

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA LEE

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Dr. Barbara Lee, on July 31, 2020. The interviewers are Kate Rizzi and Dr. Paul Clemens. Thank you so much, Dr. Lee, for doing this fourth interview session with us.

Barbara Lee: You're very welcome.

KR: You were on the Rutgers presidential search committee. What was that process like?

BL: Well, I've been on two presidential search committees. Do you mean the one for President Barchi or the one for President Holloway? [Editor's Note: Robert Barchi served as the President of Rutgers University from 2012 until 2020. Jonathan Holloway became the Rutgers University President on July 1, 2020.]

KR: Actually, we can talk about both. I didn't realize you were on Dr. Barchi's presidential search committee. I was going to ask you about Dr. Holloway, but let's talk about Dr. Barchi's search first.

BL: Okay. It was a big committee, both of them were. Although the Board of Governors makes the hiring decision for the president, it's important that a good mix of constituencies is represented on the search committees. So, I was a faculty member, and I was asked to be on the committee along with several other faculty members. Then, there were members of the board, there were students, alumni. I don't recall if there were staff or not. They used a search consultant, actually the same search consultant that was used for Dr. Holloway's search committee, and that individual provided suggested candidates. We also got nominations--some self-nominations from people, nominations from other folks for potential candidates. Then, the search consultant had what we used to call a Rolodex--I guess it's now called a list of contacts--that he contacted to see if they were interested in being considered for the position. So, we met as a committee, got a list of possible candidates, narrowed it down to maybe a dozen or so, interviewed those folks as a committee, and then reached consensus on an unranked list of--I don't recall whether it was three or four, which is what we had been told to do. Then, after that, the Board of Governors talked to each one of the four finalists and selected Dr. Barchi for the position.

That's pretty much the same process that was used with Dr. Holloway as well. Mark Angelson, the Chair of the Board of Governors, chaired the search committee, and the vice chair was Deborah Gray White, who I'm sure you know. Then, we had a very diverse committee, both in terms of racial, ethnic, gender diversity and also we had faculty, we had board members, we had both governors and trustees. We had two students, some faculty, and Mike Gower and I, as administrators, were asked to be on the committee. The same search firm was used. The same process was followed. [Editor's Note: Deborah Gray White is a Board of Governors Distinguished Professor of History. Mike Gower is the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration and University Treasurer. The search firm being referred to is R. William Funk & Associates.]

Of the people that the committee thought were highly qualified, there might have been fifteen or twenty. We narrowed that down to, I think, eight or ten--I don't recall exactly--and did what are

called airport interviews that are actually at the airport, Newark Airport at the Marriot Hotel. Because of the concern for confidentiality, we didn't want to bring these folks on campus because if you have a very well-regarded individual who does not want his or her interest in the Rutgers position to be announced to their employer back home, obviously, it's important to keep it all very confidential. From my perspective, fortunately, in New Jersey, there doesn't have to be an open public meeting about who the candidates are and their interviews. In other states, there is. Florida, for example. I think Michigan is another one. But not in New Jersey. Really, as far as I know, unless a search committee member spoke out of turn and told others who are not on the committee, I don't think anybody knew who the finalists were until President Holloway's selection was announced.

KR: In those two presidential searches, what were the guiding principles driving those committees? What were the committees looking for in each of the next presidents?

BL: Well, I think they were a little different. With the search committee that resulted in Dr. Barchi's hiring, we knew that there would be an integration with UMDNJ, and it was important to the committee members that the individual selected had some experience, not necessarily as a doctor, although Dr. Barchi is an MD, but had some experience in leadership positions at an institution that had medical schools or medical education of some sort. As far as I recall, I think all four of the finalists did have that kind of experience. [Editor's Note: In 2012, restructuring legislation integrated most of the units of the University of Medicine and Dentistry (UMDNJ) with Rutgers University, creating Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS).]

With respect to Dr. Holloway, it was the same focus on someone with experience at an institution with medical education, although he had it, and, as I recall, several of the other finalists did too. But the issue really was leadership, appreciation for diversity and inclusion, sympathy and acceptance of the values of Rutgers, focus on access and excellence. Those were the things we were looking for.

KR: What was your role on the search committee for Dr. Holloway, given that you were senior vice president?

BL: It was no different from anyone else's really. We agreed on a series of questions ahead of time so that we made sure that every candidate was asked the same questions. I was assigned a question to ask and did it and so did everybody else. So, I really didn't have any particular enhanced role. All the committee members were equal.

KR: Paul, I will turn it over to you for any follow ups on this topic?

Paul Clemens: Maybe just one or two. Was there any thought given to bringing in somebody who was outside the traditional academic world of a university? Some universities in America, because of their size, the extent of their bureaucracy, their budgets, et cetera, have turned to corporate leadership in what is today the job of managing a huge corporation? Was that discussed at all as something that might be worth looking at in this committee? Here, I'm referring specifically to Holloway, not to Barchi.

