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Rutgers University's Scott Hall on U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, professor of history Eugene D. Genovese declared, "... I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, Rutgers University President Mason W. Gross, with the

support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss Genovese and staunchly defended the principle of academic freedom.]

SI: Were you involved in any groups?

JS: No.

SI: As a junior faculty member and then getting into when you were promoted, what were your responsibilities being a member of the university community? Did you serve on any committees?

JS: Yes. I remember, as I said last time, Professor Monroe Berkowitz, the chair, was very helpful in engaging me in the broader economics role in the university, and the lead-in was this appointment that he was able to get for me for the Council of Economic Advisors. I was an associate professor, but just an associate professor, when I was appointed. That was 1974, I believe, when I got my first appointment there, and that opened the doors to me to all the economic policy issues that the state was engaged with and in an official role.

We prepared economic outlooks for the state. We briefed the governor. I was a junior member of that group with senior faculty from Princeton. There was, as I recall, I indicated it was a three-member council. There was a private economist, William Freund, from the New York Stock Exchange. There was an economist from Rutgers, and I was that person after '74, I believe. Typically, there was a senior faculty member from Princeton, and they tended to rotate the Princeton faculty. I stayed on and kept doing it, and Dr. Freund stayed on, so I got to know those people professionally.

New Jersey was in the midst of, in the mid-'70s, of a constitutional crisis over thorough and efficient funding for the school systems. It had urban issues out of the '60s. It had kindergarten through twelve disparities. It was the time of the debate for the first income tax. We were in the center of that, and that was very intellectually stimulating. So, in addition to my environmental economics, I became deeply involved in state development economic policy in all its aspects and trying to steer, and it was tricky and we did it with some success and some not-so-much success, steer an independent, objective, analytical path between this continual Democrat-Republican war over taxes and spending and the schools. I recall, that was very interesting. We testified before the legislature, and I became very adept at that, and over the years that continued, many, many years. So, I've been through all the New Jersey economic, threshold issues, from environmental issues at the state level through these very important issues on the funding of the public school system. [Editor's Note: The New Jersey Constitution mandates that the state legislature provide "thorough and efficient" public education for students in kindergarten through grade twelve. During the 1960s, disparities in educational funding between the state's poorest school districts and the wealthiest school districts came to light. The state legislature passed the Public School Education Act in 1975 to address these disparities, but the state's failure to finance the law led to the shutdown of schools and then the passage of the state's first income tax. Subsequent court rulings, notably the landmark *Abbott v. Burke*, found that the state must ensure parity in educational funding between poor school districts and affluent districts.]

PC: Did the committee report to the governor or the legislature?

JS: We reported to both. We were appointed by the governor with the approval of the legislature, and we issued reports to both. We were asked to do things by both in different times, and it was a task to steer that path of keeping your credibility and keeping your objectivity and yet you're asked to address issues that were inherently politically divisive. It was fascinating, and I learned how to try to do that well.

PC: Did you also have to deal with issues that affected Rutgers in some direct way?

JS: Well, no. Over time, Paul, and this went on for decades in that role, the council came to take positions because we were seeing what other states were doing and the underinvestment in higher education that New Jersey was making. From an economic perspective, as an economic development agent, the role of higher education and then as it fit into the high-technology industries as they develop and the importance of building a higher education sector. I got very involved with President Bloustein in that as an advocate for the university but as a[n] economic development engine. Ed was very keen on that, because he slowly realized, and he began as a low-tuition person and thought it was the state's responsibility to fund higher education properly and maintain access to the university across a broad spectrum of people so that who could attend the university was independent of ability to pay, but he had to change his view because the funding was just never forthcoming and frankly became competitive with and lost out to the enormous amount of attention and funding that went to k through twelve. So, Ed turned to be a high-tuition, high-aid person, as a way of generating revenue, and the university would redistribute through financial aid to keep the accessibility. [Editor's Note: Edward J. Bloustein served as the president of Rutgers University from 1971 until his death in 1989.]

