The Douglass Century

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DOUGLASS MUST BE A NEW BREED OF WOMEN’S COLLEGE, ONE THAT PROVIDES ALL OF THE BENEFITS OF A TRADITIONAL WOMEN’S COLLEGE, WITH NONE OF THE TRADITIONAL WEAKNESSES.
—Dean Carmen Twillie Ambar, 2005

In *Rutgers: A Bicentennial History*, Richard P. McCormick notes that Rutgers, then comprising the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, and Engineering (the men’s colleges) and NJC, began calling itself a university in 1924.¹ That language fit well with Mabel Smith Douglass’s vision, as she testified before the Duffield Commission in 1928: “We were created as a department of a state university…. We never were created as a part of old colonial Rutgers.”² Officially known as the Commission on Relations between Rutgers and the State of New Jersey, the Duffield Commission recommended “two reorganization plans, both calling for the establishment of a State University and providing for the government of the same.”³ In response to intensive lobbying by New Jersey women, orchestrated by Dean Douglass, the *Duffield Commission Report* designated NJC as an “autonomous college,” one of the “coordinate and constituent colleges of the University.”⁴ The 1930s reorganization was the first of many as Rutgers grew exponentially over the course of the twentieth century.

The sustained transformations undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s left Douglass firmly entrenched within the State University of New Jersey, yet it was no longer autonomous and it lacked a faculty—two characteristics typically associated with a college. The challenge confronting Douglass Dean Jewel Plummer Cobb and her successors—Mary S. Hartman, Martha Cotter, Barbara Shailor, Linda Stamato, and Carmen Twillie Ambar—was the reinvention of women’s higher education without many of the stock tools of the trade. This chapter traces the ingenuity of Douglass deans in devising means to offer outstanding educational opportunities to Douglass women within a markedly changed and constantly changing university. Individually and collectively, they worked
to produce “a new breed of women’s college, one that provides all of the benefits of a traditional women’s college, with none of the traditional weaknesses.”

Reaffirming and Expanding Douglass’s Mission as a Women’s College

In August 1980, Douglass dean Jewel Plummer Cobb wrote to Douglass students, alumnae, parents, and friends to assure them that despite reorganization, “Douglass will retain its identity as a women’s college dedicated to the liberal arts and the preparation of women for challenging careers.” Taking an upbeat tone, she emphasized that Douglass was and would remain a “winner,” just like the nine Douglass women who led the Rutgers women’s basketball team to place first in regional competition, gaining recognition as one of top ten women’s teams in the country. Indeed, Dean Cobb emphasized that Douglass would use reorganization as an opportunity to implement innovative curricular and co-curricular programs to increase opportunities and enrich instruction for Douglass students. Crafting a new brochure for the college in 1980, Dean Cobb noted that Douglass was beginning a new chapter, emerging stronger as a “place where students have the academic and career advantages of a women’s school while still enjoying the opportunities for coeducation at other divisions of Rutgers U.”

Celebrating Douglass students as “new women for a new world,” the College recruiting materials offered what would later be called “the benefits of dual citizenship in both the college and the university. The women have their own student government and nearly 100 Douglass clubs and organizations. There are also many more university wide clubs and organizations that bring men and women from all the New Brunswick campuses together.”

To fulfill its distinctive mission as the women’s college, Dean Cobb moved quickly to appoint a committee to concretize the role of Douglass Fellows. At the end of the 1980–1981 academic year, 150 Douglass faculty who were being reassigned to discipline-based departments in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences pledged to dedicate themselves to the “Douglass cause”—innovative education for women—as Douglass Fellows. Yet exactly what that might mean remained to be determined. Dean Cobb hoped that the fellows would assist her in devising academic initiatives and function as the “governing body of the College.” She particularly hoped that the fellows would help expand course offerings for the Douglass Scholars Program, launched in 1978 as the first honors program in New Brunswick. Douglass Scholars were outstanding students who were awarded full-tuition scholarships for four years and offered a special academic curriculum including two first-year seminars, intensive faculty-directed tutorials in the sophomore year, and junior and senior honors projects completed as independent studies under faculty supervision.

Dean Cobb introduced co-curricular programs designed to enhance students’ professional development. For example, drawing on her expertise as a cell biologist and cancer researcher, she created a Science Management Program, which offered students...
majoring in biology, chemistry, computer science, and mathematics semester-long internships in local science-based industries. She secured funding to support Douglass students’ participation in a Federal Summer Intern Program and a journalism and urban communications intern program and worked with Associate Alumnae of Douglass College to launch an Externship Program that allowed Douglass students to “shadow” a Douglass alumna in her place of work for a week during winter or spring break.  

Working with the associate and assistant deans in College Hall, Dean Cobb set clear objectives for the student affairs program in the 1980s:

- to support standards of academic integrity and provide avenues for grievance;
- facilitate informal faculty and student gatherings; provide auxiliary advising and career counseling; serve as a resource for addressing racial or sexual harassment in the classroom; provide safe quiet and pleasant places to study, assist students in coping with university bureaucracy; create an atmosphere where students can try out new behaviors, challenge old ideas and explore new ones in a supportive environment; break down prejudices and stereotypes which demean groups/individuals; provide leadership opportunities and training; help students examine values, build character, and develop a sense of community.

In short, she sought to ensure that Douglass students would continue to experience the manifold benefits of an elite women’s college, while also gaining access to the enormous intellectual resources of a major research university. In particular, she envisioned an institution that harnessed the intellectual power of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, while crafting co-curricular and student life opportunities designed for women.

