

## **Inauguration Address**

Mordechai Rozanski

April 2, 2004

Governor McGreevey, Chairman Lang, president emeritus Luedeke, trustees, faculty, staff, administrators, students, alumni, colleague presidents, elected officials, delegates from sister institutions, guests from near and far, family and friends, and to all those watching via live video broadcast and on our website, welcome to the celebration of Rider's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a university—and to my inauguration.

To all who have offered kind greetings of welcome and support, please accept my profound thanks. A special thank you to Dorothy Warner and my AAUP colleagues for their generous gift of this beautiful presidential robe. I'm sure that my biblical ancestor, Joseph, would be truly envious.

Paul, permit me to convey my heartfelt appreciation to you, the board of trustees and the university community for bestowing upon me the immense honor of becoming Rider University's sixth president. I accept the position with humility and a profound understanding of the great responsibilities and boundless opportunities it carries. I pledge myself to serve the university enthusiastically and to work tirelessly, intelligently and collegially to enhance the legacy you have entrusted to me.

I have now reached the point in my speech when it is customary for people in my position to say a few words about the tortuous path that brought them to this important occasion. And while I have a sense that baring one's soul is not a common indulgence for presidents, I will take advantage of this inaugural moment to share some of my personal journey because it helps explain why I feel I'm privileged to be here.

My obligation to higher education, and my grateful acceptance of the honor conferred on me today, is the product of a personal and intellectual odyssey that began in Poland where I was born, the son of holocaust survivors. My family's difficult post-war escape followed a circuitous course as we wended our way from Eastern Europe to Israel and France, and eventually to Montreal in 1953, all the while seeking refuge, the chance for a new life and the comfort of our few surviving family members.

The New World meant freedom and opportunity for us. And the highest expression of that opportunity was an education for me, a privilege denied my parents. Education was part of belonging somewhere, of shaping a future that made our every tomorrow better than our yesterdays.

Soon after graduating from McGill University in 1968, I left for graduate school in Chinese history at the University of Pennsylvania. Thus began what would become a 25 year academic career in the United States, to which I have now returned after 10 fabulous years as the president of the University of Guelph. Mine has been a journey connecting countries and institutions, a bridge between the old and new, between despair and joy, and most importantly, between knowledge and opportunity.

I must pause here to recognize the people who made my journey possible, or better put, the people without whom the journey would not have been worth taking. These individuals have helped speed my steps, shape my beliefs and inform my convictions. First are my father and mother. While my father is gone and my mother too ill to attend, I will repeat what I have said before, this is all for them. It redeems all the tribulations they endured for our survival and my success.

Second are my wife, Bonnie and my son, Daniel. While this honor may come to me today, it owes much more to my partner of 34 years, my friend, the love of my life, that great playwright and novelist, my wife Bonnie. She, and for the past 21 years, our wonderful and enterprising son Daniel, have put up with my crazy life and travels, have comforted and advised

me, have motivated and supported me. Both are here this morning to share this celebration with me.

Finally, I wish to thank my New York in-laws, Sylvia, Jeff and Reed Asher, who have offered Bonnie, Daniel and me unfailing support however far we strayed and are here to share in our delight at finding a glorious new home so near-by. And in Rider University, I feel we've truly found a home - not just a residence.

As I reflect on the privilege of becoming Rider's 6<sup>th</sup> president, I am filled with the deepest admiration for what has taken place within this wonderful institution over the course of its proud history. And I express my great respect for the individual and institutional achievements that constitute today's Rider University, a university which has successfully transformed the lives of more than 55,000 alumni, who have and will continue to make contributions world wide.

Allow me to acknowledge at the outset that one of the most important people shaping Rider's many recent achievements was my predecessor, Bart Luedeke, president of Rider from 1990 to 2003. I respectfully salute his 13 years of exemplary leadership and his many enduring contributions. Rider and I owe him a profound debt of gratitude because he has provided us the strong platform upon which we will continue to build Rider's prominence and success.

Bart's achievements were, in turn, built on the impressive leadership of his predecessors, and remarkably there were only 4 presidents before him going back to our founding in 1865. Clearly, determination and longevity are two of the dominant virtues gracing Rider's presidents. Their example is both inspiring and intimidating.

I have begun, and will continue my remarks with this historical retrospective because it constitutes our proud legacy and provides context for my vision of our promising future.

Starting in 1865, in one room in a rented building in downtown Trenton, ours has been a distinctive history. As Rider's dedicated historian, Walt Brower, has explained, our origins were neither colonial nor religious. Rider took root in something that was uniquely American, the independent business school movement.<sup>1</sup>

Borne in the midst of turbulent, post-Civil War reconstruction, Rider was established in a burgeoning urban and industrial center that was emerging as the seat of state government. Not surprisingly, the Trenton area's demand for well-trained employees was urgent. A ready supply came from waves of returning Civil War veterans, whose desperate expectations of a better life provided an enterprising Rider a pool of willing recruits for an education that prepared them for employment.

