

# Rowan Revolution

*To the future and beyond...*

By Mary Galloway  
Dovey '75, '96

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*Near the end of the fall 2000 semester, Board of Trustees Chairman Keith Campbell turned the first shovel of soil for the new science building. On either side of Campbell, Trustee Kathleen Matteo '56 and Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Jay Harper joined President Farish and other guests for the occasion.*

**E**xciting. Inspiring. Exhilarating. Not even close.

There are few words sweeping enough to define the 10-year master plan President Donald Farish has unveiled for Rowan. Perhaps revolutionary.

At an estimated \$270 million, the plan recasts the campus: massive improvements to the infrastructure, the construction of spectacular new buildings and facilities and the nearly total renovation of existing ones.

The plan also provides for the purchase of land off the main campus—tripling the size of the existing campus—as well as an ambitious effort that joins Glassboro and University officials in creating a true college town environment.

The plan is divided into two phases, with the majority of the new construction and renovation projects slated to occur in the first five years. The construction of a \$44.2-million science building is already underway. Some of the other highlights

include a new home for the College of Education, a 400-bed residence hall, new performing arts facilities, four parking garages to ease commuter frustration and reduce on-campus traffic and \$10 million in landscaping throughout the entire campus.

“In my first year as president, I asked faculty and staff how they would advise me to spend my time,” Farish said. “I wanted to see how long it would take before someone mentioned the condition of our facilities. I didn’t wait long.”

Rowan administrators already knew the University faced \$70 million in deferred maintenance expenses, Farish said. “As we began to compile the inventory of everything that we needed, items such as new steam lines, sewer lines, parking lots and walkways, newer and larger space and some money for land acquisition and landscaping, we ended up with a total of about \$270 million.”

It seemed an impossibly large sum, but

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after nearly a year of planning with input from faculty, students, board members and residents, Farish became convinced that this was the right direction if Rowan was to continue toward its goal of becoming an institution with a national reputation for excellence and innovation.

Farish urged the University's governing board to take a bold step: to spend as much as 12 percent of its operating budget on debt service to fund phase one. "We knew we could do it, but public institutions generally don't approach spending this way," he said. "I pointed out that although the aca-

dem ic programs going on inside our buildings were superior to those at many colleges and universities, people often didn't stay around long enough to find out how good they really are. Their first impressions centered around how things looked. The outside—the campus, the buildings and facilities—should match the quality of the education inside." In many cases at Rowan, they didn't.

To be fair, much of the explanation for the campus' too-often second-class appearance has been the limit of state funds and the delicate balance between fiscal responsibility with public money and the perception of what's acceptable within those limits.

But in 1992, all that changed when Henry Rowan pledged \$100 million dollars with the intention of transforming the college. "Henry Rowan's generosity has given the University the means to become more than anyone ever considered possible," said Phil Tumminia '69, executive vice president for University Advancement. "It's hard to think of \$100 million as seed money, but in fact, Henry Rowan offered a vision and the funds to grow the vision."

The philanthropist's generosity not only changed the school's future but also inspired Farish to imagine a future that became the master plan. "I spent a lot of

time talking to him. I respect and admire him a great deal. I didn't want to let him down," said Farish. "I didn't want Rowan to be seen as 'pretty good' for a public institution. We should be seen as a place that offers an education that is flat out second to none."

Eventually multiplying the Rowan "seed money," the State stepped in with unexpected support. The legislature passed the Higher Education Incentive Fund Act requiring the State over a 10-year span to match gifts of a million or more to public colleges and universities. It applies to all gifts of \$1 million or more received by the University Foundation since the legislation was approved, including the \$2.5 million gift



*Excavation for the new science building began this spring semester, making Meditation Walk an ironically busy, noisy passage through the north side of campus. Construction will produce a spectacular facility designed for and dedicated to studies in biology, chemistry and physics.*

the University received in December from the Campbell family. It will also apply to subsequent gifts, Farish said.

The timeline Farish has put together is aggressive. "One of the things I felt was the necessity not to just do the work, but to do it dramatically, quickly. It needed to be seen not as an evolution, but a revolution in the way the campus looks and operates. We didn't want to feel that by the time we finally finished the program we would need to start all over again. We wanted people to be shocked and amazed," Farish said.

The master plan is being developed by the architectural design firm H2L2. In the plan, the campus is designated as north and south, with Rt. 322 as the

dividing line. The buildings on the south side, where Hollybush, Bunce Hall and the oldest residence halls are located, are already undergoing renovation.

A national historic site, Hollybush will be renovated with help from a \$750,000 New Jersey Historic Preservation Trust grant, according to Thomas Gallia '66, '67, '70, executive assistant to the president and Farish's designee on all campus building projects. Antiques and memorabilia from the Whitney estate and the Johnson-Kosygin Summit will be on view in the museum-like first-floor areas open to the public. Conference rooms on the upper floors will serve the University and community groups. Outside, Victorian-era landscaping will continue to convey the aesthetic heritage of the estate's builders.