BL: I don't recall that, no. There were a number of former political leaders who were nominated as candidates, but there was very little enthusiasm on the committee for anyone but someone who had academic leadership experience.

PC: Okay, that makes sense. If you look at the people who have been presidents of Rutgers in the past, there are two factors that stand out as occasionally mattering. One would be this notion that to come to a place like Rutgers, you need insider knowledge, and therefore you could give strong consideration to somebody from the inside. I am not saying that is correct. I am just saying that's one of the stories that you hear at Rutgers all the time. The other one was that we needed to get back to having somebody who was a "humanist," which we hadn't had recently, except for one president, McCormick, was a humanist. Was there any talk about that sort of thing? [Editor's Note: Richard L. McCormick served as the Rutgers University President from 2002 to 2012. From 1976 to 1992, McCormick was a member of the history faculty and an administrator at Rutgers-New Brunswick. He then held posts as provost and vice chancellor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and president of the University of Washington, before returning to Rutgers in 2002.]

BL: Not really. I think the committee was really focused on the quality of the leadership and the person's articulated understanding of what was important to Rutgers. We were not looking for any particular discipline at all. Would we have recommended another medical person? Maybe, if that person had been as articulate and as wonderful as Jonathan Holloway. [laughter] Quite honestly, Jonathan Holloway was the last candidate to be interviewed, and he just blew us all away. He was so articulate. He was so in tune with what the committee thought was important. He was just amazing, and it was actually hard to think of three others to recommend, frankly, for many of us. I mean, we had to because if he had said no, then we would've had to start all over again. But he was just so impressive and so articulate and so warm and human that we were just really, really impressed. [Editor's Note: Before becoming the President of Rutgers University, Jonathan Holloway served as the provost of Northwestern University and the dean of Yale College and Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, History, and American Studies at Yale University. His expertise lies in post-emancipation social and intellectual history in the United States.]

PC: How big was the pool, did you say, this time around?

BL: Well, there's the pool, and then there's the pool. I mean, there's a big pool of people who think they're qualified to be president, who, when you look at their background, you think, "I'm not sure I understand why they think could qualify." [laughter] Then, there were maybe twenty who had the right CV [curriculum vitae].

PC: Feel free, which I'm sure you will, not to answer this, but in that twenty, was there anybody from the inside who was worth considering?

BL: I'd rather not say, if you don't mind.

PC: That is fine, yes.

BL: We took an oath of silence, and I probably already violated it. [laughter]

PC: What we can be pretty sure of is that when somebody actually goes to this interview at some period in the not too distant but still somewhat distant future, it probably won't matter very much. [laughter] That is it, Kate.

KR: To shift our topic of discussion to the COVID-19 pandemic, my first question for you, Dr. Lee, is when did COVID-19 first come on your radar?

BL: Well, I think I was following the news from China. As I think I mentioned yesterday perhaps, we have a lot of international students from China, and so I was thinking about the implications of that for our students, whether they would be able to travel, what the restrictions might be. I, at that point, did not have the kind of epidemiological awareness that I now have about the possibility of a global pandemic. I guess I wasn't surprised, but I was certainly taken aback when we collectively began to realize in mid to late February that this was going to have pretty clear implications for us as well as the rest of the world. But the pandemic came a little bit later to the U.S. than it did, for example, to Italy, I think, and Spain. We had students there, in Italy and Spain and China, as I said, and other places, France, and we were really focused first on keeping them safe and bringing them home, insisting that they come home, which many of them did not want to do and understandably, dealing with their parents, some of whom were frantic to keep them there and others who were frantic to bring them home. So, it sort of blossomed from a fairly narrow concern about these study-abroad kids and our international students to the whole university fairly rapidly. It spread almost as rapidly as the virus did.

KR: You said the end of February is when you realized what the impact of COVID was going to be on the university. Was there a particular "uh-oh" moment, one moment when you thought to yourself, "This is going to change everything?"

BL: Well, Tony Calcado, who you might want to talk to about this, he really was the one who kept his finger on what was going on in terms of the implications to the university as a whole. I was concerned with the students, obviously. He was concerned about everybody, and so he immediately fired up the Emergency Operations Center--EOC--that's what it's called--that actually hasn't been used since President Obama came to give his commencement speech [in 2016]. It's a daily monitoring of the environment, of the news, of the weather, everything that could affect the institution from sources that we have no control over and they're rapidly changing. The Emergency Operations Center became activated, and we started having meetings every day. Actually, we started having meetings on Fridays, and then a couple of weeks into that, we started meeting every day. Because as the news was getting worse and worse, we had to make some decisions quickly. [Editor's Note: Antonio Calcado is the Executive Vice President for Strategic Planning and Operations and Chief Operating Officer at Rutgers.]

KR: In the Emergency Operations Center, early on, what were the issues that people involved were talking about?