In its near 100-year residence in Trenton, Rider branded itself as an institution whose mission was to respond to the human capital needs of government, business and industry. It partnered with these employers in developing high-quality curricula that made purposeful connections between academic study and professional training, including experiential opportunities that we continue to espouse today.

One of the hallmarks of Rider's evolution was its well-earned reputation for championing adaptability in response to peer competition and a changing environment. One example was the enrollment of women, a pioneering initiative in 1866, only one year after Rider's founding. Another was the faculty's personal attention to student needs, reflecting a sense of accountability for the rising price paid for a Rider education. Sound

familiar? Yet another example was the development of new academic programs to connect with and balance Rider's largely business curriculum. Thus, in 1913, Rider established a School of Education and in the 1950's a School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, rounding out its identity as a comprehensive college.

As enrollment expanded, Rider College outgrew its Trenton facilities and built a new campus here in Lawrenceville, completing the move in April 1964. The last step of our expansion occurred in 1992, when we merged with the renowned Westminster Choir College in Princeton. And Westminster's programs echoed Rider's history of connecting theory with practice, the practice leading to inspiring performances.

It was this enterprising, student-focused and academically balanced institution that ascended to university status 10 years ago this month. Many individuals over many years had contributed to Rider's new status, but the vision and leadership came from two individuals, former president Frank Elliott and his successor Bart Luedeke, during whose tenure it was realized.

Why have I given you this historical tour? Clearly, as an historian, I have enjoyed the momentary return to my professorial origins. But my fundamental purpose is to embed Rider's future, its vision and mission, in the faithful roots of its past. As we celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a university, we simultaneously embrace a near 140 year old legacy, which has been renewed by each succeeding generation, and will be renewed again as we, Rider's current stewards, draw on and adapt our inherited attributes to build a bridge to the future. So what is the principal attribute that can help shape and make distinctive the renewed Rider we seek?

It is a commitment to education that makes purposeful connections between faculty and students, between liberal learning and the practical knowledge of the professions, and between the classroom and learning experiences beyond the campus.

This attribute illuminates what will be my core theme today, the theme of **connected learning**, learning that seeks to create meaningful linkages in curriculum and experiences to help students achieve greater coherence, understanding and utility in their studies.

This theme of connecting liberal, professional and experiential learning raises a fundamental question: what should the mission and purpose of a university be today, and specifically the mission of Rider University. To answer this question, I will again rely on some history to provide a context for my view of Rider's mission.

Writings on the purpose of a university reflect incessant debates over whether its highest purpose is education for self-enlightenment through liberal knowledge or education for the professions through practical knowledge.

Most commentaries begin with John Cardinal Newman, the preeminent advocate, more than a century ago, of the cloistered view of university education. Newman believed that the University encapsulated the unencroachable territory of the intellect and should be dedicated to the pursuit of liberal knowledge for its own sake and as an end in itself. In his scornful words, "useful knowledge" was a "deal of trash."<sup>2</sup>

This worthy adoration of the mind was balanced if not fought by supporters of the newly evolving American university. For Benjamin Franklin, education had to meet the test of usefulness as well as contemplation.<sup>3</sup>

Franklin's fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush, who helped found a number of American colleges and universities, endorsed these views. Rush argued for a distinctly American style university, borne of the nation's democratic and commercial impulses, and emphasized the need to produce citizen-leaders who possessed a balanced and expansive liberal arts education that would be useful and applicable for all graduates, no matter their occupations.<sup>4</sup>

In digging up these old bones about whether the ultimate purpose of a university education is the pursuit of enlightenment or utility, I am not interested in fueling a tired and false divide or in declaring a winner. Instead, I'm interested in declaring that Rider, both in origin and evolution, is a university that encompasses more than the liberal arts and sciences and more than professional preparation. Rider values connected learning, learning that bridges liberal arts and science knowledge and practical knowledge---an integrated concept that I will call the **practical liberal arts**.

In my mind, the purpose of our university is to advance both a student's personal perfectibility through the pursuit of active and collaborative liberal learning and our collective human and social progress through scholarship and application.

Therefore my emerging vision for Rider is that of a leading university devoted to student success in life and career through excellence in teaching, learning and scholarship in **the practical liberal arts**. This includes purposeful connections between a variety of disciplines to build understanding, between the classroom and experiential learning to

build leadership skills, and between personal and social engagement to improve the quality of people's lives in our communities, the nation and the world. Interestingly, this vision reflects our Latin motto, *in omnia paratus*, which translated means "in all things prepared." And those we are preparing for enlightened lives and rewarding careers are our students. It's all about our students. Let me elaborate.

