



STUDENT CENTERED

Syracuse redefines the research university.

The reporter from *Financial World* magazine was interviewing Gershon Vincow about the changing face of higher education. Syracuse, she said, is the institution many universities consider a leader in developing a more personalized approach to dealing with students and learning.

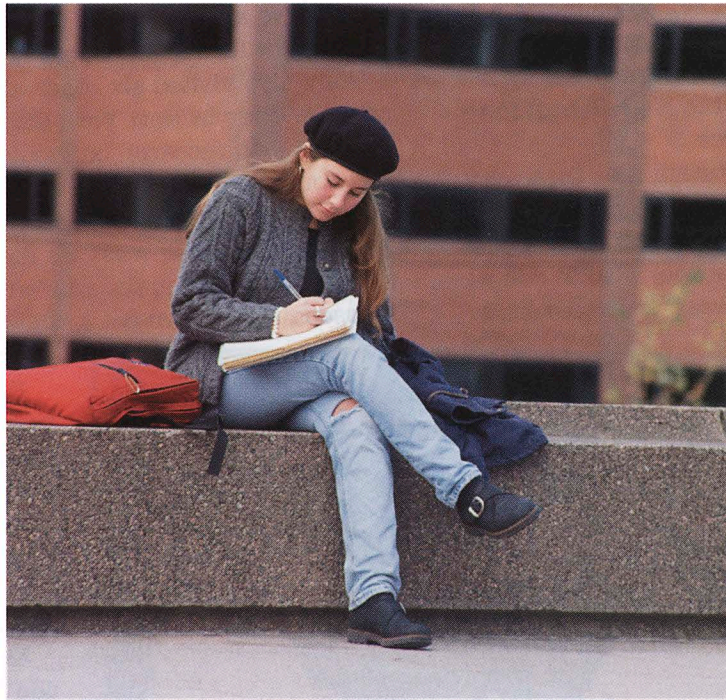
"Why Syracuse?" asked the reporter.

It was a question SU's vice chancellor was eager to answer.

"Up until 1945, Syracuse was a collection of undergraduate colleges," Vincow said. "Deep within the traditions of this University, there is a dedication to undergraduate education. It took from 1945 until roughly 1990 to develop the research university."

And now, says Vincow, SU is refocusing to become a research university centered on student needs. It's a vision the University has been wrestling with since Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw introduced the concept shortly after his installation as SU's 10th chancellor in 1991.

That was a critical time for SU. Private universities were taking a financial beating, the result of unfavorable demographics and a steady decline in state and federal aid. With college costs rising, students and parents were shopping for colleges as savvy consumers, demanding to know what their tuition dollars were buying. Higher education commission reports focused on weaknesses in undergraduate education; critics pointed to professors at research institutions who sacri-



In an effort to better meet student needs, Syracuse University has undertaken 33 specific initiatives aimed at changing everything from faculty evaluation to the way classrooms are cleaned.

ficed students and teaching for their own scholarship.

Shaw instituted a five-year restructuring plan to address these challenges at SU. Belt tightening, he said, would not be enough. The long-term solution was to change the culture. Syracuse would respond to society's demands by becoming *the* student-centered research university, where promoting learning is the foremost priority.

Thirty-three initiatives were launched in early 1992 to eliminate the mass approach to dealing with students. Summer orientation was expanded. Programs were started to improve the first-year experience. Quality improvement efforts on administrative services were implemented.

All of it was done to show students that SU is clearly centered on their needs.

"I don't know of another institution

PETER FINGER an impartial observer could say has gone as far as we have," says Vincow.

Syracuse's refocus is nothing short of revolutionary.

"We are no longer saying our mission is teaching, research, and service," says Vincow. "Our mission is to promote learning. In the old way, everything was of equal importance. We are attempting to bite the bullet and say, 'This is what is most important.'"

Most major research universities still believe the principal obligation of their faculty is to advance knowledge in their disciplines, says Vincow. "Our principal responsibility is to our undergraduate and graduate students."