BL: Well, in terms of academics, which is what I was paying most attention to, whether we needed to pivot our instruction delivery to off-campus remote models, whether to start spring

break early, which we did--several days early--how much time to give students and faculty warning that they needed to change. [phone ringing] I'm going to have to stop. This is about my husband. I'm sorry, I'll be right with you, but I'm going to have to stop.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on and recording. When we left off, you were talking about the academic-related discussions that were going on in the Emergency Operations Center.

BL: Right. We knew that most of the students would be leaving campus for spring break, and we had to decide whether we could let them come back. A decision was made that we would not let them come back because of the spikes in the virus spread. So, that was one very, very difficult decision. We also were concerned that many of our faculty had never taught online before or remotely before, and so we very quickly put together, with the help of OIT [Office of Information Technology] and Michele Norin's group, a website of resources for faculty to use, how to put their courses online. They basically had one week to do this. I mean, I have taught online, and I spent an entire summer putting my course together for my online course. I understood that it was going to really be asking a lot of faculty, but we really didn't have any choice if we wanted to keep our students safe. That was the academic side. [Editor's Note: Michele L. Norin is the Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Rutgers.]

We also had to decide about what we would do with our employees and if some of them could telecommute. Obviously, many of them had jobs where they had to be on campus, custodians, for example. Security people could not telecommute. We had to think about shutting buildings down. Again, Tony really is the best source of information for the non-academic side of things. He was involved in everything, and then he got COVID-19 himself. Then, President Barchi took over for Tony for the three weeks or so that Tony was out. He was in the hospital for a couple of weeks and then at home recovering. That was a frightening time. We all love Tony. Everybody loves Tony, and we were very worried about him.

It was constant; again, we were meeting every morning. We were concerned about--the student affairs folks were concerned because many of our students don't have access to the Internet. We needed to decide what to do about the libraries. We talked a lot about that, and then the governor issued an executive order closing the library, so that took away that question. But, again, our students use the libraries like computer labs, many of them, because they didn't have computers and they didn't have the Internet. There were a lot of moving parts, a lot to think about.

The news just kept getting worse and worse. Brian Strom, who is the Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, is an epidemiologist, and he briefed us every single day on the number of new cases, the number of deaths and the conditions inside the hospitals and the lack of respirators and the lack of personal protective equipment. I got a crash course on the medical side of pandemics, as well as thinking about the leadership issues that a university has to take into consideration when something like this happens without any warning at all.

KR: Where was the EOC?

BL: Well, the physical location is in the building where the Rutgers Police Department is located, on George Street and Commercial Avenue, but it was a virtual EOC. I mean, we were all working from home by then, or even if we were in our offices, we were not all physically in the same location. Well, actually, we did meet physically for a couple of weeks in the board room in Winants Hall, but once we understood the importance of social distancing and the need really to work remotely, we did not see each other again, well, at all. I mean, people are still working remotely. I don't know that there are very many in-person meetings even now. I'm not involved anymore, but when I stepped down from this job at the end of June, we had not had any in-person meetings since early March.

KR: I am just curious about the in-person meetings. March 10 was the day that Dr. Barchi sent the email saying the university was switching to remote instruction, and then Governor Phil Murphy's stay-at-home order was on March 21. Were the EOC people meeting in person until the governor's stay-at-home order? Do you remember?

BL: Probably. Probably, yes. I don't remember really very clearly, but certainly, when we got the stay-at-home order, we stayed at home. Frankly, I tried to avoid, as much as I could, the in-person stuff. I brought files home that I thought I would need. I brought my Rutgers laptop home, the one I'm using right now because it has a camera, and worked from home as much as I could, unless it was absolutely necessary to be in the office.

KR: How did you feel personally having to deal with this crisis?

BL: I felt--I think sad is probably the operative word here. I didn't feel sorry for myself. I was fine. I had a nice home office. I had no problem. I had plenty of technology. I had the Internet. So, it was not difficult to do my job. I felt sad for our students. I felt sad for our staff who were frightened. I was never really frightened. I followed the rules and took care of myself. I really was not concerned about my own safety, but we have students who don't have a safe place to live. We have students who are homeless. We had a lot of international students who were stuck in New Brunswick and Newark and Camden. I felt sad for them because this was not the experience that they had planned on. It wasn't an experience that any of us had planned on. I was worried about making these decisions when we had no previous road map to follow. We were making it up as we went along. I was proud that we were careful and put safety and health before other interests. Deciding to teach remotely in the fall is going to cost a lot of money in lost tuition, in a number of ways, but it was the right decision to make. It was a tough decision, and we got a lot of pushback from a lot of different people. But when you figure out what your priority is and stick to it, that's the only way you can be a leader, I think, is to do what you think is right and try to deal with the consequences of that decision.

PC: I have a quick follow up on that. Did the committee, not you personally but the committee in general, look at what other universities were doing in response to this as you were going through this decision-making process?