In my view, colleges and universities are not merely our nation's font of new knowledge and discovery; they are also our dominant instruments of social change, cultural enrichment and economic prosperity. In fact, they are the most powerful instrument of our modern democratic society. They serve this role by producing our nation's intellectual and human capital and by educating our pool of leadership talent. As a colleague recently wrote, our universities nurture and train each successor generation of artists, accountants, authors, business leaders, engineers, farmers, lawyers, physicians, poets, performers, scientists, social workers, and teachers—as well as a steady succession of advocates, dreamers, doers, dropouts, parents, politicians, preachers, social reformers, visionaries and volunteers, even an occasional miscreant—all of whom “leaven, nudge and shape the course of public life.”<sup>5</sup>

If this is what universities are, that is, the educational incubators of our successor generation, how should we at Rider educate and prepare our students, as our motto declares, for all things? More importantly, how should we educate them in a world that has experienced an unprecedented expansion of knowledge, but often without a commensurate expansion of understanding?

I believe we desperately need to educate students to comprehend complex social and economic relationships, to contend with natural systems, technology and change, and to understand global interdependence and diversity. This means that we need to promote a new type of student learning that creates opportunities for more integrative, connected

learning, learning that bridges theory and practice, technical knowledge and social understanding and, through such connected learning, makes students' education meaningful and useful. This approach, by the way, reflects several high profile projects underway in higher education.<sup>6</sup>

Rider is well positioned to join in because it has moved in this direction both within discrete disciplines and among them. Thus, we have created integrated learning communities and multidisciplinary offerings such as Biopsychology, American, global and multi-cultural studies and the honors program, among others. We also offer programs that connect science and education and science and business. Discussions are under way for new programs that connect the Arts and Management, Music and Business, and Marketing and Communications, to name just a few.

An inspired new initiative is the Center for the Development of Leadership Skills which will connect curricula from various disciplines and link these with mentorships and experiential projects, emphasizing learning by doing. An interesting example, devoted to faculty development, is the BRIDGE program which brings together faculty from various disciplines to develop connected pedagogy and content to advance new approaches to teaching and learning.

Let me make clear that I am not advocating the abandonment of discipline-based learning or the conversion of all our course offerings. Instead I'm encouraging connecting disciplines or courses where appropriate as one of our modes of enquiry to advance learning, understanding and application.

As we progress, we might consider multidisciplinary first-year seminars, additional learning communities, and capstone experiences, among other initiatives that

link programs and disciplines to provide students with “multiple and varied opportunities to develop... the capacity for integrative learning throughout their [Rider] experience.”<sup>7</sup> When initiated such efforts should be carefully developed and defined, particularly as we consider areas of academic distinction through our current strategic planning activities.

Consider that by promoting connected learning, universities hold the rich potential of creating new, exciting, unexpected results. From one link between departments, another between disciplines, and yet another between faculty, exponential fruits emerge: new programs, new student interests, new niches and new jobs. Link education with communications and you get long-distance learning. Connect business to pharmacology and an entire industry emerges. Link music and business and Westminster graduates become entrepreneurs. Knowledge is indivisible. There is a continuous gradient of knowledge that connects every resident of the university community. On the surface, each node appears to be an isolated island unto itself: education, business, liberal arts or science, but below the surface, intersecting roots connect everything into a single plant. Every so often, it is important to probe the surface and connect the roots to let a new fruit emerge.

T.S. Elliot said it best, hell he said, is a place where nothing connects to nothing. Making connections at Rider can produce a heaven on earth right here in Lawrenceville and Princeton.<sup>8</sup>

There is one more aspect of connected learning that I wish to discuss. And that is the need to extend education beyond the academy’s classrooms, “to embrace a larger civic purpose that can inspire, renew, and integrate all aspects of collegiate study.”<sup>9</sup>

For too long, we have located our education primarily within the confines of the academy rather than society at large, and have focused it on personal rather than social return. Given the diversity and socio-economic disparities of our society and globe, we need to educate our students for the value of civic engagement. Universities should help students invest their personal social capital in the betterment of society. This is both a

moral and practical imperative. At Rider this idea is reflected in our Statement of Community Values, which is inculcated in our students from their first day on campus. It is also fostered in our various community-based service learning programs.

I believe that connecting the classroom with service in communities or with various levels of government is crucial to helping our students develop the insights important for functioning as active members of an inclusive democracy. Civic engagement helps instill in our students a sense of empathy and fairness, a social awareness, a proclivity to treat others with dignity, a respect for political process and a willingness to be accountable for one's actions. Ultimately, it inspires a passion for shared purpose in advancing the quality of people's lives. Rider may be a private institution but as a university we have a public responsibility to address the great issues of our age.

