



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Boxing the Compass in New Jersey



*ruly there is a tide in the affairs of men; but there is no gulf-stream setting forever in one direction.*

—James Russell Lowell

The nautical tradition of “boxing the compass” requires naming all 32 principal points of the compass in clockwise order. It’s an exercise that demonstrates mastery of knowledge essential for mapping the best course for a voyage, which often requires steering by various compass points on the way to a distant port. In his State of the State address on January 13, Governor James E. McGreevey challenged New Jersey’s technological research universities to alter course — away from the proposed restructuring of the state’s public research universities that has received so much publicity but still firmly in the direction of institutional cooperation for educational and economic progress.

NJIT will be a key contributor to the new plan envisioned by Governor McGreevey for enhancing collaborations among our university, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and Rutgers. At the same time, we have charted a complementary course of our own toward academic improvement and partnering in economic growth. I have already shared with you the broad priorities of the strategic plan to enhance our educational and research programs, improve the quality of life on campus, strengthen relationships with industry, and ensure that our student body is diverse and high-achieving. Tactical implementation of these objectives is under way, an effort that continues to evolve through the work of university-wide taskforces.

Now open for use by students, faculty and staff, the new East Building and Campus Center are part of the dramatic physical enhancement of our campus described in this issue’s cover feature. We are also moving ahead with transforming the campus into a park-like, pedestrian-friendly space through extensive landscaping and barring vehicles from Summit Street and other interior streets.

On January 13, Governor McGreevey went on to say that public universities must be catalysts for the private sector, and he proposed establishing industry “Innovation Zones” near the state’s research universities. With a long history of productive interaction with industry, NJIT is ready to contribute to this initiative. But in keeping with our strategic plan, we are taking an important immediate step as well — creation of the non-profit NJIT Research and Technology Corporation to support applied research and business development. This will add to the successes exemplified by our business incubators and the results of research in areas such as the membrane separation technology described in this issue.

At NJIT, I believe that we are choosing carefully and wisely among the points on our compass as we navigate toward an exciting, prosperous future for the university and the people of New Jersey. ■

*Robert A. Ottobandi*