BL: Yes, we kept in touch with our Big Ten peers, for example. We were unpleasantly surprised that Purdue announced very early on that they were going to have in-person fall teaching. Now, they've backtracked from that, obviously. We were, I would say, a leader in

terms of the timing of our decision and the considerations that went into it. We worked very closely with the Governor's Office and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and frankly, they looked to us as leaders. The other New Jersey universities did not seem to be as well organized to deal with this emergency as we were, at least that was my impression from what I heard other people say. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, I think, was understandably caught flat-footed. No one expected this horrible thing to happen. They didn't have any protocols for how to advise us, so we were really advising them. The governor put together several task forces relating to the virus and higher education, and our people were on those task forces and played important roles.

KR: You said that the libraries were open until the governor's stay-at-home order and you explained why that decision was made, in terms of giving students access to Internet and resources, but that was viewed somewhat controversially, keeping the libraries open, and there were some articles published by NJ.com, for example, that criticized Rutgers in terms of the health concerns of the people in the libraries. How do you respond to claims like that?

BL: Well, we get criticized a lot for a lot of things in the press, from the unions and from students. Obviously, this was a subject that we discussed at length and often. It was felt that the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines could be followed with regard to social distancing and masks and cleanliness, and we did not feel that the library staff were at risk. Library work is very different from the way many of us remember using libraries when we were in college. Students are not checking out books particularly. They're sitting at computer terminals and going online, and even reference questions are now handled online. They're typically not sitting down with a librarian and talking through a problem. It's either by phone or email or in some other web-based mechanism. We really felt that the libraries could be kept open safely. The governor's executive order took care of that, so that ended that conversation.

KR: After that, what did the administration mobilize to counter the so-called digital divide that many Rutgers students were facing?

BL: The chancellors on each campus provided laptops or iPads to students who did not have them. I'm not sure what they did about Internet access, but they provided technology to the students who did not have access to that technology. Particularly in Newark and Camden, most of those students are commuters, and most live fairly near the campus. So, the campus Wi-Fi was still operating, outdoors as well as indoors, so I assume some of them were able to access Wi-Fi in public places. I know that, for example, when the shutdown order came that you could not go to Starbucks anymore and use their Wi-Fi. It became more difficult for students. Many students used their phones to attend class and do their homework because that was the only way they had access to technology and the only way to transmit the technology back to their professor.

KR: You talked about this website of resources that was made up for faculty. What were the problems that you were hearing from faculty about instructional technology in the spring of 2020?

BL: They had some trouble with WebEx, and I believe OIT added some capacity to WebEx. This all happened so quickly that the contracts that we had with various Internet suppliers, like WebEx--we didn't have one with Zoom then, we do now--assumed a certain amount of use. Well, it was overwhelmed by everybody who was now using it, instead of maybe ten or fifteen or twenty percent of our population. So, we had to bulk up the WebEx capacity so that the faculty could use it. That was, at that time, the recommendation that faculty use WebEx to teach if they wanted to do synchronous teaching. We have since gotten an institution-wide license for Zoom because many faculty prefer Zoom. We did not have that originally. There were some concerns about security. There were allegations--actually, there were more than allegations--evidence that people could hack into Zoom meetings and disrupt them. There were privacy concerns. So, it was primarily the functionality of the way that we were delivering instruction.

As far as I know, Canvas and the other learning management systems held up fine. We had to add some instructional designers to help faculty because we did not have enough. Again, the number we had was predicated on the number of faculty that we thought would be needing that kind of help, and all of a sudden, everybody needed that kind of help or almost everybody. [laughter] So, those were the issues that we were dealing with, with respect to supporting faculty who were teaching remotely maybe for the first time.

PC: Barbara, just to interject as a faculty member who went through this pivot, the fact that Canvas and Sakai both had literally twenty-four/seven help available was a godsend. I was just so impressed that the university expanded that so quickly. You could be working on your course at four o'clock at night on Sunday, and, bingo, they were there.

BL: Well, thank you for saying that. I mean, we had to. We can't expect people to, all of a sudden, turn 180 degrees and do something in a different way and then say, "We're only available during business hours." [laughter]

KR: Yesterday, you told us a story about how your communication with the provosts improved during the COVID-19 crisis. What are some other examples of creative problem solving that you were involved in?

BL: Well, again, because of the configuration of my office, I don't have any direct relationship or control or involvement in what goes on in the departments or the schools. They all report to the chancellor and work closely with the provosts. I didn't really have a lot of direct involvement. I was certainly involved in decisions about whether we were going to do elective pass/fail grading for the spring and whether that would be extended to the summer. Unfortunately for me, I'm the one that got to send that email message out to all the faculty and students, so I got all the complaints back when they hit reply. Some were unhappy. Some were happy but didn't know how to do it. Some didn't know how to register for summer school. So, I was sort of the epicenter of the complaints department and the here's-how-you-fix-your-problem department. So, that kept me rather busy, actually. [laughter]

KR: One thing we did not ask you yesterday--do you have an administrative assistant?

BL: Yes, yes. Her name is Joann. She's fabulous, Joann Segarra. She worked at home. She has two daughters, who were being schooled at home because their school closed, so she was involved with taking care of her children. But she obviously monitored her email very closely because if I had a question or a concern, I got an answer back before I would hit send practically. She still is doing that, even though I'm not officially her supervisor anymore. She's still very, very supportive. She was wonderful. I told her I could never do my job without her, and that's true.

