

# Gifted Education

Philanthropic bequests to local colleges prepare students for the workforce in unprecedented ways.

by Whitney McKnight

Unlike neighboring Philadelphia, where educational institutions sprouted centuries ago, South Jersey can't claim a long history as an academic stronghold. But

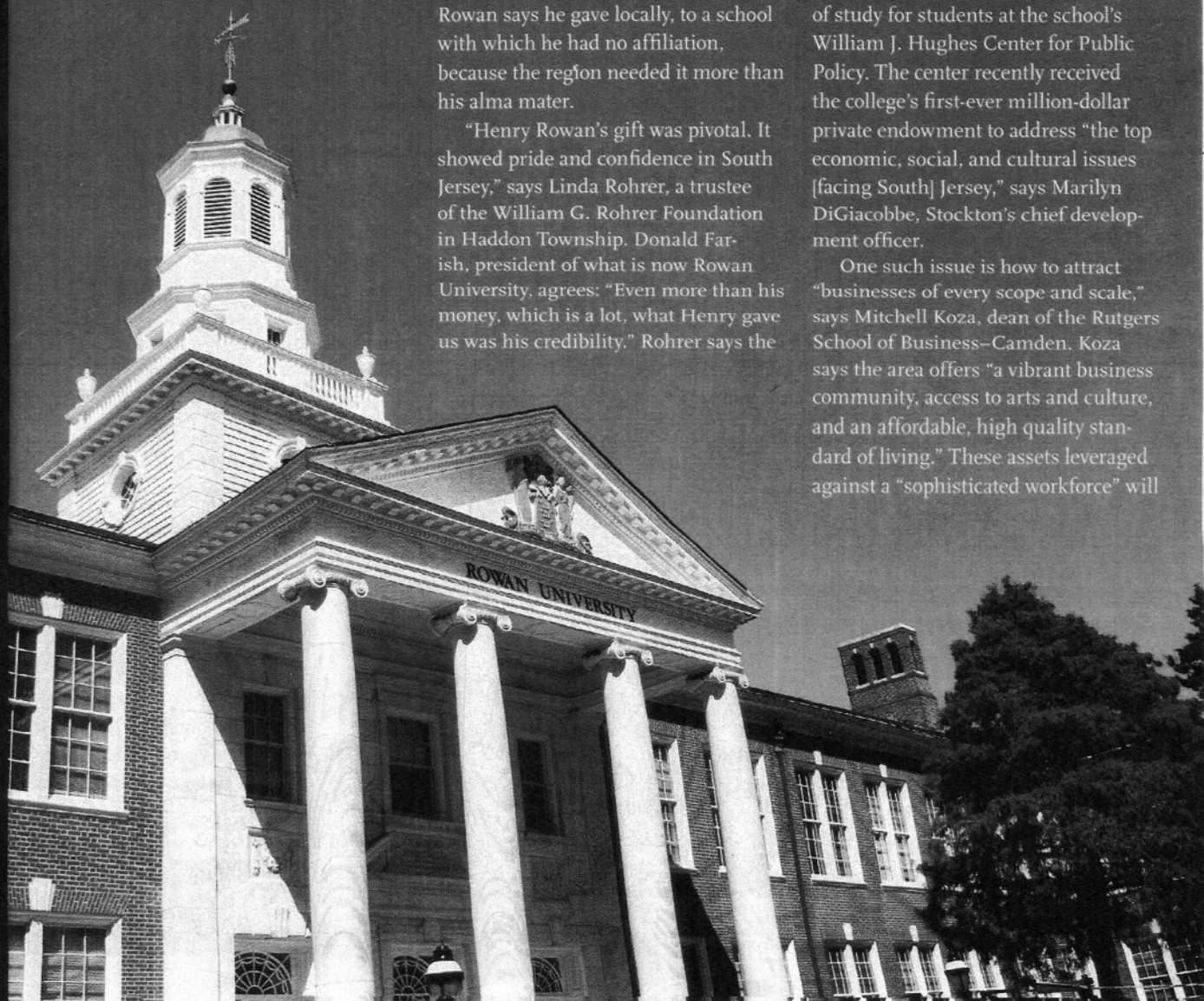
things began to change in 1992, when local industrialist and MIT graduate Henry Rowan bestowed \$100 million — at the time, the largest gift made to a public institution in U.S. history — to tiny Glassboro State College. Rowan says he gave locally, to a school with which he had no affiliation, because the region needed it more than his alma mater.

“Henry Rowan’s gift was pivotal. It showed pride and confidence in South Jersey,” says Linda Rohrer, a trustee of the William G. Rohrer Foundation in Haddon Township. Donald Farish, president of what is now Rowan University, agrees: “Even more than his money, which is a lot, what Henry gave us was his credibility.” Rohrer says the

gift was “absolutely a catalyst for others to invest in the region.”

At Stockton College, a public liberal arts school in the Pinelands, the impact of increased regional philanthropy on higher education might be a topic of study for students at the school’s William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. The center recently received the college’s first-ever million-dollar private endowment to address “the top economic, social, and cultural issues [facing South] Jersey,” says Marilyn DiGiacobbe, Stockton’s chief development officer.