Then, with Dr. Pond, whom I had enormous respect for, to develop the role of the university as being a first-class research university but also contributing to economic development and the ability of the state to attract industry and the formation and growth of the Commission on Science and Technology. I was deeply involved in that, and there, we did get funding to build these high-technology research centers and attract faculty and integrate them into our academic environment. It was a source of friction within the Rutgers community for a time, but as a way, frankly, of getting resources and building the capacity of the university, it was a huge success and, I firmly believe, important for the state of New Jersey. I think over the last decade, the state has lost its way again in underfunding investment in higher education. This current bond issue is the first bond issue in decades. [Editor's Note: From 1982 to 1997, T. Alexander Pond, known as Alec, served at Rutgers as executive vice president and chief academic officer, professor of physics, and acting president (1989-1990).] In November 2012, New Jersey voters approved the ballot question authorizing the state to issue a bond for improvements in higher education facilities.]

PC: Yes.

JS: 750 million dollars is not a very large investment. Rutgers' share of that is about 350 million dollars. The New Brunswick school system built a new high school, and it's a terrific high school and they needed a high school. It was two hundred million dollars for one high

school. So, that's almost two-thirds of what will be Rutgers' share of this bond issue system-wide. So, you look at New York. You look at Texas. You look at North Carolina, Massachusetts, California; all made significant capital investments in the '90s and the first decade and their economies are strong. We went from having twenty percent of national pharmaceutical employment to about thirteen percent.

PC: I remember from research, even though I was here at the time, I do not remember it happening, President Bloustein got up in front of the faculty. He did not say this more publicly. This was at the time that there was the no-confidence crisis for him. He made a statement about the governor that was pretty negative. He said he was battling against the governor, who personally did not like him. This is sort of a political question. Did you have any sense that during the 1970s, when you were first involved with policy, that there were governors who were more favorable or less favorable to higher education?

JS: I think it was an issue of sort of the state government, rather than an individual governor. Typically, it was wrapped around fiscal issues, fiscal constraints. I remember distinctly the governor that most supported the university was Governor Kean, and the administration here responded to that. Governor Byrne was entangled with the income tax, and the *Abbott versus Burke* decision and "thorough and efficient," and that was all consuming, although he did win reelection. [Editor's Note: In *Robinson versus Cahill* (1973), the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the state's system of financing public education through local property taxes was not meeting the "thorough and efficient" requirement of the state constitution. The court ordered the state to revamp its system of financing education, which led to the passage of the Public School Education Act two years later. Brendan Byrne served as the governor of New Jersey from 1974 to 1982. Thomas Kean held the post of New Jersey governor from 1982 to 1990.]

PC: Yes.

JS: So, I got to know all the governors, and I got to know the presidents and the governors. It was by serendipity that I was this junior faculty member, or young faculty member, but I was in this position. I tried to be conscientious and do it well, and so I became a go-between.

PC: Let me ask you a question in slightly a different way.

JS: Sure.

PC: Before Kean, was any governor a real advocate for public higher education? Was there anybody who made that a priority, as opposed to transportation or k through twelve?

JS: No.

PC: No.

JS: The only one, no, Governor Byrne, no, again, because he was consumed with this constitutional crisis.

PC: All right.

SI: Governor Byrne was the first governor you served under on the council.

JS: Yes.

SI: Okay.

JS: Mid-'70s.

SI: Independent of Rutgers, did Governor Byrne give a lot of weight to the advice that the council gave him?

JS: What impact do you have as an economic advisor? Yes, he listened. We did papers; we did annual reports. There's a whole printed volume of Council of Economic Advisors annual reports. We did, actually, academic papers on different topics, and they were used in the policy debates on high technology, on sales tax exemptions, a whole range of issues that went on for years and years. There's quite a luminous record of our work. It was used, yes. It was used and affected policies. We were always asked to do analyses for individual pieces of legislation. It was modeled on the federal council but less political, in other words, we weren't part of the administration. We were in but not of. [Editor's Note: Dr. Seneca is referring to the Council of Economic Advisors, an agency in the executive branch of the federal government.]

SI: From what I have read, Governor Byrne was pushing pretty heavily for the income tax.

JS: Yes, he was facing a constitutional crisis. They shut the schools down. The Supreme Court shut down the public schools, and they shut down in the summertime for a couple days, but it was at that level of crisis. It's still evolving. School financing remains a very powerful policy issue here. The court has intervened repeatedly over the years in a series of legislation, and governors and legislatures have responded. Democrats and Republicans. Governor Corzine changed the funding formula. Governor Christie is attempting to change the funding formula. It remains a very important and divisive issue in a state that has over six hundred school districts. That type of fragmentation just is a catalyst for divisive problems. [Editor's Note: Jon Corzine served as the New Jersey governor from 2006 to 2010, when he was defeated by Chris Christie. Replacing decades of school funding based on the *Abbott vs. Burke* decision, the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 established a system of public school financing in which the state provides aid to school districts based on enrollment, with extra money going to poverty-stricken districts and districts with other special needs.]

