

Women's Education: A 21st Century Imperative

Leaders of Women's Colleges Speak

Panel Participants: *Nancy Y. Bekavac, President, Scripps College*
Carol T. Christ, President, Smith College
Johnnetta B. Cole, President, Bennett College
Judith R. Shapiro, President, Barnard College
Carmen Twillie Ambar, Dean, Douglass College

Moderator: The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman

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MARY S. HARTMAN

Hello everyone. My name is Mary Hartman. I am Director of the Institute for Women's Leadership which is located here at Douglass College. It is a particular pleasure for us at the Institute to join with the Douglass Alumnae Association and with Douglass College itself in welcoming our panel of distinguished leaders of colleges for women, as well as our superb moderator, former Governor Christine Todd Whitman. (Applause.)

You are a very special audience of students, faculty, staff, alumnae, and friends state-wide. You include student leaders, Board of Governors members, state legislators, corporate and community leaders and so many more I cannot take time this evening to recognize you all. But do know that we sponsors are grateful for every single one of you in this audience on this rainy evening for making time to attend this forum. It is Thanksgiving week and we thank you.

Now, having said that, I am going to make one important exception to the no introductions rule. Well, maybe a couple. Is Senator Vitale still here? (Yes?)

Senator Vitale had to leave. So I am going to make one exception to this rule in presenting to you two special women who honor us by returning to campus for this historic event. They are two former deans of Douglass College of Rutgers University and I would like both of them to stand up. They are Dean Barbara Shailor, and Dean Jewel Plummer Cobb. (Applause.)

Now turning to this evening's program, I report first that a couple of weeks ago—this is a true story—an acquaintance who noticed an announcement of tonight's panel on a schedule for all of our fall events, said to me, "Oh what a wonderful coincidence! You have these terrific

women, the college presidents, visiting campus at just the time it turns out we are debating the recommendations of that Task Force. (Laughter.) Well, I have this to say, in case there are any others here this evening who may have had the same thought. It IS wonderful that our guests are here, joining Douglass' Dean Carmen Ambar tonight. But tonight's event is NO coincidence. It was planned with the report from the Undergraduate Task Force in mind. In particular it was planned to address the Task Force's recommendation that the present confusion around our colleges, including Douglass, be addressed by eliminating the colleges, rather than by eliminating the confusion. (Applause.) We propose eliminating the confusion.

We do understand, we even share, a frustration that wants us at Rutgers New Brunswick to be better organized, to be more streamlined, to be less hopelessly bureaucratic, and to be far more appealing to college-bound students. In inviting these special guests some months ago we imagined that by now the effects of a semester debating these issues among ourselves would make us long for an interchange with outside guests: people with more elevated, less personal perspectives, more enlightened perhaps, less in-your-face perhaps. And we were right.

Tonight you are in for a treat in some deeply informed perspectives on women's education and on women's colleges, perspectives that only six wise women such as these can offer to you. For those of you in the audience, let's remember most of all that whatever divides us here at Rutgers—and there are a few things—we share a common interest in the well-being of this university. An interest verging on devotion for many of us, and I include myself in that number. We share a belief that our state university needs to thrive, that we need to keep more college-bound New Jersey students from leaving our state, and that we need to attract more out-of-state students.

Goodness knows, in undertaking the very brave act of calling for a review of an undergraduate system that has languished now for a quarter century in not-so-benign neglect, President McCormick was calling for a sorely needed fresh look at how we can make Rutgers, as a whole, a better place for our undergraduate students. Chairman of the Task Force, Barry Qualls—where are you Barry? (Applause)—is also setting out (for those of you who may not know the story of his many efforts here) yet one more time to put our undergraduate house in order.

So, whatever our views on the specific recommendations, we can agree that lots is at stake in our discussions, and that we have a great opportunity at long last to do it right. We have a great opportunity to turn Rutgers/ New Brunswick into an incredibly rich and extraordinary place: a place that can be transformed, and will in turn transform the experience of the undergraduate students here. Now, in presenting this symposium this evening, we have of course brought you the very best people. We have former Governor Whitman, Governor of the State of New Jersey from 1994–2001, thereafter a member of the United States President's cabinet as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. (Applause.) Now, she sits on a whole lot of boards, and she also heads a major initiative to move our New Jersey cities forward. In addition, she sits on the Republican Pro-Choice Task Force.