KR: I want to ask you about the economic impact. How soon after the onset of the health crisis were you and other administrators feeling the economic impact?

BL: I would say fairly quickly. Mike Gower, the Senior Vice President for Finance, kept a very close watch on what was going on with the state budget. We were quite certain, although we didn't know the exact impact and it kept changing, we knew we were not going to get the appropriations allocation from the state that we had been promised because the state's revenues were down. People were not buying things. They weren't buying gas, so the gas tax revenues were down. People weren't going out to dinner, they weren't allowed to anymore, so sales tax revenues were down. Although we didn't know the magnitude of the impact, we knew that it was going to be enormous. [Editor's Note: With passage of the state budget at the end of September 2020, Rutgers' state funding was restored to pre-pandemic levels for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.]

We also knew that we were going to have to give partial refunds to students who had housing and dining contracts because they couldn't come back. We would not let them come back. So, we had to prorate the amount that they had agreed to pay for the entire semester and return it to them, and that was millions and millions and millions of dollars. Although we didn't have necessarily a dollar figure, and even when we did, it changed--it just kept getting worse as the state's situation kept getting worse, and we weren't sure at all that we would get even a portion of our appropriation because it's doled out each month. You don't get the whole appropriation at the beginning of the fiscal year. They send it to you in twelve installments, basically, which makes sense because the revenues have to come into the state before they can go out again. So, we were extremely concerned about the financial impact on the university and talked early on about what that would mean for the potential for layoffs. We had collective bargaining agreements, where we had agreed to give salary increases that we couldn't afford anymore. It was just a really, really tough time, very tough, still is.

KR: What were the discussions like that led to things like senior leaders taking a decrease in their salaries and also Rutgers freezing tuition?

BL: Well, the decision to freeze tuition came very early. In fact, I'm trying to remember whether that even may have preceded the COVID crisis. It was the first decision that was made, to freeze tuition. With respect to the salary implications, we knew that a couple of high-level administrators at other Big Ten and AAU [Association of American Universities] institutions, the presidents at least had taken a pay cut. President Barchi thought it would be important for him to take a pay cut and for the top leadership of the university, so all the deans, institute directors, the provosts, the chancellors, and the senior vice presidents all took a pay cut for four

months. So, it was May, June, July, August. President Holloway will make a decision whether or not that will be extended for the rest of the year or not. I haven't heard anything about that. [Editor's Note: On his first day in office, July 1, 2020, President Holloway announced that he would take a ten percent pay cut. He also donated 75,000 dollars to Scarlet Promise, a grant program for the university's most economically-challenged students. Board of Governors Chair Mark Angelson donated one million dollars to Scarlet Promise.]

KR: A workshare furlough program was instituted for managerial staff. Now, I think that was announced after June 30th, but were discussions about that going on when you were in your position still?

BL: Yes, we were having discussions with both the unionized employees and what we call the non-aligned employees, people who are not represented by a union. Unfortunately, we were not able to get an agreement with the unions. Well, actually, I just heard yesterday that we got an agreement with a couple of unions for a workshare program, but some of the unions where the employees are more highly paid refused to agree to a workshare plan. But, of course, if an employee is not represented by a union, then the employer can impose a workshare plan or a salary reduction or anything they want to. So, yes, that went on. There wasn't much discussion about that, actually. A few weeks after the salary reduction for the top people was announced, it was decided that we all--I'm on furlough. In fact, one of the days that we talked, I was officially furloughed, but I just ignored it and did it anyway. All of us have been furloughed for several days this summer and may, in fact, be furloughed more in the fall, if it's necessary for financial reasons.

KR: You said that when Antonio Calcado got sick that Dr. Barchi stepped in. One of my questions is, how hands on was Dr. Barchi throughout the spring in dealing with the crisis?

BL: I would say he was very hands on. I'm sure Tony would say that, too. He wanted to be briefed every day, which obviously he should have been, and he had his own perspectives about what he thought should be done. When Tony was hospitalized, I think President Barchi got, simply because he was there listening and participating in the Emergency Operations Center meetings every single day, more of the in-the-weeds kinds of issues that you wouldn't necessarily brief a president about. I think he had a very good appreciation of all of the different issues. Of course, as an MD, he was very concerned about the medical side of things and public health and safety. So, he was very much involved, I would say. He respected the responsibility of senior leadership, the vice presidents, to make judgments, but he wanted to know what was going on and he let us know what he thought.

PC: If I could just follow-up on one quick point. Normally, we think of some of the more important decisions being made at the university as things that are recommended, suggested, the president signs off on them, but they go to the board. To what extent was the Board of Governors also involved in the decision making?

