

What's in a Name?

By Michele Dailey '94

Since its inception nearly 75 years ago, the school today known as Rowan has undergone a continuous transformation, always growing, improving and renewing. The two-year normal school which began training future teachers changed to a four-year teacher's college, then to a liberal arts college, and most recently, to a comprehensive, regional university.

The change from college to university became official on March 21, 1997, when the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education approved Rowan's petition for university designation. But the academic and philosophical shift from two-year normal school to comprehensive regional university has been occurring almost from the day the Glassboro Normal School opened its doors to 236 students in September 1923.

So, what's the difference between college and university? Traditionally, a college is a higher education institution that offers mostly undergraduate degrees in a single area, such as the liberal arts and sciences. In contrast, a university is much more comprehensive, offering a more diverse range of degrees at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Technically, Rowan has been acting as a university for many years.

In New Jersey, however, being called a university is easier said than done. New Jersey is one of only three states (New York

and Massachusetts are the others) which requires a rigorous review and documentation process for a school to achieve university status. But, says President Herman D. James, New Jersey's demanding requirements make the new status that much more meaningful to alumni, students and faculty, and to the future of the institution we now call Rowan University.

While the change in status may seem to have been a natural outcome of Rowan's development, few know how difficult the journey was from college to university. Dr. Thomas Gallia, executive assistant to the president, chaired a three-person committee charged by President James to complete the lengthy and involved petition process for university status. Dean of The Graduate School Dr. Marion Rilling and Professor of Educational Administration Dr. Lawrence Marcus worked with Gallia for four months to complete the report, a three-volume document totaling more than 2,000 pages.

The next step in the process required an outside review. Rowan selected two independent consultants

highly regarded in academia. "If we pleased them and showed that we were truly deserving, we knew their recommendations would be well respected," Gallia said. After visiting campus for two days, touring facilities and interviewing faculty, students and administrators, the

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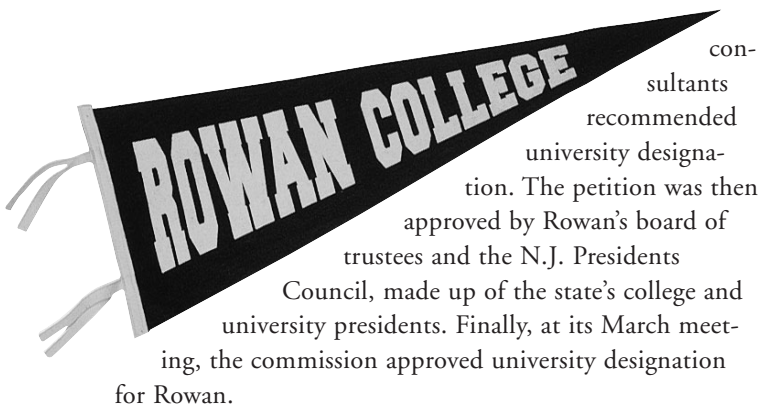
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consultants recommended university designation. The petition was then approved by Rowan's board of trustees and the N.J. Presidents Council, made up of the state's college and university presidents. Finally, at its March meeting, the commission approved university designation for Rowan.

New Alumni Association President Nicholas Trabosh '71, '80 believes that Rowan was always an excellent school. "University designation recognizes our excellence and that we offer a much more broad range of educational opportunities than the name 'college' implies," he said. "And it will add more credibility and greater recognition to our degrees."

Kathleen Matteo '56, past Alumni Association president, agrees. "Becoming a university will give added strength to our students while they are here and when they enter the job market," she said. "It will give our alumni additional exposure in other areas of the country."

On and off campus, speculation and reality have collided since university status was announced. The truth is, becoming a university will not directly cause tuition to increase and will not replace professors in classrooms with teaching assistants, said Dr. Carol Matteson, executive vice president/provost. "The way this institution will be perceived will change," Matteson explained.

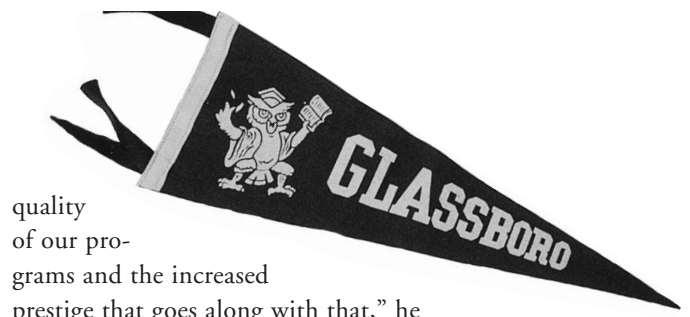
"Top-tier faculty will be attracted to us because of university designation. Other colleges and universities will begin to recognize us for what we are—a comprehensive, premier institution of higher learning. University status puts this institution in a whole new light in the academic world."

The impact of university designation extends to the university's fundraising efforts as well.

Prospective donors want to be associated with an institution that has name recognition, an excellent reputation and has strong ties to its community and region, according to Dr. Philip A. Tumminia '69, vice president for university advancement and executive director of the Rowan University Foundation.

"University designation is a very positive step. Friends and prospective donors will more easily see the breadth and

quality of our programs and the increased prestige that goes along with that," he said. "I believe many will want to participate in the tremendous growth this institution is experiencing."



Although the new status will not change the way Rowan operates and educates students, it is expected to have a noticeable impact on Rowan University's first graduates, the class of 1997. Clementon resident Ayanna Reed, president of the class, is excited about what it means to her as she begins her job search as a university graduate. "I think the future will be different for us," Reed said, who applied to Glassboro State College, enrolled at Rowan College and graduated from Rowan University. "I believe that most employers will look upon a university graduate more favorably than a college graduate because universities have more to offer."

Current students feel the same. Cathy Ragan '98 of Palmyra, the new Student Government Association president, said the university designation not only increases the school's prestige, but changes the way students perceive themselves. "I think the professors now expect more of students, and we need to meet those expectations," she said.

But this new perspective is not confined to academia. The business world, too, will gain a new view of Rowan, said alumna Debra P. DiLorenzo '76, '87, president of the Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey. DiLorenzo, who oversees an organization representing the interests of more than 1,350 businesses in the seven-county region, believes that industry will clearly see the benefits of having a university in their midst. "Businesses like having a university close to home," she said. "Expert faculty, student interns, library resources, entertainment and cultural activities and an educated work force are all important not only to businesses already in the area, but to start-up businesses or those looking to relocate."

After decades of growth and refining its educational mission, Rowan has earned the right to be called a university, but this is just the beginning. "Becoming a university has never been an end in itself, but a means of achieving even greater things for this institution," said President James. "In that respect, university designation is a precursor of the challenges and accomplishments that lie ahead." ■