The tree-lined University Green in front of Bunce Hall and the park-like landscaping of the south side will serve as the model for the entire campus, Gallia explained. A landscape architectural firm will work with the individual building architects to incorporate appropriate landscaping, including amenities such as benches and trash receptacles. "Rowan will be green all the way from Whitney Avenue to 322," Gallia said.

This holds particular appeal for Deb Baldassarre '80, '99. "Attractive landscaping and a well-maintained property are really impressive, particularly for parents," the Orchard Valley Middle School band director said. "Knowing that there are people who are always taking care of the little things gives them the sense that their child will be safe and protected on campus."

The first project on the campus' north side is the construction of the new science building between Bosshart Hall and Robinson. The building will include high-tech capabilities, state-of-the-art laboratories and classrooms and southern New Jersey's largest planetarium, a facility open to the public.

Farish's cooperative approach to planning construction is fairly uncommon, especially in public education, where the State traditionally sets a budget and assigns an architect but seeks little or no counsel from the building's future users. Instead, from the beginning Farish relied on faculty and students who will use the science building to be involved in planning the facility. "We have all been very active deciding everything from the philosophy of the building's use to the faucets. We now get to watch the construction process out our windows," said Chemistry & Physics Chair Robert J. Newland. "We're very excited."

Improvements are also planned for the heavily traveled state highway, Rt. 322, a safety hazard and a barrier that has divided the campus for years. The University, which has received approval from the State Department of Transportation to lower the speed limit from 35 to 30 miles per hour, will move sidewalks away from the road and install wrought iron fences and planters to define crosswalks. At those crossing points, the University will institute traffic calming devices such as pavers that continue from the walkway across the street, as well as signage and landscaping to slow traffic.

Expanding the vision for the University requires expanding the borders of campus. Further west on Rt. 322 on the Rowan side of the Rt. 55 exchange, the University has 400 acres under option for the construction of a new football stadium, soccer fields and other athletic facilities in the plan's first phase.

Shifting the athletic venues to the new site will free space on campus to permit construction of new buildings throughout the 10-year plan.

For former Student Government President John Mazzei '69, '75, a long-time member of Rowan's Brown and Gold Gridiron Club, this is great news. "When we travel and see what other teams have and think about what we have

to offer, it's clear we need to improve," he said. District director of academic programs for Woodbury public schools, Mazzei knows what today's college-bound students are looking for. "As a Division III school, we'll have to do a much better job in the future if we want to compete for athletes."

The huge tract at the 322 and 55 intersection may also serve as the home of the South Jersey Technology Center, a new state initiative that the University hopes will be located at Rowan, coordinated by the Colleges of Engineering and Business. If approved, the technology center and a proposed business incubator will serve small businesses as a research and development facility benefiting local industry.

One of the more ambitious and longer-term aspects of the plan involves the revitalization of Glassboro, particularly the homes and neighborhoods near the downtown. In late January, Glassboro officials unveiled a plan that will dramatically alter the area from High Street to the University. Making the areas surrounding campus more hospitable to borough residents, the University community and businesses creates a win-win situation.

"Dr. Farish's idea of the community is the same as ours," said Glassboro Mayor Alvin Shpeen, who has worked for ways to improve Glassboro and capitalize on the University's presence. "The University is our strongest selling point," Shpeen said. "When Dr. Farish volunteered to serve on our steering committee, I knew

we were on our way."

"A Vision for Downtown Glassboro" calls for a Barnes & Noble-type bookstore, cafe, a movie theatre, clothing shops and boutiques, Shpeen said. The commercial properties will be selected to appeal to students and residents alike and will be designed with second-floor housing.

Moving the borders of campus eastward a bit, the University has purchased real estate in Glassboro in an attempt to upgrade the properties and increase student safety in private rental housing. Farish is also committed to finding ways to encourage more faculty members to move into the borough and become a part of the community, including a property tax-relief incentive.

"The faculty are elated about the master plan," said Edward Streb, president of the University senate and a veteran Communication Studies professor. "Donald Farish has been able to define what 'the next level' is. This campus is going to be dramatically different from the one where I was hired 22 years ago."

For students like Jennifer Doyle '02, Student Government executive vice president, the master plan inspires a new level of pride. "It's really an exciting time to be here," she said. "We're setting the tone for the future of the school."

Finally, while the benefits to current and future University students and faculty—as well as current and future residents of Rowan's hometown—are clear, the master plan's effects reach even further. Ben Martin '96, '97 believes the value of the campus improvements to the alumni is significant. A senior account executive with CPR Communications in Teterboro, Martin said, "If you improve the infrastructure, you improve the image. And if you improve that, you improve the reputation and attract more students. And that increases the value of all of our degrees."

Follow the revolution. Log on to [www.rowan.edu](http://www.rowan.edu) for updates on the progress of the master plan. ■



*The new science building atrium will host University and community science fairs just beyond the planetarium.*