BL: I would say that the board was kept informed, at least the executive committee of the board was kept informed regularly, I would say probably at least weekly, if not more often. I wasn't involved in those discussions, so I don't really know how often it was. But Bob has always been

very concerned that the executive committee of the board hear it from him or someone at Rutgers rather than in the press or from an outside source, which is good leadership. So, the board was briefed constantly. I'm sure if they had concerns, they let Bob know, but he did not communicate concerns to us. It may have informed his concerns. I don't know.

KR: Paul, if you have any follow ups, please go ahead.

PC: I want to go back to one key decision, which I think I understand what informed it, but I'd like to hear you talk about it. We were in the classroom. We had spring break coming up. It would have been really easy just to close the university at the end of the period right before spring break and send kids home. Instead, we closed down in the middle of the week, so chopping two-and-a-half days, or slightly more than that, off the semester. In other words, there was immediacy. How did that come about?

BL: As I recall, at that point, cases in New Jersey were increasing at what we all thought was a horrifying rate, and it was based solely on student safety and faculty and staff safety. Yes, we could've waited a couple more days, and maybe, in hindsight, it would've been better because there were faculty giving midterm exams and they all got disrupted. But there was a concern that waiting even one more day would result in more illness and more death, and the group just was not willing to take that risk.

PC: Actually, personally, I would say exactly the opposite. In hindsight, it was a brilliant decision. It saved lives. Things were changing so quickly. It was just an interesting decision when it happened. In hindsight, about a week later, I was so glad it had. It didn't really make a lot of sense to me when I learned about it from my students in the middle of a class. Then, I thought about it and said, "You know, they did the right thing." It surprised a lot of faculty.

BL: I'm sure.

PC: I don't think they were angry about it. I think they were just more surprised. One of the things that I've been less able to understand is what is going on, and maybe this is completely out of your personal concerns or things that you are allotted to as senior vice president, is the fact that we are still talking about playing fall football. That has clearly taken up a lot of press time, too, in terms of talking about it. Was that discussed by this committee, or was that something handled by the Board of Governors, the president, the football coach, and things like that?

BL: Well, we did not discuss it. The senior vice presidents were informed by the athletic director of all the discussions that were going on in the Big Ten and the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] and the reasons for and against having fall football. One explanation, I can give you--again, this is not me talking, this is what I've heard from someone else--is that our football players would be safer if they were with the team in a hotel, practicing social isolation, one student per room, and taking courses online in the summer and fall, and their nutrition would be supervised, than they would be if they were home, taking courses online and socializing with people in the community. I was quite dismayed to read about the party that was given apparently last week that sickened several of our players, and it got, I guess, a couple of assistant coaches as well. But, frankly, those parties are occurring all over New Jersey. I just

read in *The New York Times* today that there were parties in three or four different towns where twenty or thirty people tested positive as a result, and that could have certainly happened to our football players wherever they were living. That was one of the reasons that our AD decided to bring them back.

Another, frankly, was financial. If we don't have a football season at all, we don't get our public portion of the Big Ten revenues that we're contractually entitled to, and that would put an even bigger strain on Rutgers' budget. So, we already are in a situation where we can't have any spectators if football is being played, but the television revenues, I assume, would still continue if the games were being played. I'm not saying that the university put finances before health because it didn't. I think the explanation about how to keep our football players safe, unless they do something stupid, makes sense to me. They're probably more at risk of testing positive and transmitting the virus to family members and friends if they're at home and in their communities than they would be in a hotel, being supervised, hopefully better from now on, by the athletic staff.

PC: Just to make sure I am clear on this, the way an issue like this gets played out--this is obviously a special case--is the athletic director, the president, and the board, so that your committee itself might have been asked its opinion, but it had no particular role in this.

BL: No.

PC: Yes.

BL: I don't even think we were asked our opinion, as I recall.

PC: Okay. How much trouble did Rutgers have in getting the necessary personal protective equipment [PPE] to keep people who were still on campus for one reason or another safe?

BL: In the beginning, everybody had problems getting PPE.

PC: Yes.

BL: We had a huge number of what are called painters' masks. I'm not sure exactly what they look like, but our maintenance people had been wearing painters' masks to do routine maintenance for quite some time, and we had thousands of them in our warehouse on campus somewhere. Although they're not medical-quality masks, they certainly are enough to protect others from being infected by an infected worker.

I don't know as much about the hospitals. We don't own any hospitals. Obviously, our faculty teach in them, and our students have internships and residencies in them. I don't know as much about the hospital equipment side of things as I do the on-campus maintenance and custodial folks. I do know that the custodial people were given masks and were given instructions on handwashing and social distancing and that sort of thing. Most of the buildings were empty, so it wasn't much of a risk. But, certainly, I know that early on Tony and his team got additional PPE for the Rutgers employees and I believe also for the medical folks. I do also know that because

our vice president for Rutgers Global has such good connections in China, he was able to get thousands and thousands of masks from a Chinese friend that he then distributed to the healthcare workers.

PC: This is a random question, but it goes back to something you were talking about before and I didn't want to break in. You said that a number of Rutgers professors helped work closely with the state or were on state committees. Can you give us a couple of examples of people who did that?

