



## **Rutgers Strategic Plan Calls for Greater Collaboration with Business**

Improved access and simplified processes are among the recommendations.

BY EDWARD TATE

**E**xpanding the collaboration with the business community is among the recommendations made in the new strategic plan for Rutgers, which was approved recently by the university's Board of Governors. The five-year plan is a bold and comprehensive blueprint that will propel Rutgers into the ranks of the nation's premier public universities, and enhanced corporate partnerships and relationships are a key goal.



Peter Lobel, professor and associate director at Rutgers' Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine, and Haiyan Zheng, Ph.D., assistant director of CABM, work with a state-of-the-art Thermo Orbitrap Velos mass spectrometer. It is used to conduct proteomics experiments such as protein identification, characterization of post-translational modification, and quantitative analysis of complex mixtures on behalf of scientists from Rutgers, other universities, and industry. The facility has additional advanced equipment used by a wide range of investigators. (photo by Nick Romanenko, Rutgers)

The strategic plan comes during a time of transformative change for the university that is highlighted by four historic events: Rutgers' upcoming 250th anniversary; the integration of Rutgers with most of the former University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and the creation of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), an entirely new academic entity at the university; Rutgers' entry into the Big Ten athletic conference and its academic counterpart, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation; and the approval of the Building Our Future Bond Act, which has provided a major infusion of

funding from the State for higher education capital construction projects.

"As the strategic plan makes clear, our distinguished faculty are at the core of our university's aspiration," Rutgers President Robert Barchi said. "Among Rutgers faculty are many innovative researchers who are leaders in their fields, and their expertise is one of the powerful assets we can offer to industry. Rutgers research has enormous economic potential, which has grown even stronger as our biomedical and health sciences portfolio has expanded. We want to build public-private partnerships that take full advantage of these resources and create jobs that stay in New Jersey."

Barchi has given the responsibility for enhancing the university's business partnerships to Christopher Molloy, senior vice president for research and economic development. A long-time researcher in the pharmaceutical industry, Molloy led the Rutgers-UMDNJ integration before becoming head of the Office of Research and Economic Development three months ago.

"We know how to work successfully with business, but we need to make it happen to a greater degree across the university," Molloy said. "The strategic plan articulates the need for us to make substantial improvements in our systems and processes to encourage industry collaboration. My office is committed to ensuring that we streamline our administrative processes to facilitate partnerships and to providing a business-friendly portal."

To businesses in New Jersey and beyond, Rutgers offers research centers and institutes, technology for licensing, facilities and equipment, top-notch graduates and interns, continuing education and graduate academic programs. The Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) provides a one-stop shop for industry, including a new website, [businessportal.rutgers.edu](http://businessportal.rutgers.edu).

The office also is developing numerous initiatives of value to the business community, including:

- Corporate contracts and research agreements are being simplified and made more adaptable, with a streamlined decision-making process. Many decisions on agreements will be made by managers more directly involved with business partners.
- Alliance managers are being assigned to foster relationships with each business partner, so the companies will know who to contact at Rutgers. Many of the alliance managers combine years of business experience with an intimate knowledge of Rutgers' structure and people, allowing them to facilitate collaborations with industry.

- The Office of Translation Science was launched last fall. Led by scientists from industry, the office creates value in biomedical research across Rutgers by building interdisciplinary collaboration through the molecular, structural, imaging and biomedical sciences. The office will build the interface between Rutgers and the private sector with the goal of contributing to the success of local biotechnology and biomedical companies.

- The clinical trials process is being re-envisioned by the new leadership in Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences and the Office of Research and Economic Development. A very recent step is the university's endorsement of a new agreements template that BioNJ developed with Rutgers and a New Jersey law firm that has a pharmaceutical industry practice.

One of ORED's components, the Office of Innovation & Technology Commercialization, is implementing many of the steps toward enhanced business collaboration. It is led by Richard Mammone, associate vice president for innovation and professor in the School of Engineering and the Rutgers Business School.

"We're becoming more customer-driven," Mammone said. "We're listening to companies to better understand what they want, and then putting together solutions that meet their needs. The culture has been changed, driven by Dr. Barchi and Dr. Molloy. We're hoping that industry gives us the opportunity to prove ourselves."

Mammone's staff has interviewed numerous business executives and managers, he said. They also have gathered insights about high-performing industry-relations programs at major universities, particularly Big Ten schools, to benchmark against best practices.

Among the research centers at Rutgers with successful, long-standing business partnerships are the Wireless Information Network Laboratory (WINLAB), which currently has 20 corporate sponsors and research partners; the Engineering Research Center for Structured Organic Particulate Systems (C-SOPS), which works closely with major pharmaceutical companies and recently opened a Continuous Pharmaceutical Advanced Manufacturing Laboratory on Rutgers' Busch Campus; and RUCDR Infinite Biologics, the world's largest university-based biorepository, which collaborates with numerous companies and academic researchers worldwide.

The strategic plan, which is posted at [universitystrategy.rutgers.edu](http://universitystrategy.rutgers.edu), emphasizes greater investment in a range of metrics to evaluate the university's progress, both qualitatively and quantitatively. ■