That doesn't mean Syracuse plans to relinquish or minimize its research activities. The challenge is to ensure that research enhances the learning experience.

"In a student-centered research university, the culture is focused on learning in every part of the community," says Shaw. "It is a place that fosters learning for all its members, for faculty and staff as well as students."

Response from the University community ranges from outright enthusiasm to skepticism.

"It's an exciting and important challenge," says Stuart Thorson, director of SU's Global Affairs Institute. "It's a shift in the University's self-consciousness about what it is we're trying to accomplish. For all of us on the faculty, it's going to mean some degree of change in the mix of ways we spend our time."

We have to be creative about how to combine our scholarship and our educational responsibilities."

Sophomore Nicole Schlinger, president of Undergraduates for a Better Education (UBE), a student watchdog organization, says she has seen increased attention to student needs: "The design of Eggers Hall was built with learning in mind, the library has increased its hours, and the Kimmel Computer Cluster is open all night."

Still, her organization remains guarded.

The concept of the student-centered research university is exactly what UBE has been working toward," says Schlinger. However, she says only time will show what criteria the University uses for granting tenure and promotion to professors.

Though it may be happening too slowly for some, significant change is occurring at Syracuse University.

"The concept of a student-centered university is not a radical one," says Shaw. "What is radical is that Syracuse University is using its resources to make it happen.

"People are taking note of what we're up to. Other colleges and universities have called for advice. Accrediting organizations have sent observers. Recently the Pew Charitable Trusts, a major educational foundation, included Syracuse among a select group of research universities to participate in a dialogue on this and other issues related to changes under way in higher education."

Becoming *the* student-centered research university is also an ongoing process, not a product, say Vincow and Shaw. Over time, they'll know the University is succeeding as government and educational leaders increasingly look to Syracuse as a model institution and top-flight students choose to attend Syracuse because of the University's unwavering focus on student needs.

"Right now, responding to what society says is important, Syracuse is first tier," says Vincow. "We've seen all indications from the outside world that people are responsive to what we've started." —RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

HEAD LINES

➤ ***Eggers Hall Opens.*** Melvin A. Eggers Hall, the \$20-million addition to Maxwell Hall and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, opened January 10. Located on the former site of Holden Observatory, the addition allows all Maxwell faculty, departments, and programs to be housed in the same space for the first time in nearly 50 years.

The five-story building is connected to Maxwell Hall by glass corridors and includes offices, classrooms, seminar rooms, lecture halls, computer clusters, a computerized political analysis lab, a 3,000-square-foot public events room, and a 65-seat café.

"Eggers Hall offers to undergraduate and graduate students throughout the University the most exciting social science and public and international affairs educational environment in the country," says Maxwell Dean John L. Palmer.

Dedication ceremonies for the Maxwell Complex—a centerpiece of Syracuse University's 125th anniversary celebration—will take place in early October. Maxwell Hall is now undergoing renovations.

➤ ***Lacrosse Investigation Completed.*** An internal investigation of the lacrosse team revealed 3 violations of NCAA rules, 1 of which exceeded the NCAA's statute of limitations. Two violations involved athletes receiving extra benefits in the amount of \$13.89 and \$40. Another violation involved the co-signing of a car loan for a student athlete.

The University's official report included actions taken by the University both before and during the investigation to ensure its lacrosse program was in full compliance with NCAA legislation.

"Our results revealed some violations but no pattern of favoritism," says Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw. "Quite the contrary, these results show a record of high integrity on the part of Coach Roy Simmons Jr. and the entire lacrosse program."

The NCAA is reviewing SU's report and is expected to render a decision this spring.

➤ ***Julian Bond Visits Campus.*** As part of the University's celebration of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, civil and human rights activist and politician Julian Bond spoke at a dinner in the Carrier Dome. While on campus, Bond also conducted an undergraduate seminar on student participation in the civil rights movement. Bond is currently Distinguished Scholar in Residence at American University and a lecturer of history at the University of Virginia.



SU's newest structure, Melvin A. Eggers Hall, is home for the Maxwell School.

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