BL: Well, it wasn't professors. It was administrators. Tony Calcado was on one. Brian Strom was on several. Vicente Gracias was on several, and Jonathan Holloway is on a very important one. [Editor's Note: Vicente Gracias is the Senior Vice Chancellor for Clinical Affairs at RBHS and Vice President for Health Affairs.]

PC: Again, to the extent that you can talk about anything like this, has the governor made it clear what he hopes Rutgers will do in certain types of situations while this has been unfolding? Does the partnership between the state and the university extend to the level that he would have private talks with the president, let's say, or whomever, and say, "Here are my wishes"?

BL: Well, just generally, I think there's been a very good, close relationship between Governor Murphy and President Barchi. I think that has now extended to President Holloway, just generally speaking. I think that the governor, actually, I would flip it over and say the governor looked to Rutgers as a resource and sought certainly Brian Strom's advice on safety measures. I don't know to what degree Brian was influential in the governor's various executive orders. Certainly, in stark contrast to the way the federal government has been operating, Governor Murphy really relied on science and made that clear and took a beating for it in some quarters. But my understanding is that he relied on the best medical advice that he could find, and that was at Rutgers.

PC: Kate, do you have other questions now about this?

KR: Paul, please keep going with your questions.

PC: Well, I only have, at this point, one more. I've already, in a vague sense, talked about this with my email. Right now, if you imagine what the future might look like at Rutgers, what have we learned from this that might go into influencing the way we prepare for the possibility of something like this happening again? I know there was this long and partly redacted report done on the Hurricane Sandy disaster in 2012. Is that sort of planning already underway, to think about lessons from this and how we better prepare ourselves for these things?

BL: Yes, absolutely. When you talk to Tony, that's a good question to ask him. He has said throughout this process, "We're not just putting this plan together for the spring or the summer or even the year 2020, but we need to develop a blueprint for the next time this happens because it probably will." In terms of the academic affairs piece, which I was responsible for, we were totally unprepared to shift to remote instruction. There are a number of schools that have invested in instructional technology and insisted that faculty gear up to be able to do that, and we

have not. We have no strategic plan for supporting or encouraging or requiring technology-assisted delivery of instruction, and that is shameful. We have allowed faculty, myself included, to choose, on their own, how they're going to teach, whether they're going to teach online or face-to-face, and you see now the result of that.

PC: Kate, that's about it for me in terms of questions on this.

KR: There have been two plans put forth, one is called Return to Rutgers, and one's called Return to Research. What kind of input did your office have in those reports?

BL: Well, my role on the committee was to participate in the discussion of both of those. The Return to Research I was a little bit more involved with because that's primarily faculty and graduate students and staff, of course. David Kimball [Senior Vice President for Research and Economic Development] worked very closely with the research deans at all the campuses, New Brunswick in particular just because it's bigger, but he worked with all of the research deans in each school within each campus to lay out a road map so that research could reopen safely. We had pretty much shut down all the labs, except those that were involved with COVID test issues. As a matter of fact, as you probably know, we developed a saliva test for COVID-19 that was way ahead of anybody else in the world and is now being used extensively and is much more successful and the results are coming back faster than anywhere else. So, I was involved in the discussions, but I would say that David was the real leader of that particular effort. [Editor's Note: In the spring of 2020, RUCDR Infinite Biologics developed the first saliva-based test to detect SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. RUCDR, headed by Andrew Brooks, worked in collaboration with Spectrum Solutions, PerkinElmer, Thermo Fisher Scientific and Accurate Diagnostic Labs to develop the test.]

The Return to Rutgers was more of a university-wide operational issue. Are we going to reconfigure offices? Are we going to have people sign in every day? Are we going to take people's temperatures every day? Are we going to require masks and where and under what circumstances? That was something that Tony and his team worked on. I mean, he reached out to all of us. The student affairs folks were very much involved in the questions about housing and dining, for example. I was involved with the discussions about the delivery of instruction and whether or not courses would be pass/fail and whether any courses could be delivered in person, for example, at Mason Gross or engineering, where the students have to use specialized equipment. They can't really do it online as effectively. We talked about maybe reconfiguring science courses so that if there was a two-semester science course, the first semester was all lecture and the second semester was lab, hoping that by the spring of '21, we could be back on campus and they would do all their labs then. Probably not the best pedagogical strategy, but one that might allow us to give the students the information they needed. So, the reports took a long time. They had a huge number of people involved in developing them. It was a real team effort, but I would say Tony and David were the two who were the real leaders.

KR: What has it been like in working with Dr. Holloway in his transition to the presidency?

BL: It has been one of the nicest experiences I've ever had. As you probably can tell, I am very impressed by him. I like him a lot. I think he is perfect for Rutgers. He came at a really hard

time. When he accepted the job in January, none of us knew what would be happening in February and March and after that, but he has certainly stepped up. He is thoughtful. He listens. He really cares about the place. He's an absolute delight. I said to him, "My only regret about stepping down from this role is that I won't be working with you."