Jewel Plummer Cobb also made Douglass a resource for women faculty and staff at Rutgers. In spring 1980, she founded the Rutgers Women’s Organizational Network (WON) as an “umbrella group to provide support for women in the university community and communicate their diverse scholarly interests to the greater society.” Recruiting a twenty-member steering committee of well-known feminist scholars and administrators, including Jean Ambrose, Joan Burstyn, Barbara Calloway, Judith Gerson, Mary Hartman, Ruth Mandel, Ellen Mappen, Judith Walkowitz, Virginia Yans, Catharine Stimpson, and Linda Stamato, Dean Cobb began building bridges between Rutgers women in Camden and Newark, as well as New Brunswick. In the first WON Newsletter, published in December 1980, she identified the primary purpose of the network:

- to assist women at all levels—undergraduate, graduate, and non-matriculated students, faculty and professional staff—in their academic careers by providing such support as advising, counseling, mentoring, and facilitating; formulate and encourage broad programs to have significant impact on women at Rutgers; encourage scholarly research on or about women in many disciplines;
and to provide communication and visibility for research and action programs on women both within and beyond the university.\footnote{13}

This first WON Newsletter provided a systematic catalog of women’s programs on campus, in the state of New Jersey, and at other universities in the United States. To bring Rutgers women together, WON scheduled open meetings each semester on the Douglass Campus, and organized lectures on feminist topics. The second WON Newsletter, published in April 1981, also began introducing “new women at Rutgers” and providing brief bios of women scientists and humanists who had joined the university community. By the time the second newsletter was circulated, there were hundreds of Rutgers women on the mailing list.

In a later issue of the newsletter, Julia Cameron, the newsletter’s editor and a member of the Douglass dean’s staff, coauthored an essay with Adrienne Scerbak, a PhD student in history, titled “Academic Feminism: A Contradiction in Terms?” The essay begins by clarifying the conception of feminism that WON hoped to foster at Douglass and at Rutgers:

While all feminists agree that the bottom line is an equal sharing of societies’ responsibilities and rewards between women and men . . . feminism should imply more than an equality between women and men in the world as it now stands. First, we doubt that our present society could survive without the oppression of a large number of women at home, in the workplace, and elsewhere. . . . Society is stratified by race and class and this stratification impinges on the lives of women. The feminism to which we subscribe transcends equal rights for we do not choose equality to men of our class and race, if it means the perpetuation of the oppression of our sisters from other backgrounds. . . . We do not wish only to participate in the public forum, but to bring to that forum those values and characteristics which have traditionally been described as “feminine.” These include a preference for cooperation rather than competition, nurturance and compassion and a respect for the emotional and intuitive.\footnote{14}

With an impressive record of accomplishments, Dean Cobb left Douglass at the end of the 1980–1981 academic year to become president of California State University, Fullerton.\footnote{15} Her final note to the Class of 1981, published in Quair: Yearbook of Douglass College, is a testament to her vision of the “new” Douglass woman: “You are expected to become less provincial, more tolerant, less angry, more critical of all you read and hear in the media, more independent emotionally and academically. . . . You have always upheld a traditional expectation of top performance . . . as Douglass women. We expect that you will be not simply a writer or a surgeon or a judge or a teacher or a scientist, a corporate manager, or a civic leader, but we expect you to be the best of the lot.”\footnote{16}
The Hartman Era

Mary S. Hartman, who had achieved a national reputation for research excellence and successful institution building in women’s studies (see chapter 8), was tapped to serve as the acting dean of Douglas in July 1981 and appointed seventh dean of Douglass College in 1982. She was the first—and the only—Douglass faculty member to serve as permanent dean of Douglass.

With the consolidation of all New Brunswick faculty into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1981, Dean Hartman’s first order of business was to preserve a strong faculty presence at Douglass. Although in principle, all former Douglass faculty retained the status of Fellows of Douglass College, the demands of their new roles within Faculty of Arts and Sciences departments, the increased pressure to publish, and their dispersion across the Busch, College Avenue, Douglass, and Livingston campuses led most to treat the title as largely honorific. Using her ties with Douglass faculty and her powers of persuasion, augmented by enticing social events at the Dean’s House, Mary Hartman recruited an inaugural class of twenty-five Douglass Fellows to perform the traditional role of college faculty, serving as academic advisers for first- and second-year students, planning programs, overseeing admissions and graduation requirements, and participating in student recruitment. Representing all major Faculty of Arts and Sciences
disciplines, the fellows participated actively in the governance of the college, setting academic policies and curricular offerings, serving on college committees, recommending degree candidates to the Board of Governors, teaching honors seminars, supervising undergraduate research, developing special programs, organizing lecture series, and representing the college in university-wide bodies. Celebrating Douglass’s resiliency in the aftermath of reorganization, Provost Kenneth Wheeler praised Douglass in 1983 for being “on the forefront of the collegiate units designing their organization, establishing standards and directions for the college, and initiating selected activities.”

To flesh out her commitment to women’s leadership, Dean Hartman worked with Ruth Mandel, director of the Center for the American Woman and Politics, to secure Douglass’s membership in the Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN). Founded in 1978 by Frances Tarlton (Sissy) Farenthold, a Texas state legislator, gubernatorial candidate, and contender for the 1972 Democratic Party vice presidential nomination; the founding president of the bipartisan National Women’s Political Caucus; and the president of Wells College, PLEN was an alliance of women’s colleges committed to educating women for public leadership. With funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Farenthold; Ruth Mandel; and Betsey Wright, director of the National Women’s Education Fund, developed campus-based programs to prepare women students for leadership in the public arena. Douglass developed a three-credit PLEN course that combined an overview of American women and politics with guest lectures by three elected women officials each semester. The women politicians shared with the students their paths to power and discussed the challenges of public office. PLEN participants also traveled to Trenton to meet state legislators and policy makers. And beginning in 1983, PLEN students could attend seminars in Washington, DC, where they met with women in Congress and the executive agencies of the federal government. In 1985, Dean Hartman established the Emerging Leaders course, designed to promote new models of leadership by assisting students to develop a philosophy of leadership through experimentation with various leadership techniques, models, and theories, while gaining practical experience in building community partnerships.