SI: Can you walk us through that issue and what you did and what the council did?

JS: We were providing analysis of what an income tax would generate. We weren't asked the political framework of it, but what would you tax, what would the coverage be, what would the rates be. They were getting advice from different groups. The legislature had its own fiscal analysis office, but those were the types of questions on the income tax and then to look at the incidence of it, would it affect economic growth. These are questions that remain.

SI: Would the council say, “You should do this?”

JS: Well, no.

SI: “You should do this.”

JS: No, we would not take a position. We would try to avoid that, although if you were in testimony, they would ask you, “Do you support this?” So, it was interesting. It was very, very interesting.

SI: Did the council try to present a unified voice?

JS: Yes. It was three people. We had a small staff. We tried to speak as a council, yes, come to a consensus in what we were going to look at, how we were going to look at it and what we’re going to say.

PC: It was three people. Was one a Princeton economist?

JS: Yes. One was always at Princeton.

PC: Who was the third?

JS: Typically, it would be a Rutgers economist, a Princeton economist, and an economist from the private sector. That was William Freund.

PC: I think you mentioned that.

JS: Right. William Freund, who was chief economist for the New York Stock Exchange.

PC: Okay.

SI: How much time would this take in your average week or average month?

JS: Yes. It was all pro bono, a public service from the university. It would vary depending on what was hot and what was going on, but it was a lot of time. We did have a staff that was able to do work, but, sure, it was a major commitment. Somehow, I was able to balance that and actually, because of the policy issues, generate some publications. It was a nice combination. The university looked very favorably on doing that, as a university service to the state government. It was seen to be public service and service to the state, so it was consistent, certainly, with the Rutgers mission.

SI: Was there a set term?

JS: No, it was at the pleasure of the governor.

SI: Okay.

JS: So, when the governors changed, we would resign. They would ask, the new governor would ask, typically, would ask me to stay on. I became chair of the council quite soon after that, because the Princeton people would rotate. Bill Freund was chair, and then I became chair. I stayed chair for many years. I served under Governor Byrne, Governor Kean, and it was two terms each. Then Governor ...

PC: Florio.

JS: ... Florio disbanded the council, and it became politicized. He disbanded the council. He was involved in a major fiscal restructuring. We were giving advice that probably they didn't want to hear, and they just disbanded the council. He lost the reelection, and then the council was reinstated, but it was reinstated in a different way. [Editor's Note: James Florio served as the governor of New Jersey from 1990 to 1994.]

PC: That would have been by Whitman, right?

JS: Yes. It became a five-person council with the governor appointing the chair and then the Democratic and Republican leadership in both houses appointing one member each. So, you had the Senate Democratic leaders, the Senate Republican leaders appointing a member, and there were five people. Governor Whitman reappointed me, but the council wasn't the same. They became more political appointments. They were still economists. Then it became some non-economists. We didn't have any staff. I continued to serve Governor Whitman through the bond issues on higher education, and then I stopped with Governor Corzine. [Editor's Note: Christine Todd Whitman served as the New Jersey governor from 1994 to 2001. Jon Corzine held the governorship from 2006 to 2010.]

PC: So, you were there with, I am trying to get my governors chronology right. You were there with McGreevey, too, right?

JS: Yes, I was there with Governor McGreevey. I have this window into all these governors. I'm generally impressed with governors. They're clever, clever people and have to deal with a lot of problems. I came to appreciate that more when I was in the administration here, too, the full range of the pressures that go on to people in those positions. [Editor's Note: James McGreevey served as the governor of New Jersey from 2002 until his resignation in 2004.]

PC: You were doing this even while you were vice president of the university.

JS: Yes, Paul, I was, yes. In the new incarnation of the council ...

PC: Right.

JS: Yes, right.

PC: So, you really had to stretch to make sure you were non-politicized.

JS: Yes.

PC: Yes.

JS: Exactly.

SI: Would you ever have to recuse yourself from discussions or that sort of thing?

JS: No, no.

SI: Okay.

