



NEW JERSEY

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QuickTakes!

The College of New Jersey Launches “Trenton Roots” Exhibit in Trenton Hall

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On Friday, October 26, The College of New Jersey unveiled a new exhibit entitled “Our Trenton Roots” in the lobby of Trenton Hall.

The display, which explores the history of the college from its beginning in the city of Trenton until present day, was conceived, designed, written, and constructed by TCNJ students and faculty from the history and interactive multimedia departments.

“Our Trenton Roots” is one of several recommendations from the TCNJ Advisory Commission on Social Justice, which aims to increase the awareness of, and engagement with, the cities of Trenton and Ewing among TCNJ students.

“This project will give our campus community a deeper sense of the college’s history and institutional identity, which can be traced back to its first home in Trenton,” said TCNJ President Kathryn A. Foster at the exhibits launch. “I encourage everyone to experience the exhibit and continue to engage in open and honest discussion of TCNJ’s past, present, and future.”

The exhibit, which will be periodically updated by members of the campus community, includes a series of informational panels, historical photos, and an interactive touchscreen kiosk focusing on the history of TCNJ and its relationship to Trenton. It also includes vintage video of the college combined with audio from a lecture given by Roscoe West, who served as President of the college from 1930-1957.

The exhibit has its roots in a spring 2017 recommendation from The College of New Jersey’s Board of Trustees to rename Paul Loser Hall, the building that houses the college’s Office of Admissions and School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science.

“The name Trenton Hall embraces the college’s history, under its six different names, as an institution born in the city of Trenton,” said former TCNJ President Barbara Gitenstein at the

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time of the renaming. “We have a longstanding history with the city and this name will remind us and everyone who visits campus that TCNJ’s roots run through our state capital.”

The Advisory Commission on Social Justice: Race and Educational Attainment, which Dr. Gitenstein formed in February 2017, was charged with developing an institutional response to revelations about Dr. Loser’s history.

“Archival research conducted by TCNJ students revealed that Dr. Loser, as superintendent of Trenton schools from 1932-1955, supported and maintained a segregated school system that shaped the prospects for opportunity for generations of Trentonians,” wrote the commission members in their recommendation to the president.

Dr. Gitenstein concurred with the commission’s recommendation. In advancing it to the board for consideration, she noted that Dr. Loser and the college were on opposite sides of the issue at the time. Then college president Roscoe West was a member of the Trenton Committee on Unity and a prominent advocate for school desegregation in the state capital.

Dr. Gitenstein acknowledged that while she is confident that the action is the correct one for the institution, her respect for the Loser family – Paul’s sons Pete and Tom and Tom’s wife Carol – made it especially difficult.

“Pete Loser was instrumental in the creation of the TCNJ Foundation,” noted Dr. Gitenstein. “And the late Tom Loser and his wife Carol Kuser Loser exemplify extraordinary generosity of spirit. The family has been a strong supporter of the college’s quest for excellence.”

The \$1 million gift from Tom and Carol Loser to TCNJ in 1987 was intended to help the college realize its aspirations to support top faculty and students. It was not contingent upon or tied to the naming of the building.