Following precedents set by Deans Margery Somers Foster and Jewel Plummer Cobb, Dean Hartman continued to provide space—one of the university’s most precious and limited resources—to feminist initiatives and serve as an invaluable resource for women faculty at Rutgers. In 1982, the college provided desperately needed office space in Voorhees Chapel for women’s studies and the Institute for Research on Women, at a time when the university had withdrawn resources for the programs and assigned them to share two small basement offices in Carpender Hall. Throughout the 1980s, Hartman supported initiatives focusing on women’s lives, initiatives that were moving forward in multiple sites at Rutgers. Within discipline-based departments such as English, history, anthropology, political science, and sociology, as well as within the Institute for Research on Women and the Center for the American Woman and Politics, feminist scholarship was advancing with energy and verve. Coming together at Douglass Col-
lege, with its special mission to promote educational opportunities for women, feminist scholars worked collaboratively with Dean Hartman to strengthen and expand support from Rutgers and to address challenges posed by more subtle yet persistent gender stereotypes, exclusionary practices, and assumptions about power in society that thwart women's advancement to leadership.

Mary Hartman also brought celebrated women speakers with diverse specializations to campus, among them Sarah Weddington, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Eleanor Smeal, and Betty Friedan. In 1984 she inaugurated the annual Frances B. L’Hommedieu Lecture, which featured distinguished speakers such as British primatologist, ethologist, and anthropologist Jane Goodall; author Frank McCourt; Jody Williams, founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (who later went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997); and *New York Times* health columnist Jane Brody. Dean Hartman created the Annual Women’s Conference to explore important contemporary women’s issues and she continued to host the Dana Women Artists series. To introduce Douglass students to the emerging field of feminist scholarship, new curricular requirements mandated two courses in women’s studies for all Douglass students.

Dean Hartman recruited the directors of women’s studies, CAWP, and the IRW to engage in strategic brainstorming sessions about how to heighten the visibility of women’s research and educational programs, meet new challenges created by reorganization, and devise strategies to promote women’s leadership. These discussions set a pattern of collaboration among women’s units that became the hallmark of Douglass. Through collective initiatives to promote structural, curricular, and program changes at the university, Dean Hartman worked to ensure that women played a central role in and benefited from all aspects of university transformation. In these endeavors, Dean Hartman built a reputation for ingenuity and entrepreneurialism, working within as well as around the system.

In 1981, Dean Hartman began a series of discussions with university administrators and board members as well as state officials to create a chair in women’s studies at Douglass College. Through contacts on the Rutgers Board of Governors and through CAWP’s connections, she formed a legislative “study commission” consisting of female board members, state elected and appointed officials, and heads of New Jersey organizations focused on women. This study commission, chaired by state senator Anne Martindell and vice chaired by Hazel Gluck, then director of the State Lottery Commission, proceeded to recommend the creation of a state-supported chair in women’s studies at Douglass. When Governor Thomas Kean approved the proposal, it was celebrated in a packed Assembly chambers in Trenton, with remarks delivered by Rutgers Board of Governors chair Linda Stamato (DC ’62), Governor Kean, chancellor of higher education Ted Hollender, Dean Hartman, and others. The governor then challenged Douglass to supplement state support by finding a private donor. Before “leveraging” became a routine practice of university development offices, Dean Hartman worked with executive director of the Douglass Associate Alumnae Adelaide
Zagoren to approach potential donors with a proposal to “match” the state appropriation. New Brunswick philanthropist Irving Laurie agreed to give a quarter of a million dollars to establish an endowment for the joint venture, which was named the Blanche, Edith, and Irving J. Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women’s Studies at Douglass College. At the dedication ceremony in 1983, President Bloustein and Governor Kean cele-
brated this signal victory for Douglass and for women’s studies as a model for future public-private partnerships.

With the support of Douglass alumnae, Dean Hartman launched the Douglass Project for Rutgers Women in Mathematics, Science and Engineering in 1986 to encourage young women to enter scientific and technical fields. Building upon the internship model of Dean Cobb’s Science Management Program, the Douglass Project, led by Ellen Mappen, developed mentoring opportunities and various curricular (e.g., a three-credit course, Introduction to Scientific Research) and co-curricular programs to create a community of support for undergraduate women pursuing science and math majors. When the Douglass science departments were moved to the Busch campus, Dean Hartman transformed the science building into the Bunting-Cobb Math, Science, and Engineering Residence Hall, the first of its kind in the nation, which provided a living-learning community for one hundred Douglass women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. Over the next decade, with the support of major corporations and foundations, the Douglass Project created a range of pipeline programs, including the Douglass Science Institute for high school students, which brought students in grades 9 and 10 to campus for weeklong programs that featured workshops in math and computer science, field trips to AT&T Engineering Research, and meetings with women scientists from Colgate Palmolive. Science Career Exploration Day and the Douglass Science Academy were designed for high school juniors and seniors to reinforce commitments to science careers and strengthen research skills. The Douglass Project gained national recognition for its innovative initiatives, first in 1990, as the recipient of the American Association of University Women’s Progress in Equity Award; then in 1991, as a National Research Council Model Program; and again in 1999, as the recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

During the 1980s, Dean Hartman provided resources for community outreach programs, supporting Douglass Advisory Services for Women (DASW). Informally known as the Women’s Center, DASW offered to women in Middlesex and surrounding counties an array of services, including career, educational, legal, and personal counseling to twelve hundred women a year (40 percent women of color). It operated a hot line for those in need of referrals to local and state agencies, and it organized workshops, seminars, and conferences.19 Like women’s centers at many colleges and universities across the United States, DASW afforded space to Douglass students concerned with social justice activism. From concerns about sexual harassment and acquaintance rape to strategies to address sexist jokes in some classes and insufficient material about women in others, students turned to DASW to organize Take Back the Night marches, campus escort services (the Green Lantern Guides), and pickets against pornography.

In the *Dean’s Newsletter* (August 1987), Mary Hartman quoted the judgment of alumna Madeline Schetty (NJC ’27) that Douglass provides “the best a good college can offer.” Characterizing the college’s ties with central administration of Rutgers as “tighter
than they once were,” Dean Hartman emphasized that closer ties “have enriched us academically. . . . There is no question that Douglass continues healthy and strong. Applications were up 8% despite a decline in high school graduates, reflecting the end of baby boom era. Efforts to recruit students of color have paid off, 22% of entering students are Black or Latina. . . . The physical plant has expanded enormously as have academic programs.”20 The dean also mentioned that the fifteen hundred responses to a Residence Hall survey were “gratifyingly positive: students were generally pleased with and supportive of efforts to maintain racial harmony; roommate relationships were notably strong; professional and student staff were perceived as generally fair and concerned.”21

Douglass’s successes won praise across town at Old Queens. In its report, the Provost’s Committee on Undergraduate Education, chaired by Barry Qualls, noted:

Most striking of all is praise of students for the work of Douglass College and its Deans. This college—“like having Vassar at Harvard”—clearly has found a way of personalizing its services, of knowing its students individually, while also fostering a learning environment that students define as genuinely intel-
lectual. Whether it be the Douglass Scholars Program, or the Dean’s lecture series, or the Bunting Cobb Center, or the programs in women’s studies, Douglass students see that their College provides “an education for undergraduates equal to that available at any private college in the country.”