President John F. Kennedy affirmed this point in an address to Amherst students in October 1963. "What good is a private college," he said, "unless it is serving a great national purpose?" Its purpose cannot merely be "to give [its] graduates an advantage, an economic advantage, in life's struggle. Unless," he continued, "the graduates...are willing to put back into our society their talents, broad sympathy, understanding, and compassion in the service of the Great Republic, then obviously the presuppositions upon which our democracy is based are bound to be fallible."<sup>10</sup>

This encouragement to connect the classroom to the world around us is also important because of the need to foster global perspectives in an increasingly interdependent world. Why? Because that same world is shrinking, and the forward rush of trade, technology and communications is fast eliminating the cushioning spaces that once separated people and cultures. The result is a rapid increase of interdependence, but also tensions. While the world is fast becoming a global village, many here and abroad retain attitudes and values more appropriate to a past age when different cultures existed far removed from each other, and the well-being of most individuals was determined

within self-contained nations. Such parochial attitudes can no longer be sustained,<sup>11</sup> as evidenced by the horrific events of 9/11, and beyond. To contend with our global realities, our students need to connect with and understand our new global community. That means developing international perspectives in our various curricula, facilitating study abroad opportunities and foreign language study and increasing the number of international students on our campuses. Rider is responding in many of these areas, in global business, multinational studies and exciting study abroad programs. We will continue to expand these efforts particularly in the international exchange of students.

Allow me to conclude with several summary remarks. As I have said previously, my overall goal is to have even more people see what I see in Rider's future—a leading university fostering a culture of the intellect and excellence in teaching, learning and scholarship; a vibrant and financially robust university reflecting first-class people, programs, services and facilities; a learner-centered university, attracting and graduating bright and motivated students; a celebrated university, renowned for its quality, attractiveness and distinctiveness, a distinctiveness focused on the practical liberal arts and reflecting connected learning.

To advance these goals, I ask the Rider community to continue to join me in renewing our university. Over the last eight months Rider's students, staff, faculty, administrators, alumni and trustees have generously supported me and my initiatives. With their insightful advice and determined actions, we have successfully advanced more than 20 initiatives ranging from strategic planning to the construction of new residences and a student recreation center (for which we broke ground yesterday). It's been a whirlwind of exciting initiatives as our university embarks on a period of renewal. And as our community has heard me say before, all universities are founded once, but only the best renew themselves continuously. And surely that describes Rider.

Finally, I believe that success is as much a journey as a destination. And this journey needs to offer us a sense of enjoyment and pride in what we do. While our work

together is very serious and important, it should also be fun and rewarding. Consider our good fortune. As members of a university community, we have the unrivaled opportunity to experiment, to discover, to transmit culture, to create and perform, to analyze, to glory in humankind's achievements, to learn from its history, to test our ideas in the marketplace and, in the end, to transform lives---our own and those of our successor generation, our students.

We achieve this transformation by continuously inviting students to join our community of ideas, creativity and practice and by encouraging them to develop habits of mind that value reason, evidence-based judgment and the human quest to achieve a civil and just society. At its core, therefore, one of the key goals of university education, complementing preparation for gainful employment, is to persuade our students to appreciate the transforming power of free, rational and humane investigation and behavior. What an exhilarating way to spend our days and earn a living.

As I wrote the last words of this speech, I looked for a magnificent quote with which to end it, a truly inspiring quote that would convey my optimism about Rider's future, but I couldn't find one I liked. So I turned to my favorite TV show, **The West Wing**, which can easily serve as a surrogate for university life. In an episode entitled "The Long Goodbye," guest star Matthew Modine looked into CJ's eyes and uttered the following auspicious words:

*I think the best day's got to be the next day. Life is all about what's next. It's like those billboards before the actual ad goes up, they put in big block letters, 'watch this space.'*

Well colleagues, watch this space for Rider's future. We're going to make you proud. Think Rider. Thank you all for coming.

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Walter A. Brower and Feb. 27, 2004 report. See also Walter A. Brower, Full of Promise: The Story of Rider College, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Quotes in Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University, 2001, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> Vartan Gregorian, speech at NAICU Annual Meeting, Feb. 2, 2004.

---

<sup>4</sup> William Durden, from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 18, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Rhodes, The Creation of the Future, 2001, p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> My views on connected learning are linked to The Integrative Learning Project: Opportunities to Connect, which is a national project sponsored by the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#) (AAC&U) and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. See Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings, “Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain,” Background Paper for AAC&U, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings, *ibid*, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Gregorian, *ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore Long, “The Civic Renewal of Liberal Education,” August 24, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> JFK, October 26, 1963, at the opening of the Robert Frost Library, quoted in Fall/Winter 2003-04 Amherst Magazine, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Preceding paragraph contains interspersed quotes and paraphrasing from Edwin O. Reischauer, Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Education for a Changing World, 1974, pp. 3-4.