One such issue is how to attract “businesses of every scope and scale,” says Mitchell Koza, dean of the Rutgers School of Business–Camden. Koza says the area offers “a vibrant business community, access to arts and culture, and an affordable, high quality standard of living.” These assets leveraged against a “sophisticated workforce” will



## CLOSE TO HOME

*Tech start-ups born in Camden stay in Camden*

Camden's throwing a little salt into the plans of interstate business poachers. "There has traditionally been competition among states in the mid-Atlantic region to attract technology start-ups, and southern New Jersey is particularly well-positioned to serve these companies," says Lou Bucelli, entrepreneur-in residence for Camden's Applied Communication Information Networking (ACIN) Technology Center, which anchors Camden's waterfront defense technology hub.

"Since ACIN opened in 2001, no participating company has left New Jersey because of an out-of-state investor," he says.

According to New Jersey's Enterprise Development Center, over \$200 million in revenues left the state from 2004-2006 when nearly 40 percent of the 600 state-supported start-ups followed private and public funding elsewhere.

Bucelli says ACIN start-ups enjoy too much of the good life to be hooked by out-of-state cash, even once they've hatched from the incubator. He cites as an example defense contractor Gestalt, an ACIN alum recently purchased by Accenture, and still headquartered in Camden. There are advantages, he says to being clustered around the same focus.

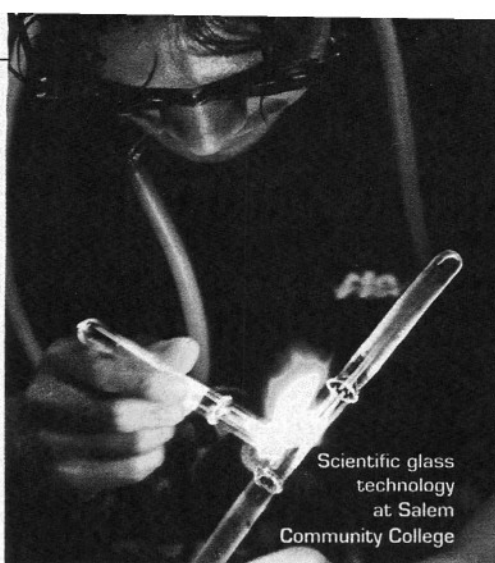
"We're the first and largest incubator in the country dedicated to the Department of Defense. There are several military bases in the area, and the defense tech sector here is growing. The real story is now we're part of the local scene. Hanks Bar and Grille even has a Smarter Agent salad on their menu." — *WM*

help the region succeed globally, he says.

Rowan president Farish believes philanthropy helps South Jersey's higher education institutions deliver a reliable workforce by allowing the flexibility to design programs for specific industries. Henry Rowan intended for the college to create "a quality engineering degree program," Farish says.

The school consulted with top engineers across the nation and decided to cross-train students in chemical, electrical, mechanical, and computer engineering methods. Students are assigned real issues facing local companies such as Siemens Water Technologies in Vineland; DuPont in neighboring Wilmington, Delaware; and Henry Rowan's own Inductotherm in Burlington County. In 2008, the school's undergraduate engineering program was ranked twelfth in the nation by *US News & World Report*.

Philanthropy is making it possible to fill the need for scientific glassblowers at local companies such as Chemglass, Greatglas, and Kontes Glass, all makers of test tubes and other scientific apparatus. Salem Community College offers the nation's only associate degree program in scientific glass technology. Local businessman Samuel Jones stepped in with more than half a million dollars for a unique facility that includes a studio and lab, as well as technology (developed by local company Energenic) that converts methane gas from the county landfill into the intense heat needed to fire glass. "Here was something that was good for everybody," Jones says, "so I just gave them what they needed."

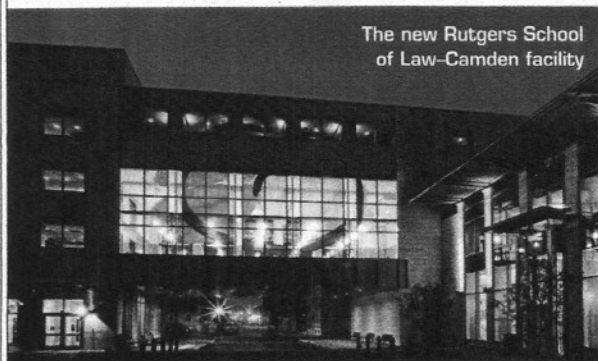


Scientific glass technology at Salem Community College

Rutgers-Camden, part of the state's world-class research university system, recently received a multi-million dollar gift for an endowed chair in its computational biology program. The gift, says Margaret Marsh, interim chancellor, allows the school to expand its research, such as collaboration with the Coriell Institute and Cooper University Hospital, both in Camden. The region's thriving life sciences industry creates a high demand for computational modeling, Marsh says.

Rohrer's foundation, created in honor of her late father, has invested heavily in Rowan University, helping to found a business school. It's also invested in the business program at Rutgers-Camden. Business education was important to her father, Rohrer says, and a grant from the foundation launched the William G. Rohrer Center for Management and Entrepreneurship, part of the Rutgers Institute for Management and Executive Development at the business school.

"There's more giving to education in South Jersey than ever before," says Rohrer. This is good news to DiGiacobbe, in light of diminishing state funds. The level of investment in Stockton and other area institutions depends on givers being able to "see the difference it makes for our students, and their collective impact for our community."



The new Rutgers School of Law-Camden facility