In the 1990s, Douglass was the largest college for women in the United States, and the only one that was part of a state’s flagship university. The 1994 Money Guide to Best College Buys Now ranked Douglass twelfth in a field of one thousand schools and first among the top eight women’s colleges. The Douglass Project won a half-million-dollar grant from the Sloan Foundation to establish Project SUPER (Science for Undergraduates: A Program for Excellence in Research), which created new forms of research collaboration between Rutgers faculty and undergraduate students. Building on its long history with the living-learning communities in the Language and Culture Houses, Douglass created the Global Village in 1992, consolidating the residences in a single area and revising their house courses to engage with issues of gender, migration, and globalization.

New scholarship on women’s life-writing inspired English professor and Douglass Fellow Carolyn Williams to suggest a new mission course for Douglass students. Dean Hartman charged the Curriculum Committee with exploring the possibilities. Following extensive planning by the Douglass Curriculum Committee, chaired by Associate Dean Louise Duus, and including Fellows Carolyn Williams (English), Robert Loveland (biology), Leslie Fishbein (American studies), Bonnie Smith (history), and Barbara Reid (journalism), the college created a first-year course, Shaping a Life, designed to help undergraduate women think about their future lives and livelihoods. Using a range of women’s autobiographies as its primary texts, the course theme emphasized “shaping a life—in the living and in the telling”—as faculty encouraged students to analyze “how women live their lives—and how they talk about and write about them—living forward in time, then shaping the life retrospectively.” In fall 1994, Professor Williams taught a pilot version of the course to one hundred randomly selected students, combining weekly lectures and presentations by faculty members with eminent guest speakers. Women of achievement, such as Jill Ker Conway, the first woman to serve as president of Smith College, and Hazel Gluck, chair of the New Jersey Lottery Commission, spoke with the students about how their lives took shape; students analyzed both the content and the style of their narratives, while also learning to conduct oral history interviews. After the successful pilot course, Shaping a Life was adopted as the Douglass mission course, taken by all entering and transfer students beginning in fall 1995.

During the early 1990s, Dean Hartman also launched a major fund-raising campaign in preparation for Douglass’s seventy-fifth anniversary. Douglass development officer Lisa Hetfield worked with the dean and Associate Alumnae of Douglass College executive director Adelaide Zagoren to recruit Gretchen Johnson (DC ’63) to serve as
volunteer campaign director. Through their energetic efforts, the campaign topped its target goal of $7.5 million, raising $10 million to support key programs, including the Global Village, the Institute for Women’s Leadership (IWL), and the construction of the Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, which was to become the new home for the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies and the IWL.

With the successful completion of the Douglass seventy-fifth-anniversary campaign, Dean Hartman announced that she would retire from the position of dean at the end of 1994. Looking back on her fifteen years as Douglass dean, she noted that “she never wanted to be a traditional dean”; she wanted “to start things and build new initiatives.” She also wanted to give a consistent message to Douglass women: “My concern is that students realize that they’re not going to have a happy, fulfilling life unless they love what they do. So, the main choice is, ‘What do you care about?’ If you can then pick up on what you care about and turn it into a life with a career on the side, that’s fine. See what your life passions are and then direct your career accordingly.” She continued to launch new initiatives and to inspire students as the founding director of the IWL until her retirement from Rutgers in 2010.

Martha A. Cotter, professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Rutgers and longtime Douglass Fellow, agreed to serve as acting dean in 1995, pledging to preserve and enhance Douglass’s strengths as a national search was undertaken for a permanent dean. Preserving equanimity on the Douglass campus was no mean feat during Cotter’s eighteen months in the Dean’s House. Several key staff members decided to time their
retirement to coincide with Dean Hartman’s departure, leaving Dean Cotter to conduct searches for director of the Douglass Campus Center, an associate dean for academic affairs, and a business manager for the college.  

Dean Cotter also saw Douglass through the tumult around President Francis Lawrence’s “misstatement” concerning race and intellectual aptitude (see chapter 10). Dean Cotter quelled campus fears, working with Rutgers and New Brunswick police, fire officials, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation when two bombs were found in the Mabel Smith Douglass Library in April 1995.  

She raised funds to cover the substantial instructional costs associated with expanding the new mission course to include all incoming and transfer students and recruited faculty to teach the course. In addition, she introduced new recruiting mechanisms to appeal to out-of-state students interested in single-sex education, developing a virtual tour of campus and emphasizing the “Douglass Difference”—the impressive strengths of a major research university combined with the virtues of an elite women’s college.

**Shoring Up the Foundations: Dean Barbara Shailor**

In 1996, Barbara A. Shailor, a classics scholar who specialized in Latin paleography and codicology and the study of Visigoth manuscripts copied and illuminated in northern Spain in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was recruited from Bucknell University to serve as the eighth dean of Douglass. During her years at Bucknell, Shailor had served as associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and as associate provost of the university.