JS: No. I would advocate for the bond issue under Governor Whitman, and she was pleased to have it, but we thought it was the right thing. As a council, it was the right thing to do. They were modest amounts, relative to the higher ed system and to its needs. I've still been promoting that same idea, of investment in higher education.

SI: What about when an issue would come from another area? For example, during the McGreevey administration, the chairman and chief executive officer of Merck, Roy Vagelos, wanted to restructure public higher education in New Jersey.

JS: Roy Vagelos.

SI: Roy Vagelos.

JS: Dr. Vagelos.

SI: When that plan was out there, would they contact the council and have them give an opinion on it?

JS: No, no.

SI: No.

JS: No.

SI: That would not happen.

JS: We would've been speaking about the importance of higher education to the state's economy, but not on the structure, no.

SI: You were not involved in that particular issue. Going back to Rutgers for a moment, from the time you came here in 1967 to the time you became vice president, were there any other administrative positions that you took?

JS: I was chair of the economics department, yes, several times.

SI: When was that?

JS: I could get the dates for you, but I had several terms as chair and as a young person. I think I was a chair as an associate professor. I was chair of, by then, a bigger department. We had business. We had economics. I think it was comparable in size to some of the major departments certainly in the social sciences, forty, fifty people. Yes, that was running the department, the recruiting and the whole bit. It wasn't as divisible. There was no undergraduate director. There was no graduate director. The chair did everything for a while and year after year. I did that. I got to know the university structure and the university administrators then. I had always been able to know the people in the central administration from the work on the council, but then I got to know more of what was happening in the various structures. By then, we had a single department across the university through the reorganization. [Editor's Note: Reorganization refers to the merger of the faculties of Rutgers-New Brunswick's five undergraduate colleges into a single entity, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), in 1981.]

SI: Were you the chair after the reorganization period?

JS: That's a good question. I think it would be in the mid-'80s, early '80s, probably after.

SI: Do you have any thoughts to share on how reorganization affected the economics department?

JS: Oh, it was terrific, the whole thing, Ed Bloustein and Alec Pond did it, and it was a struggle and the sun wasn't going to come up in the east if we did it. There were all sorts of issues and complaints and problems, but they did it and they pushed it. Paul Clemens referred to the no-confidence vote based on reorganization, and Ed just kept at it and did it and the university's never looked back. Yes, there were costs, but the benefits are huge and I think just demonstrably so that the university is an incredibly better intellectual environment and academic community because of it.

SI: After that point, as chair, what were your goals as chair in terms of recruiting faculty? Was there a conscious effort to work it into wider university plans?

JS: Well, I think the hardest job I've ever had at the university was being chair of the department. When I became a senior administrator, you had the support of everybody. You had the lawyers. You had all the infrastructure of the university that you could call on. The chair, you were out there alone, and you're trying to run a large department and basically focus on the student programs, the programs and the faculty. Those are both difficult things. We tried to recruit. Recruiting was hard. It still is hard. It's a very labor intensive thing. It's the most important thing you can do, recruit, retain and develop faculty. I think that was the lesson that I learned as a chair that I was able to keep coming back to as an academic officer, that that's one of the most important things that's done at the university, because if you can recruit successfully over time and consistently, then in a generation or two, you have a pretty damn good university. It all starts with that. So, I was deeply involved in the recruitment, some successful, some not. It

was very hard and success begets success. If you're a good department, it's easy to recruit, and that gets you to the next level of candidates. For economics, it was a struggle.

PC: Let me ask a question. You mentioned before that when you first came here, you had no sense that there was a change in culture about promotion. When you were chairing economics, did you have a sense that there was a moment when things passed into a new world?

JS: Very much so, absolutely, with Dr. Pond.

PC: Yes.

JS: Absolutely.

PC: How about internally in the economics department itself? Was there a point at which it became significantly harder to get tenure because the standards had sort of gone up?

JS: Yes, yes. It reflected the university discipline on it. Yes, absolutely. I think it's still occurring. I was just on a promotion committee for the economics department. They needed faculty, and I'm a university professor. My tenure's still there, and I was impressed with the quality of the candidates and the level that they're held to.

SI: I was going to ask earlier if there were any problems integrating the other New Brunswick departments into the larger unified department.

