

NACME Awards Dinner Comments
Robert A. Altenkirch
President, New Jersey Institute of Technology
September 29, 2009

On behalf of my NJIT colleagues, some of whom I will recognize in a moment, and students, thank you for recognizing NJIT with the “Rising University Star of the Year” award.

NJIT has been repeatedly recognized for being in the top ten percent in the nation for awarding baccalaureate degrees to minority and African-American engineers.

Two programmatic initiatives have been notable in our achievement of this national recognition. The first, NJIT’s pre-college programs, focuses on grades 4-12 from school districts in the greater Newark, New Jersey area. Each summer we host more than 3,000 pre-college students, the majority of whom are minority students, and engage them in programs that build skills, knowledge, and interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics majors, or STEM majors. Much of the support for these programs comes from our corporate and school district partners. These programs now yield over one hundred freshmen for NJIT each year.

Second is our long standing, State of New Jersey and NJIT supported, Educational Opportunity Program, or EOP. EOP enrolls over 600 students, most first generation, generally from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and from school districts that underprepared them for STEM majors in college. EOP has a graduation rate that often equals or exceeds that of our regularly admitted freshmen and that of the national average for graduating minority engineers.

NACME and NJIT have had a nearly thirty year family history. NJIT’s President Emeritus Saul Fenster was a member of the NACME Board of Directors for nearly twelve years. We partnered with NACME in the NACME Incentive Grant and the original NACME Scholars programs of the early 1990’s. More than 150 students were provided financial assistance that resulted in 95% of them graduating in STEM fields. Currently, nearly twenty students are NACME Scholars with thirty five more waiting to be accepted into the program.

We have had the good fortune to team with NACME, John Slaughter, Irving McFail, Aileen Walters. NJIT and New Jersey colleagues with us tonight are:

Chair of the NJIT Board of Trustees, Ms. Kathleen Wielkopolski
Dr. Glenn Lang, Executive Director of EOP Programs, New Jersey Commission on
Higher Education
Dr. Clifford Janey, Superintendent of Newark Public Schools
Ms. Marilyn “Penny” Joseph, Director of Corporate Outreach, Panasonic Corporation

Mr. Bruce Curry, Senior Director, Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals
Mr. Leon Baptiste, EOP alumnus, President, LB Electric
Dr. Joel Bloom, NJIT's Vice President of Academic and Student Services
Dr. Sunil Saigal, NJIT's Dean of the Newark College of Engineering

And,

Lawrence "Tony" Howell, Executive Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at NJIT.

This is the team with which I have had the privilege to work, and NJIT has certainly been privileged to have had a long and highly productive relationship with it and NACME to benefit our minority students, some of whom are here with us tonight! Thank you again on behalf of my colleagues and students for being recognized with the "Rising University Star of the Year" award. An honor we will long remember.