KR: At this point, I just have a few questions left that are reflection questions. Before I go into that, I just want to ask Paul if there is anything he wants to follow up on.

PC: I have one reflection question too. I can ask it or wait. It is up to you.

KR: Sure, please go ahead.

PC: Barbara, you are retiring, but you are still very much a scholar. I was wondering if you could tell us more generally about your plans. I was just curious about what you plan to do as a scholar now that you have some extra time or hopefully have some extra time.

BL: I haven't retired. I'm just returning to the faculty. As a faculty member yourself, you know that a faculty member isn't really retired, well ever, actually. But I'm not retired. I'm on leave for a year. I just keep reminding people of that. What I'm doing right now is I've just been made the editor of a law journal called *The Journal of College and University Law*, published by the National Association of College and University Attorneys, which I've been a member of for about thirty-five years. It's a scholarly and professional organization of lawyers who work with institutions of higher education, and that's been my passion ever since I finished law school. I'll be doing that. I'm working on a law review article on the *Bostock [v. Clayton County]* case from the Supreme Court, where the Supreme Court said, to the surprise of many of us and the great pleasure of many of us, that Title VII includes prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I'm going to be working on that article as well. I've also been invited to join an of counsel position in a law firm that's based in Syracuse, New York, has a New York City office, and I guess my study in my condo will be the DC office of a law firm called Bond, Schoeneck, and King, which has a large higher education practice. So, I will be advising clients on various issues. I've already been involved in a couple this week, as a matter of fact. That should keep me either in trouble or out of trouble, I'm not sure which, but it'll keep me busy and happy.

PC: I guess I assumed you were retiring because you were moving to Washington, DC, but in this world ...

BL: Exactly. Well, I've taught online before. I taught employment law at SMLR [School of Management and Labor Relations, pronounced "Sim-ler"] online for several years after I stepped down as dean. I prefer face to face. That's why I was kidding myself as well as everybody else when I rather snarkily said, "We let the faculty choose how they want to teach." I much prefer face to face, but if I can teach online and be effective at it and enjoy it, I love to teach. I have a PhD seminar that I teach in the fall. I have been doing that for quite a while, even when I was SVPA, and I love that. That's so much fun. I have a feeling I'll find things to do.

PC: Okay. Thank you.

BL: Sure.

PC: Kate, it is yours now.

KR: Over the course of your entire career, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

BL: That's a hard question to answer because I don't think that way. I don't really feel it's appropriate for me to take credit for things that have happened that I've been involved in because you never do these things by yourself. I'm very pleased with what I accomplished as SVPAA with respect to sexual harassment, with respect to improving how teaching is evaluated, with respect to the public scholarly engagement, those three things. I'm very proud of those, but I didn't do them by myself. I think the authority of my office helped them get done. There's no question about that and the fact that I was passionate about it helped get it done, but I didn't do it by myself. I'm proud of my scholarly record. I'm proud of the awards I've gotten. It's just been a nice combination for me. An academic life is just the one that I, when I finally realized what it could be, have loved and I'm really glad that I chose it and I'm glad I'm not finished.

KR: I have reached the end of my questions. Paul, do you have anything else?

PC: I may follow up with an email, at some point, in the not too distant future, so I could follow some leads you gave me for the work I'm putting in at this point to understand the pandemic response at Rutgers. But, no, this is a wonderful, wonderful set of interviews. I've learned a lot.

BL: Well, thank you. I had a meeting with Jonathan Holloway yesterday at two, which is why I had to change the timing of yesterday's session. I was talking with Brian Ballentine, his chief of staff, telling him that I was doing this oral history project, and Jonathan came on. Of course, he's a historian, and he said, "Oh, that's wonderful." He said, "I'm really glad to know that Rutgers has an oral history program here." He said, "I had to do an oral history once when I was at Yale, and they never ask you the questions that you expect." I said, "Well, that's true. There were a lot of questions I didn't expect." So, he went on to say that during the questioning, he was asked something about his mother, I don't even remember what it was, and she had died recently. He got so choked up he could hardly talk. It was being videoed. Apparently, they showed it or a portion of it to a student group and he was there, and the portion that they showed was where he broke down talking about his mother. He said, "You just never know how you're going to react to the questions they ask." I said to myself, "Yes, I'd better keep that in mind. Too bad I didn't have this conversation a week ago." [laughter] But I've enjoyed it. I've never spent this much time talking about myself before. I'm not completely comfortable talking about myself, but I enjoyed it and it brought back a lot of memories, most of which were good. [laughter]

KR: Well, thank you so much for doing this oral history interview series with us. It has been an absolute pleasure.

BL: It has been a pleasure for me too, and it's nice to see Paul again. We go back a long way, but, frankly, I haven't seen Paul in decades. If I had to go through all of this just to see Paul, it was worth it. [laughter]

KR: Well, thank you so much. I am going to stop the recording. Have a great weekend, everyone.

BL: Thank you. You, too. Bye-bye.

KR: Okay, bye-bye.

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