JS: Other than transitional problems, no. In time, these things worked out, and, as I say, the fears of the integration of the faculties and the lament of the loss of the college departments, it passed pretty quickly, although we had a redo of it with the last step done by President McCormick with making the School of Arts and Sciences. [Editor's Note: In 2006, under the leadership of President Richard L. McCormick, Rutgers-New Brunswick restructured its undergraduate education by merging its four liberal arts undergraduate colleges into the single School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and creating the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) on Cook Campus.]

PC: The first time you had a reorganized department, did the economics department have a contested election for chair with candidates from different former departments?

JS: Probably, yes. I don't remember the details.

PC: It was not the sort of thing that burned into your memory.

JS: No.

PC: It is in mine from the history department.

JS: Yes.

PC: We were a very contentious department for a short period of time. That all disappeared.

JS: Right.

PC: At least initially, it was contentious. We were rubbing elbows with people we had not seen.

JS: Right. With recruitment and replacement, if you're turning over faculty, three, four a year, in time, in a couple years, it's a new group.

PC: What about physical location? Did the economics department change where it was located?

JS: No, we stayed on the College Avenue Campus. We were in the ...

PC: Same building.

JS: Well, we were in the little house on College Avenue, 60 College Avenue, when I first came. We moved to Winants Hall, occupying the third and fourth floors there, and then when that became renovated, we moved to New Jersey Hall. So, we've stayed here, and we're centrally located here and went out to the other campuses and taught. I remember teaching on Douglass and it was no big deal.

SI: During this same period in the 1980s, can you tell us about you work with the Council of Economic Advisors regarding the bond initiatives with Governor Kean and improving science and technology?

JS: That was, yes, a major alignment of the university with the state to promote, for economic development reasons for the state, the interface between the higher education research capacity and state economic development. It came about through the formation of the Commission on Science and Technology, the appointment of Ed Goldberg, who worked with the higher education community, and it was spearheaded by Dr. Alec Pond here, and with Ed Bloustein's support, to develop a mechanism that would both provide resources to the universities, and I mean the research universities, Princeton, Rutgers, New Jersey Institute of Technology, to attract international distinguished faculty to build research capacity in selected areas. So, there was a major effort to identify areas of investment for the university, what they should be related to economic development, to establish centers in those areas. Some of those centers spanned institutions; some did not. Then, to provide both the capital equipment, the infrastructure, the building, the equipment, the technical support, and the people, the faculty, that would staff those centers, and they would be part of the university. They would be tenured faculty appointments in departments, but they would be removed from them. Part of it was Alec's goal, I believe, that this was one way to speed the process that he saw necessary to improve the quality of the faculty. He would be able to appoint outside faculty, although they would have tenure in the departments, and to build faculty through that means. He was, I think, enormously successful, and there were centers that we have today in, e.g., biotech. They've evolved some. There are engineering centers and centers in Rutgers and NJIT on hazardous waste. There is a center on computer-aided technology, centers in biomedicine. The centers attracted outstanding faculty.

Then, in addition, centers were developed under the same model that were not funded by the commission, Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute, jointly with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and managed jointly, and they became the dominant mode of university expansion. Often they would have industrial members. They tackled theoretical and industrial problems. They supported graduate students, and they were integrated in time with the academic departments. It became a structural issue. It was a source of friction for some time. As academic officer, I moved some of those centers back into academic homes under the deans. Some of them remain still reporting to the central administration. Some other ones were moved back after they developed their competencies and expertise. Also, the quality of the underlying departments grew at the same time, and we were able to integrate them back into the more traditional academic structure. That became a driving engine how to enhance faculty and bring the university's research capacities to a higher level. It was supported well in the Kean administration, and then the support died out later in the Whitman administration.

PC: Just so I am clear, this was the 1984 bond issue.

JS: Yes.

PC: Because there was another one in 1988, which was ...

JS: More generic, yes.

PC: Unlike most higher education bond issues, you mentioned that Princeton got money from this.

JS: Yes, they had a center.

PC: So, it was not entirely public institutions.

JS: That's right. They had a center under the Commission on Science and Technology. The process worked well, and it was emulating what other states were doing, making major investments. The key to the state economic development policy is that it can't be on the political cycle. It can't be stop-go. It has to be sustained. You can't pull the plug and then start over later. So, the states that have done it successfully have been able willy-nilly over the political cycle, over the business cycle, to sustain steady investments in higher ed, particularly in facilities and in personnel and in targeted areas. New York State, for example, had a major initiative in nano technology, Texas, in cancer research.