In her inaugural convocation address in November 1996, Dean Shailor articulated a vision for Douglass that blended historical college traditions with the demands of the fast-approaching millennium. Reflecting upon the college motto, *Sophia kai sophrosune*, which had long been translated as “Wisdom and Self-Control,” Dean Shailor noted: “*Sophia* is, of course, wisdom. . . *Sophrosune* is the operational aspect of wisdom: the determination, the drive, the self-discipline to set priorities, to overcome obstacles, to use to the best advantage the wisdom we have gained from a Douglass education.” Situating the motto in contemporary vernacular, Dean Shailor suggested that it might best be rendered “Smart and Savvy,” a fitting reference to what Douglass gives its graduates—research skills, technical skills, a taste for discovering, enjoying, and contributing to the wide and wonderful world that lies before her [sic] . . . We cannot actually teach integrity, grace, and dignity; we cannot in any meaningful way mandate involvement, and compassion and open-mindedness. But what we can do and must do and what . . . Douglass is ideally equipped to do is to gather together in one place the people, the ideas, the structures that enable and encourage our women to learn these most important but least tangible things themselves. Those are the lessons of Douglass that last.
Recognizing the importance of emerging information technology, Dean Shailor wired the residence halls for Internet access and broadcast the first e-mail to all Douglass students. Concerned with certain structural problems with the physical facilities on campus, she raised funds to cover major renovations in the Chemistry Annex (restoring the roof), College Hall (replacing the original slate roof, chimneys, and windows, restoring exterior woodwork, repainting), and rebuilding the terracotta pediments and columns of the chapel. Dean Shailor also reorganized the college administration to place greater emphasis on strengthening relations between the college and its corporate and foundation partners, increasing the visibility of Douglass on the national scene, enhancing mechanisms for student recruitment, and raising funds for scholarships and academic programs.

To evaluate the benefits of the mission course for the largest undergraduate women’s college in the United States, Dean Shailor initiated a major study of 3,112 students who had completed Shaping a Life since its inception. Noting that Douglass students were pursuing sixty-nine majors and sixty-five minors, that 70 percent of the students received financial aid, and a large proportion of the students were holding part-time jobs while in college, Dean Shailor sought to discover the measurable benefits of the mission course. The results were telling: Shaping a Life increased retention at the college (attrition rates
decreased 30 percent over three years), enhanced academic performance by 10 percent, and improved four-year graduation rates by 5 percent. Students reported that the course fostered a greater sense of community and personal connection to Douglass, heightened their awareness of leadership and academic opportunities, and increased their self-confidence. The students also noted that they had been inspired by the featured women speakers, whose life experiences raised the students’ personal aspirations and career expectations. To assist students in their preparation for the labor force, Dean Shailor introduced the Transitional Leadership Program, a seven-week co-curricular program to help students think about life after graduation.

Developing a partnership with Ewha Women’s University in South Korea, the largest women’s university in the world, Dean Shailor began planning two online courses, Psychology of Women, and Leadership in a Global Community, which would enroll students on both campuses, beginning in 2002. In fall 2000, Dean Shailor’s recruitment efforts showed palpable results: the entering class of eight hundred students was the largest in a decade, fueled in part by highly positive national publicity. Douglass received glowing reviews in both the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*, which characterized the college as “a little-known gem of a school with excellent faculty and access to world-class research facilities; a pioneer in breaking down stereotypes that have deterred many women from pursuing science education.” The CBS news show *60 Minutes* produced a segment on the Douglass Project, in conjunction with its report on the newly created Girl Scout Leadership Institute in Science and Technology.

Dean Shailor resigned in 2001 to become director of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection at Yale University. She returned to administration in 2003 as the deputy provost for the arts at Yale, where she served until December 2012, when she retired from administration. She is currently senior research Scholar and senior lecturer in the Department of Classics at Yale.

**Douglass Enters the Twenty-First Century with an Alumna at the Helm**

In 2001–2002, Linda Stamato (DC ’62) became the first Douglass graduate to lead the college as interim dean. As an alumna, faculty member, administrator (co-director of the Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Bloustein School for Public Policy), and former chair of the Rutgers Board of Governors, Stamato had an unparalleled record at the university, which she drew upon to shepherd the college through the tumultuous beginning of the twenty-first century. Her term began at a very difficult time for the nation. Fall semester had barely begun when the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon were attacked on September 11. In this moment of terror, when Douglass students were trying to make sense of the enormity of the violence and deal with the loss of friends, family members, and a sense of national security, Dean Stamato sought to restore equanimity. She helped organize “vigils and moments of silence in memory of victims, their families, and friends, as well as blood and clothing drives, classroom
and residence hall discussion groups, counseling to help students cope with the tragedy,” and she raised funds to provide a full scholarship for a Douglass student who lost her mother in the attack.31 She used plenary sessions of Shaping a Life and her Mom’s Day talk to connect Douglass women across generations, reinforce bonds, and emphasize the importance of community as a resource in times of adversity. And she helped students see that it is possible to respond to crisis in ways that “affirm the basic goodness of humanity and our ability to sacrifice for and to be respectful and supportive of each other in times of great distress.”32 Drawing upon her expertise in conflict resolution, Dean Stamato helped students to shift their expectations about peace and peacemaking in a world of growing inequalities.

As a former Douglass student, Dean Stamato drew upon her unique relation to the college to shape her interactions with students, faculty, and staff. She made relation-
ship building with the students her top priority, and involved them actively in events at the dean’s house. She organized concerts and performances at the dean’s house that featured students and invited students to meet women writers (e.g., Joyce Carol Oates), politicians (e.g., Dharani Wiketelekka, Sri Lanka’s justice minister), and leaders in various fields at dinners and receptions in her home. To encourage the students to think deeply about contemporary issues, she organized a yearlong series on capital punishment, featuring a talk in the Voorhees Chapel by Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, a panel discussion with Justice Alan Handler of the New Jersey Supreme Court; Raymond Brown, lawyer, scholar, writer and moderator of *Due Process* on PBS; Hiroshi Obayashi, professor of religion at Rutgers; and Mary Hartman. Amherst College professor Austin Sarat, author of *When the State Kills: Capital Punishment and the American Condition*, also gave a lecture in the series and engaged with faculty and students at the dean’s home prior to and following his lecture. A film series, launched with *Dead Man Walking*, and an exhibition in the Douglass Library accompanied these debates.