Yet another thing that she has done really warms my heart in talking to this group tonight. Governor Whitman wrote a book that I hope many of you have read, more of you should if

you haven't! It is called *It's My Party Too*; and it's all about the Republican Party that she loves dearly, and whose heart she wants to bring back. In looking at that title I especially relate to it here at this university, because I find that I am translating that love that she has for her party and I'm thinking of our love for this university. And I am saying, "Hey, it's OUR university too!" (Applause.)

And so Governor Whitman, distinguished members of our panel, it is my honor and pleasure to welcome you all tonight and to introduce us all to a symposium of historic dimensions. Governor Whitman. (Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Thank you, Mary. Thank you very much. I particularly love an opportunity to be in front of an audience where I don't have to say a whole lot! We have got some extraordinary women here tonight. You know, when the Task Force for looking at undergraduate education at Rutgers undertook their mission, they were tackling a very real problem and they were tackling some very real concerns that exist here at the university. They have done their work with a lot of dedication and we should thank them for that. But I will tell you in my experience as a governor I never once saw a bill—any piece of legislation that I put forward make it all the way through looking exactly the way it had when I put it forward. (Laughter.) But the important thing was that in the discussion with the legislature, it generally came out better. To the extent that you can look at and understand all the parameters and anticipate as many of those, quote unquote, unintended consequences of your actions, you will have a better end-product. And that is what tonight is all about.

The items that are being proposed are enormous, there is no question about it. But that doesn't make them bad on their face. In fact, some people would say in the chaos theory: "That's good—just do it—and that will change things for the better." The fact that Douglass was the first public institution of higher learning to offer a place to women in the state of New Jersey is not a good enough reason to keep it going as business as usual. The fact that today it is the largest public women's college in the country is also important, but not a good enough reason in and of itself to keep Douglass going.

But there are a lot of things that have happened over the last ten years. There are a number of experiences around the country with women's institutions. There are now statistics and there are studies that can give us a better understanding of what might happen, and what we can expect the results to be for the kinds of changes proposed. And it is only by having a good frame of reference—it's only by having real knowledge—that you can make informed decisions. And right now we're leading up to a time where this institution will have to make a very big decision. We want it to be as informed as possible. And we have a panel of leaders here tonight that is going to share with us some of their understanding and knowledge and experience with women's institutions and what they've seen happen, with and to and for women's institutions, and hopefully give us a little better understanding of the experience of attending a college for women: Does it make a difference? I happen, as a product of all-women's institutions, to think that it does, but that's my take. What you'll hear tonight is from people who really have the kind of knowledge that we need in order to have the best discussion possible.

So, what I'm going to do is—since this is taking place at an institution of higher learning and therefore everyone here can read, and all your programs have the full bios of your panelists—I am not going to go into a long recitation of their accomplishments. I will simply introduce them as they come and give you an idea of the angle and perspective that they are going to share with us. Nancy Bekavac is the sixth president of Scripps College, and she is going to take a look and walk us through a study at Duke University that has some very real implications for what is being proposed here in the changes that are being considered at Douglass. So I would like to ask Nancy to come up and be the first of our presenters. (Applause.)

NANCY BEKAVAC

Good evening and warm wishes from the West Coast which is exactly where I wish I were tonight! You can live with a lot of earthquakes just to get out of winter. First, my congratulations to the university, to Rutgers University, on taking a serious look at undergraduate education. Undergraduate education is the foundation for what comes after, for the future. Whether you're going to go to professional school, graduate school or whatever, a firm, excellent undergraduate preparation is essential. And it is particularly essential in a state like New Jersey, which is going through this profound transformation from industrialized to post-industrialized state, where pharmaceuticals and other very high tech companies are the future.

What I want to talk to you about tonight is—and by the way I'm not a product of women's education: I went to parochial school, public high school, Swarthmore College and Yale Law School—and you could make a good case that when I was there, that law school was a men's institution! At any rate, what I did learn at law school was the best way to make a decision is to accumulate evidence. I want to talk to you about evidence accumulated at a premiere institution, a co-ed institution, very recently. In 2003, Duke University decided on a Women's Initiative, that is to undertake a study of the condition of women at that University at the undergraduate level, at the graduate student level, and at the faculty level. You can find the study at the Duke web page by going to Duke.edu. If you can get past all the stuff about the basketball team, that is, you can find the Women's Initiative!