SI: Was that part of your work to determine the area that it would be?

JS: I was involved in some of that initial work from my role in the economic policy council and then ultimately back at the university. Alec, Dr. Pond, led the effort. He had a terrific mind and was able to really shape the direction of the Commission on Science and Technology as to the areas of investment, the strategic areas of investment, and then devise the structure.

SI: I do not know that we are going to get everything in.

JS: We may not. That's okay. If you don't mind, it's a good discussion. You're triggering memories that I have, and I'm expanding on them.

PC: That is what we want.

SI: That is what we want.

JS: Okay.

SI: How much time do we have?

JS: Until about four [o'clock] would be good, thank you.

SI: All right. Tell us about the period when President Bloustein passed away and then Alec Pond was the acting president.

JS: Acting president for a year, I believe, yes.

SI: Then Dr. Lawrence came in. [Editor's Note: Francis L. Lawrence served as the president of Rutgers University from 1990 to 2002.]

JS: Yes.

SI: Did you become the vice president in 1991?

JS: I was acting vice president for a year, for one year while there was a search, yes.

SI: Tell us about getting into that role.

JS: Again, fortuitous. I guess people in the administration knew me. I had worked closely with the administrators, again, through the role in the council. I was a colleague of Alec's and Ed, to an extent, sure, and to Marv Greenberg, who was the senior financial officer. At that time, I guess I had let it be known that I would be interested in an administrative position. I had no inkling that I would get it, but President Lawrence, again, doing his searching, I guess, got my name and contacted me and had asked me to serve while he did a search. He restructured the university and restructured the administration, as all presidents do, and created a number of positions and asked me to be an acting [vice president] in what he called the university vice president for academic affairs. With some trepidation, I took it, because I had never been a dean. I had done these other things as a chair for several times and this role in the state government. Maybe that's what he wanted, an external, outside-the-normal-chain-of-command ascension. He asked me, and I was challenged by it. He spoke with me, and I was impressed with what he wanted to do. I said, "Well, yes, I'll do it for a year while you search." Then, during the year, I was asked to be a candidate, and I was appointed and I was pleased to serve for President Lawrence. He was a good president and a good person.

SI: What did he tell you that impressed you and made you want to take the job?

JS: He came in with a mandate from the Board [of Governors] as an external person. He had a difficult time in his position. He was keen on doing something for undergraduate education. Paul referred to the potential threshold shift in the culture at the university, and there was some sense that the balance between undergraduate and graduate education was shifting too much towards graduate education. The president was, I think, tasked by the Board and he was keen to do so, to restore that balance towards undergraduate education. He created a vice president for undergraduate education, a position that still exists through all the changes that have happened since, and an emphasis over the time that President McCormick certainly embraced to devote attention to undergraduate education. He asked me to be part of the team that would do that and would continue to grow the university. I think he wanted somebody that knew the university to complement his coming from the outside, much like, I think, what's happening now with Dr. Edwards being familiar with the university and President Barchi an external appointment. [Editor's Note: Richard L. McCormick served as the president of Rutgers University from 2002 to 2012. Formerly the president of Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Robert L. Barchi became the president of Rutgers University in 2012 and appointed Richard L. Edwards as executive vice president for academic affairs.]

I knew the faculty, and I got along with the faculty. I was pleased to have the opportunity, and then I stayed. I told him I would serve as long as he wanted me to, and through some good times and not-so-good times, we were together as a team. He had a good team. I remember my colleagues, Don Edwards, the vice president for external affairs, no, state and federal government relations, and Nancy Winterbauer, the vice president for budgeting, Christine Haska, institutional research, the two other provosts, Norm Samuels, who I have enormous respect for, Walter Gordon. It was a congenial, cooperative team. I never remember any dissension. There were inevitable very difficult times for all sorts of reasons. He put together a good team of colleagues that worked collegially and well together, and it was terrific to be a part of that team. [Editor's Note: Norman Samuels served as the provost of Rutgers-Newark, and Walter K. Gordon served as the Rutgers-Camden provost.]

SI: We will just touch on some subjects and then go more in depth next time. At that point, in the early 1990s, how would you characterize the relationship between the New Brunswick Campus and the Newark Campus and Camden Campus? You said that working with the provosts was collegial.