Dean Stamato regularly attended Government Association meetings and “hung out” in the Women’s Center, where she engaged with many student groups. To build student confidence in this precarious period, she emphasized the role of Douglass in fostering wisdom and self-determination. Blending a profound respect for Douglass traditions with a nuanced interpretation of the original English translation of the college motto, “Wisdom and Self-Control,” Dean Stamato recommended revisiting the most recent iteration of the motto, “Smart and Savvy.” She suggested that the Government Association consider substituting “Wisdom and Self-Determination” for “Smart and Savvy” to express more adequately “our expectations of Douglass students . . . gaining knowledge, fine-tuned skills and demonstrated grit and confidence” from their college experience.33 The Government Association voted enthusiastically to approve the change.34

To foster direct faculty involvement with students, Dean Stamato strengthened the Fellows program, building bridges with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and its new dean, Holly Smith. Through her efforts the number of Douglass Faculty Fellows surpassed four hundred. She increased undergraduate research initiatives and highlighted student research in several venues on campus, in her public talks about Douglass, and in the *Dean’s Letter*. She worked with Professor Wise Young in Cell Biology and Neuroscience to create opportunities for students at the W. M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience who were in the Douglass Project for women in STEM. She broadened the range of majors offered to Douglass students by persuading key administrators in Old Queens that students’ academic choices ought not be limited by their chosen college. She strengthened college signature programs, including the Global Village, the honors program, and the Douglass Project. As Douglass’s most knowledgeable ambassador, she tried to demonstrate to the central administration that Douglass was “a jewel in Rutgers’ crown, not an outlier that ‘created problems for the rest of Rutgers.’”35
Dean Carmen Twillie Ambar: The Fight to Save Douglass

In 2002, Carmen Twillie Ambar was named the ninth dean of Douglass. At age thirty-three, Ambar was the youngest dean of Douglass and the first lawyer to lead the college. Prior to her appointment, she had served as assistant dean of graduate education at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and she had worked in the New York City Law Department as assistant corporation counsel.

Dean Ambar’s legal expertise was put to good use when both the college and the president’s office began receiving phone calls contesting the legitimacy of a women’s college at Rutgers. To support their claims that a public university could not allow a women’s college to exist, callers routinely cited Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in public and private institutions that receive federal financial assistance, the 1974 Equal Educational Opportunity Act, which prohibits the assignment of students to schools on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex; and United States v. Virginia, the 1996 U.S. Supreme Court case...
that declared the all-male admissions policy at Virginia Military Institute unconstitutional. Interpreting these policies to require identical treatment for men and women in public universities, callers claimed that Rutgers had a legal obligation to abolish Douglass. Two lawsuits were filed toward that end. What the callers did not appear to know was that *United States v. Virginia* did not prohibit all single-sex education. The court’s ruling drew a distinction between exclusions based on generalizations about the sexes that perpetuate pernicious stereotypes and group-based programs designed to address persisting inequality. Writing for the 7–1 majority, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted that the justification for a sex-based classification “must not rely on over broad generalizations about the different talents, capacities, or preferences of males and females . . . Generalizations about ‘the way women are,’ estimates of what is appropriate for most women, no longer justify denying opportunity to women whose talent and capacity place them outside the average description.” 36 Indeed, the decision explicitly endorsed the use of sex-based classifications to “compensate women ‘for particular economic disabilities [they have] suffered,’ to ‘promote equal employment opportunity,’ and to advance the full development of the talent and capacities of our Nation’s people.” 37 In response to the callers’ misguided concerns, university counsel crafted a statement for the Visit D.C. website. Rather than drawing attention to unique Douglass programs designed to promote gender equality, university counsel stressed that “Douglass College is only one component of a large coeducational undergraduate population at Rutgers University. All of Rutgers undergraduate students share and have access to the University’s educational resources, with Douglass being only one unit of Rutgers’ varied undergraduate programs in New Brunswick. Rutgers offers comparable educational opportunities to both male and female undergraduates at its campuses throughout the state.” 38 By emphasizing equal access and equal treatment at the university as a whole, Old Queens affirmed the legal ground for Douglass’s existence as a women’s college.

To ensure that Douglass is “the best and first choice in women’s higher education,” and to help the college achieve a new level of national and international publicity, Dean Ambar undertook a five-year strategic plan for the college and successfully completed a twenty-nine-million-dollar capital campaign. She launched the teleconferencing course with South Korea’s Ewha Women’s University and established a partnership with Kiriri Women’s University of Science and Technology in Nairobi, Kenya. She strengthened the Global Village, creating a comprehensive living-learning community that incorporated peer leaders to connect academic departments and academic course work with residential living programs, and she worked with the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, and the School of Business to shape the academic content and co-curricular components of the living-learning experience, adding the Human Rights House, Leadership House, Mid-East Coexistence House, and Women in Business House. To help students develop a greater global vision, she worked with the Associate Alumnae of Douglass College (AADC) to fund study-abroad scholarships in conjunction with Human Rights House initiatives. Dean Ambar
also organized an annual global symposium to discuss issues facing women in a changing world, such as the feminization of poverty both worldwide and in the United States and HIV/AIDS. In 2004, the symposium, “Women in the Era of Globalization,” featured Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and UN high commissioner for human rights (1997–2002), as the keynote speaker.39

In 2002, the Douglass Project introduced a comprehensive faculty-mentoring component that paired individual students with eminent Rutgers faculty for intensive funded-research experiences in the first and third years of undergraduate study. Each student also presented her findings at an annual research conference. Both the format and the content of the course, Introduction to Scientific Research, were reshaped in 2003 to feature teaching teams drawn from Rutgers science faculty, who expanded the range of research methods included in the class. Working with the W. M. Keck Center for Neuroscience, the Douglass Project introduced a new seminar series, RUWINS (Rutgers University Women in Neuroscience), which brought prominent women in neuroscience to campus to share their academic research and career experiences with students and faculty.