It is important to consider what the results of this study are. It was conducted under the presidency of an acknowledged feminist, Nan Keohane. And it was an attempt to really understand the sociology, the economics, the REALITY of the lives of women at Duke. Duke is a very well-endowed private institution, smaller than Rutgers, but it has many of the aspects of life that you at Rutgers have. And one of the things that was most interesting was its discussion of undergraduate education, and the progress of women through the university. The study noted that there are particular blockages for women at various points in their careers. It is not a question of life being uniform [for both sexes]; there are critical periods where women's experiences are different. And what it speaks to is what a difference institutional arrangements make.

Duke University had two colleges until 1973—a Women's College and a men's college called Trinity. In 1973 it merged the two institutions into a single institution. And in its look at the undergraduates, the study went back and interviewed women from thirty years before who

had a college for women, as well as interviewing women who had gone through the co-educational experience. Those with the Women's College experience reported that they had felt empowered by their experience, in which they had deans and mentors who were women who they saw as successful. Women in the current Duke mode noted they came to Duke having absorbed the culture's views of what constituted proper department for women and proper department for men. They noted it was different.

Women at Duke now reported that they were under pressure to be "effortlessly perfect," flawlessly turned out in fashionable clothes and never threatening men with their academic prowess in the classroom because that would lead to no dates. I have to tell you that I remember thinking, "Wait, wait, this is not 1966!" As you read the Women's Initiative report you will see this—and I am sure that young women at Douglass will say this accords with their experience. Women have these expectations of themselves. And these are expectations that men have of them. They get in the way, on many occasions, of what we would most want [young women] to do. The study also shows that the intense pressures to conform to strict forms of femininity and at the same time conform to standards of academic achievement put them in an impossible position in terms of the stress they have to manage. The polarized standards can confuse women undergraduates who are unsure how to establish their own power and social acceptance. These are the kinds of pressures women face in this society.

As a president of a women's college for fifteen years, I know how important it is for our undergraduates to see examples all around them of women they admire, who manage these standards or just ignore them. But in any case such women are available to them, to talk to them, to talk with them about the confusions and difficulties they encounter in organic chemistry, in deciding upon their future lives, in arriving at a sense of their future selves, in coming into their own power. Women's education is not—and I want to stress this—NOT about equal opportunity. It is about EVERY opportunity, and that's what women's institutions uniquely can provide. Every opportunity.

Think of it as the difference between—and I know this—having a bad car radio and having satellite radio. (Laughter.) The difference is the static. If you've got a really good radio, you don't have the static. If you are a woman at a women's institution, you are likely to encounter less static—to get the signal much more clearly. It is not a counsel of despair. It is not a counsel of blame. It is a counsel based on evidence and experience at women's institutions that focus on one aspect of humanity and one gender. They do a much better job than those that try to be all things to all people. It is particularly important in a very large institution to have small, human-scale institutions that mediate all those pressures.

And in a state like my state, California, which is experiencing incredible waves of immigration, just think about this. All of us in New Jersey and in California get to be citizens of states where the smartest and most determined, most ambitious, hardest working people in the world come to live and work. Those women, those families, want the very best education they can have for their children; and they ought to have the full array, the full set of choices before them that prior generations have come for, whether it's sectarian education of a particular faith-based community, whether it's historically black colleges or women's colleges. Those choices ought to be there for them. And I encourage you to think about higher

education not as a place that would benefit from a single model for all, but instead as a place that offers multiple models, and multiple educational choices. We have a huge and diverse population. We should have diverse educations and institutions that appeal across the board, because higher education is not just a luxury. It is a necessity. And that necessity should come in as many flavors and sizes as do all of our wonderful students. Thank you. (Applause)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Thank you, Nancy. I realize I've been neglectful of my duties from the very get-go, which is to tell you how this is all going to work. We are asking the panel members each to make a short presentation, then we will have a discussion up here, and then we will throw it open to you in the audience. As you can see, there are microphones. We ask you to come to the microphone and identify yourself as you ask your questions.

To talk about the relationship between women's colleges in the United States and women's education globally, we are very lucky to have someone who understands the meaning of co-education and single-sex education, and the way women's colleges address women's interests. She knows what happens when you don't offer those kinds of wide opportunities for women. Judith Shapiro has been the President of Barnard since 1994, and she is someone who is going to give us some insights into the differences that are being made in women's colleges today. (Applause.)