JS: There's always an underlying issue with respect to the way the university was organized that some of the services were centralized and some of them were devolved to the campuses, and the campuses always wanted more devolution of the central functions, the facilities and administration functions, personnel. It was a healthy push by those provosts to have more authority and responsibility and more, ultimately, resources, but also structurally to have authority and then to retain the identity as a university, that this was one university. That's a theme that certainly has surfaced over this last year and the challenges, the unbelievable challenges, that it has posed for the university to keep the university whole in some sense, but, again, at the same time, strike that balance of providing opportunities for more independence and

more discretion on the part of the campus administrators. You see that reflected, I think, certainly in this latest restructuring, which is unprecedented in terms of my experience with the university.

We met. There were unified budget talks, and I think the allocation of resources was equitable. There were the personnel decisions. I sat and chaired the promotion review committee for thirteen years and went through literally hundreds and hundreds, into the thousands, of promotion cases, and I can honestly say that there was a single standard. The provosts did not argue parochially, nor did the campus representatives from the faculty here. There were faculty from all the campuses. They would rotate through that committee. There was, I think, a uniform standard, and there were no sort of exceptions to that, in terms of trying to say special circumstances existed for this or that reason, for this candidate in this campus. I did not find the campus provosts to be advocates for their campus from an academic quality perspective. They certainly advocated for their campuses for resources and for discretion. President Lawrence made an effort to go to the campuses and to be there and rotated the Senate meetings through the campuses [and] held Board meetings there. He was very much involved with trying to maintain a single university identity by his presence and his participation on those campuses. He did a heck of a lot of traveling up and down the Turnpike.

PC: I do not know how to ask this other than a lead-in question. My sense was that just like there may have been some overemphasis in the minds of some faculty on graduate education and research under Edward Bloustein, there is also the sense that the best departments in the flagship university got most of the resources with Alec Pond and Bloustein just because they were building strength. My sense was that when Fran Lawrence came here there was a conscious effort to speak to Camden and Newark as part of one university, as opposed to just continuing the tradition of the provosts pushing. When the provosts of Newark and Camden pushed, Lawrence responded to that push ...

JS: Yes.

PC: ... Probably more so than might have happened in the past.

JS: I think that's right. Yes, I would agree with that.

SI: Did Lawrence have this view right from the beginning, or did it evolve?

JS: No, I think he had that, and it was a clean slate. In other words, as Paul said, he didn't come in with a background, so he was looking at these campuses and he was interested in the students there and the programs there. His wife was very engaged with the university. She would travel with him for events on the other campuses. He made it a major effort to be involved in the communities there.

SI: For our clarification, for next time, can you describe the purview of your office, which, you said, Lawrence created ...

JS: Yes.

SI: ... And then, would Dr. Lawrence call you in on other issues?

JS: Yes, my title was academic vice president, but it was more of an executive vice president. I was involved in everything, everything, state issues, the Board issues, all the issues. Yes, it was beyond the academic purview. I was very much involved in all things.

SI: Would Dr. Lawrence involve you in fundraising issues and athletics?

JS: Fundraising, sure. The capital campaign, I was very involved in that. Athletics, yes. We were involved in that from the academic side because of some very difficult issues on the emphasis on, as was felt by the faculty and still elements of it, on athletics. President Bloustein made the commitment for Rutgers to go in a major way, the so-called big-time athletics, and he saw that as a way to, again, get the university in the public eye in a positive way. The resources used for that have been an ongoing issue. [Editor's Note: Under the leadership of President Fran Lawrence, Rutgers-New Brunswick became a member of the NCAA Division I Big East Conference in football in 1991 and in all sports in 1995.]

It had academic implications that were difficult. There was some discussion by Board members, "Did Rutgers have the academic environment for athletes to be recruited and succeed?" That meant the athletic support, academic support, but also then treading into the area of faculty on whether we had the right set of majors that were competitive with the teams that we were competing with. That led to some very difficult discussions and very heated discussions, and it was one of the principal things that I was really deeply committed to that we would not sacrifice academic standards to do that. There was talk, "Why didn't we, like University X, have a physical education major?" Well, we had one, and that was changed and [then we] did not have one and [it] would not be restored. We would not do that. At that level, you asked about, "Do I get involved in this? It has an academic dimension certainly." It was quite heated and difficult.

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