The Transformation of Undergraduate Education

In 2004, President Richard L. McCormick and the executive vice president for academic affairs, Philip Furmanski, appointed a Task Force on Undergraduate Education, charged to examine all aspects of the undergraduate experience at Rutgers–New Brunswick. Following a year of deliberations involving dozens of faculty and administrators under the direction of Faculty of Arts and Sciences humanities dean, Barry V. Qualls, the task force issued a lengthy report, Transforming Undergraduate Education (TUE), which recommended the centralization of administrative functions involving student recruitment, admissions, facilities, services, and student life and the standardization of core educational requirements pertaining to academic majors and graduation. In the words of President McCormick, the goal of TUE was “to address the insidious competitive hierarchy of former colleges; reorganize on the principle that services for students should be managed centrally but delivered locally, so everyone has nearby access to quality programs; and create a single process of recruitment and admissions, residence halls, recreational facilities, student centers, psychological counseling, and health care.”40 In developing its recommendations, the task force was particularly concerned to ensure equal access of all students to academic and co-curricular programs, eliminate confusing and inequitable requirements set by undergraduate colleges, eliminate the misperception that degrees from some colleges were more valuable or prestigious than degrees from other colleges, ensure equitable resource allocation and consistency in the quality of student services across all campuses, and remove structures that close academic opportunities for some students.41

To accomplish these objectives, the task force drew a distinction between schools and campuses: “Schools will denote degree-granting academic units composed of fac-
ulty and students; schools set all academic requirements, from admissions to graduation. . . . Campuses will denote student communities (geographical or virtual) cutting across the Schools.” In particular, the task force recommended

the creation of the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, which would be responsible for the admission criteria, general education, scholastic standing, honors curricula, and degree certification of all Arts and Sciences students in New Brunswick. Its faculty would comprise the existing Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and its Executive Dean would head that faculty; its students would be students of the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences.

Our current undergraduate colleges WILL be designated as local campus communities, serving as vital centers for the integration of the academic and co-curricular aspects of undergraduate education. Students in the undergraduate schools would affiliate with one of six such campuses: Busch Campus, Cook Campus, Douglass Campus, Livingston Campus, Queen’s Campus (on College Avenue), or UCNB. A Dean, who would report to the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, would serve as the head of each campus. Douglass Campus would be reserved for women; Cook Campus, although distinct from the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, would remain generally focused on programs associated with its land-grant heritage; and UCNB (non-residential) would be reserved primarily for non-traditional students (adult and part-time learners). Campuses would organize smaller learning communities (say of size no larger than 600 students), which would focus on the particular intellectual or artistic interests of groups of faculty and students.42

Many at Rutgers saw TUE as merely the logical extension of the 1981 reorganization. As Michael Beals, Faculty of Arts and Sciences dean for undergraduate education, noted, “To a great extent since 1981, when the separate college faculties were combined into a single unit, the so-called separate colleges . . . have been residential colleges. And we are not at all proposing that that be changed. The residential campus functions are strong ones that . . . we want to enhance.”43 Across town at Douglass, however, TUE recommendations were interpreted as the “abolition” of the undergraduate colleges, a proposal that threatened the very existence of Douglass. To ward off this threat, Dean Ambar, Douglass students, AADC, faculty fellows, staff, and friends of Douglass across New Jersey mobilized to preserve the women’s college.

From September 2005 through March 10, 2006, when the Board of Governors approved President McCormick’s recommendations, the Save Douglass forces organized debates, demonstrations, petitions, lobbying campaigns in the state capitol and in Washington, and public programs about the importance of women’s colleges. Graphically depicted in a photograph of Woodlawn, home of the Eagleton Institute of Politics and the Center for American Women and Politics, with a “Save Douglass” sign
prominently displayed on the sloping lawn, Quair staff observed, “It is everywhere. On the front page of the Targum. Outside the Douglass Student Center. On the wristbands of many students. On Tee shirts. On signs in yards of nearby neighborhoods. ‘Save Douglass College.’” Although the students acknowledged that TUE recommendations to “streamline applications, eliminate confusion, [and] ensure equal treatment of all Rutgers students” sounded benign, students suggested that they harbored real danger for Douglass: “As the largest public women’s college in the nation, Douglass stands to lose a great deal. Current students worry about losing their identity as Douglass students, and alumnae worry about losing their alma mater. All supporters of the college worry about what is to come if the institution is to come to an end. What is to become of everything that Douglass has to offer women?”

As debates about TUE continued throughout the academic year, Douglass students turned up at public meetings, sporting T-shirts that proclaimed, “Eliminate my college, eliminate my future.” U.S. representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) wrote an open letter to President McCormick, which was published in the Targum, demanding that Rutgers save Douglass: “A degree represents a contract between students and schools. It sets in motion a lifetime bond that provides many benefits to both. For Rutgers, this bond between Douglass and its alumnae has resulted in contributions of $29 million to the University’s capital campaign, more than the alumni of any other liberal arts college at Rutgers University.” On March 2, AADC organized buses for 150 Douglass students, faculty, alumnae, and friends to carry the Save Douglass campaign to Trenton. Bearing banners saying, “Mabel’s treasure should last forever,” the demonstrators rallied support for the college among the state legislators. Fifty-two state senators and assembly persons lent their voices to the Save Douglass College campaign in floor debate, culminating in the passage (75–0) of a New Jersey Assembly resolution to retain and strengthen Douglass as a four-year women’s college.

During this tumultuous year, Dean Ambar worked with the Save Douglass campaign and behind the scenes to ensure the survival of Douglass. “We want to accomplish both the aims of the task force report and hold on to the benefits of Douglass College.” She approached President McCormick with a plan for Douglass Residential College (DRC) that integrated academics, co-curricular programs, internships and externships, and residential living for women students. Dean Ambar was particularly concerned to develop a plan that would help attract students to Douglass. As interest in attending a women’s college continued to decline across the United States, fewer students had been applying to Douglass. Some women were “assigned” to Douglass by university admissions staff because there was no space available at Rutgers, Livingston, Cook, or Busch. Through creative programming, Dean Ambar hoped to reverse the trend in declining enrollment. Her proposal envisioned Douglass Residential College as far more than a campus, or physical site, reserved for women. She sought authorization to preserve and create a rich array of academic and co-curricular programs specifically designed for Douglass women.
Martha Cotter, president of the university Senate, also drafted a plan for DRC and built support for it within Senate committees that were reviewing TUE. Harriet Davidson, associate professor of English and women’s and gender studies, played a similar role within the New Brunswick Faculty Council. In his final TUE proposal to the Board of Governors, President McCormick included the recommendation that Douglass “provide a single-sex environment for women who choose to live there; offer co-curricular and student life programs consistent with the historic mission of Douglass College, and—with the approval from the new SAS—related curricular opportunities as well.”

