

Otto York Memorial

September 19, 2007

Good afternoon. It is a special privilege to join you in honoring Otto York, one of NJIT's most dedicated and generous supporters. We are all saddened by Otto's passing and will greatly miss the insights and guidance he provided in the course of his long association with our university, most notably for our programs in environmental science and chemical engineering. Yet Otto's exceptional dedication lives on at NJIT through a legacy that benefits our university and its students today, and will continue to do so far into the future.

Otto was not an alumnus of NJIT. He was a graduate of Purdue University, which is also my alma mater. However, as an outstanding chemical engineer and entrepreneur who built a highly successful company in New Jersey, Otto recognized NJIT's vital role in education, research and economic development. He was also ever mindful of how hard he had to work to pay for his undergraduate education, and how difficult it was for him to do so during the 1930s. This experience engendered a deep commitment to NJIT's mission of nurturing the talent of promising students regardless of their personal economic circumstances.

Understandably, Otto was especially interested in fostering the abilities of those embarking on careers in chemical engineering. He wanted as many young women and men as possible to have an opportunity to gain the knowledge essential for breakthroughs such as his own York Demister, a process component that revolutionized gas and liquid separation in many industries. Otto's innovation has been used worldwide for applications that range from refining petroleum and manufacturing chemicals to processing food and desalinating water.

Otto was also a dynamic contributor to the economic life of New Jersey, achieving substantial success that began with manufacturing the York Demister. As an entrepreneur, he knew that expanding access to education in engineering, science and technology is fundamental to sustaining prosperity not only in New Jersey, but throughout our nation. In light of Otto's concern for NJIT, which included generous scholarship support for chemical engineering students, it was very fitting that the

university named the chemical engineering department in his honor in 2002. I am pleased to say that I had the privilege of meeting Otto and participating in the dedication of the Otto H. York Department of Chemical Engineering shortly after coming to NJIT that year.

Although Otto's achievements were rooted in his unique expertise as a chemical engineer, his social vision was much broader. Through the Otto H. York Foundation, he generously helped many groups working to improve healthcare and the quality of our environment, as well as to advance higher education. Later in today's program, NJIT President Emeritus Saul Fester will speak about Otto's other contributions to our university and the quality of life in New Jersey over more than three decades. It is for all of these commitments to NJIT and to creating a better future that Otto York will long be remembered.