After securing board approval for TUE, President McCormick appointed a special committee to flesh out the possibilities for a residential college, which included longtime Douglass Fellows Cheryl Wall, Lisa Hetfield, Linda Stamato, and Barbara Balliet. Issued in November 2006, their report identified the mission and scope of a residential college at Rutgers:

Residential Colleges at Rutgers University will promote the intellectual, social and personal growth of undergraduate students by strengthening the relationship between classroom instruction and students’ lives outside the classroom.
The purpose is to develop students’ intellect, capacity for reason, ability to communicate, and self-knowledge; to broaden their understanding of life; and to bring integration and unification to their college education. The mission of a residential College is to create a supportive and inclusive community of students (both those who live on campus and commuters), staff, and faculty sharing defined academic interests; to build common experiences designed to help students and faculty form a sense of community and mutual support around the residential college’s defined interests; to instill in students integrity, independent thought, self-discipline, tolerance, support for diverse cultures and beliefs, a willingness to place others above self for the common good, and a commitment to learning; to connect faculty and students through faculty’s commitment to define the residential college and to develop and offer relevant courses; to participate in out-of-classroom activities and to identify relevant academic programs in departments and centers that support the curricular and co-curricular work of the residential college; to sponsor enrichment programs, seminars, lectures and field experiences created to increase opportunities for students to learn together and to enhance their academic, intellectual, professional and personal growth; to further the University’s mission of creating an informed and responsible citizenry through civic engagement, community service, and political dialogue.50

Although the Report on Residential Colleges used generic language, Douglass was the only residential college in New Brunswick until 2015–2016, when the Board of Governors approved the creation of the Honors College on the College Avenue Campus.51 In 2008, Dean Ambar announced that she would be leaving Douglass to become president of Cedar Crest College, where she served until 2017, when she was named the fifteenth president of Oberlin College. In her farewell announcement, Dean Ambar emphasized that both pre- and post-TUE, Douglass’s mission remains constant: “to prepare women for leadership, providing students with a women-centered approach to understanding the world in which they live, helping young women pursue the sciences, and to do so in an ever changing global environment.”52

Having secured the structural changes that he sought “to reinvigorate the undergraduate experience at Rutgers by creating a more satisfying, more coherent, less frustrating, less confusing, and more rational academic environment for all students,” President McCormick faced an additional challenge, the creation of a single association of alumni and alumnae.53 Prior to 2007, Rutgers had nineteen separate alumni/alumnae associations. Loyal to the undergraduate colleges and professional schools with which they were associated, these units seldom interacted. Although President McCormick acknowledged that Rutgers’s “350,000 alums have a perfect right to organize as they see fit,” he appointed a task force that recommended the creation of single Rutgers University Alumni/ae Association (RUAA) to which all living Rutgers University grad-
The task force recommended increased funding for the RUAA by the university, abolition of dues, and the creation of regional clubs. Acting on these recommendations, President McCormick established the RUAA in 2007. Since its creation, four hundred thousand alumni/alumnae receive Rutgers Magazine three times each year; the university regularly communicates with two hundred thousand graduates for whom the RUAA has e-mail addresses; and 150 geographically based alumni/alumnae clubs have been launched, organizing more than one thousand events each year. Douglass alumnae were included in the new RUAA events and clubs, and AADC continued to organize its own programs for Douglass alumnae.

Through 2015, AADC also continued to perform its historic role as the primary fundraiser for Douglass, generating funds for scholarships, fellowships, externships, international programs, and a range of co-curricular programs according to the provisions of a memorandum of understanding negotiated in 2005. Its first campaign of the twenty-first century, Douglass: Always a Leader, raised twenty-nine million dollars for the college. In its second campaign, which concluded in 2014, AADC brought in forty-two million dollars—vital resources in an era of shrinking state budgets. In April 2015, the university terminated the 2005 memorandum of understanding, arguing that AADC should function exclusively as an alumnae association and that the Rutgers University Foundation (RUF) should assume sole responsibility for future fundraising for DRC. When AADC objected to this fundamental change in its historic mission, the university and the AADC entered into a yearlong mediation process.

In July 2016, following a series of thoughtful and productive mediation sessions and subsequent discussions, Rutgers University and the RUF, in partnership with DRC and the AADC, reached a new agreement regarding the fundraising structure and alumnae relations program for DRC and the AADC.

This agreement clarified the relationships among the parties. It specified that DRC will continue in its unique role offering women a single-sex educational opportunity at a major public research university and providing innovative programs to help women students from all backgrounds succeed academically, prepare them to meet the challenges of the global workforce, and pursue career paths with confidence and conviction. The AADC will continue to serve the network of powerful, vibrant Douglass alumnae by providing quality educational, social, and leadership opportunities with lasting impact for Douglass alumnae at every stage of life.

Rutgers University acknowledged AADC’s long and successful history of fundraising for and stewardship of gifts to Douglass, enabling the college to grow and fulfill its mission. According to the agreement, after July 2016, Douglass will handle all student educational and fundraising efforts for the college. Fundraising for the college will be managed by DRC, with support from RUF, and they will continue to work to advance the goals and aspirations of Douglass Residential College, the only all-women’s college within a major public research university.
The agreement also specified that AADC will fundraise for its alumnae activities, operations, and alumnae fellowships and will continue to steward the Douglass Fund, the endowment that was started by the AADC in 1969 to provide financial support to benefit the college and its students.

The AADC will continue to be a chartered member of the Rutgers University Alumni Association and will remain housed in the Ruth Schilling Hennessy Alumnae Center on the Douglass Campus.

Together, the Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, Douglass Residential College, Rutgers University, and Rutgers University Foundation noted their deep commitment to Douglass’s mission of advancing women and the unique experience the college creates for the next generation of female leaders. The parties also encouraged Douglass alumnae to stay connected with the college, the AADC, and each other.