JUDITH SHAPIRO

Well, I thought I would begin with a brief observation about the world we are living in in 2005. The Harriet Miers' nomination fails; and ABC News decides to do a program on what this means for women, and particularly for women in positions of leadership. You can understand why they might feel that this was an important thing to do. Yet we can look all around us and see how many men in high positions are totally unqualified for those positions, and are failing right and left. And I don't see ABC News, or for that matter anyone else, feeling that it's important to do a piece on what this means for the future of *men* in leadership. (Applause.) I also think that at this point I can be entirely non-partisan in noting that if any woman or group of women had screwed up the war in Iraq the way a bunch of men have, can you even begin to imagine what the response would be? (Laughter.)

Now back to women's colleges. (Applause.) Women's colleges, as we know, were originally established for women who could otherwise not get the kind of education that was available to men. And the meaning of this was obvious when the doors of most of our most distinguished institutions of higher education were closed to women. A century later after these colleges were founded, the doors started opening to women. This was a highly welcome development, but many have come to believe that women's colleges have fulfilled their historic mission and it is time for them to fade away—like good soldiers, or old soldiers. Actually, that is not what happened. Women's work is never done, they say; and I believe the saying also goes for women's colleges.

Over time, studies have emerged—and I need not outline them because you have a very good overview in the material that was handed out at the door as you came in—showing all kinds

of outcomes about women who graduate from women's colleges, whether it is the proportion that enter fields previously dominated by men or all kinds of other things like that. It seems to be that women's colleges are providing exceptional preparation for life in a co-educational world.

Now we read stories from time to time about the demise of a woman's college here or a woman's college there; and I think it is very important to remember that what is at risk—and this applies also to Rutgers as well as to the country at large—is not only specifically women's colleges, but the small liberal arts college more generally. I think that is something we want to get into in our discussion. What is our cultural interest in preserving women's colleges, and also true liberal arts colleges?

I should also note that there are quite a few women's colleges that are doing very well indeed. You have some statistics on that [in the handout], and there are others that could be shared as well. I find it interesting that women's colleges are always being asked to account for themselves in a way that co-educational colleges are not, and the people who ask questions about women's colleges generally assume that they know what co-education means. But, in fact, co-education is a term that requires deconstruction. Is it being used to describe an institution where men and women are equally likely to study in all fields, where they are to be found in similar numbers in all ranks of the faculty and administration, boards of trustees, etc.? If so, then the system we have in most places can hardly be fairly described as “co-education.”

Now I think it's best and most accurate to look at co-education as a project, rather than an achieved state-of-affairs. And even insofar as that is our goal, it is a project in which women's colleges are pivotal players, because once you look not just at the student body, you can recognize that women's colleges have been pioneers of real co-education: in their faculties, in their administrations, and on their boards of trustees. And it has always seemed to me that women's colleges are not only good for women, but they are very good for professional and collegial relationships between women and men. (Applause.) Now I'm often asked what it is that we do at women's colleges that makes our graduates so successful. I like to reply by pointing out what we do *not* do. And that is, we do not ever lead our students to limit their aspirations. That is something Nancy has already spoken about.

What is more, we are places where women never take second place. And when they go out into the world and find that the world is not exactly like their women's college, they don't assume that the problem is with *them*. The problem may very well be with the world! Now they may not be able to change the world right away, and they do have to learn to adapt to it, but that doesn't mean they completely accept it. It means instead that they work to transform it. And it also means that whatever obstacles they may encounter from the outside, they do not have the enemy within, and that can really be the most deadly enemy – that is, the lack of confidence in who you are in yourself. (Applause.)

Another point is that while women's colleges in general are doing good things for women, it is very important not to lump all women's colleges together. We have no trouble remembering that co-educational institutions differ greatly among themselves in terms of admissions and of the populations they serve; and the same is true of women's colleges. Barnard is not Douglass

is not Scripps is not Spelman is not Smith is not Bennett. And we each have to be clear about our own goals, our own missions, our own strengths. This is something we can get into further in our discussion. I would just like to draw attention to one difference in how women's colleges see their mission, and this is one that actually concerns me.

I don't know how widely relevant this is—it's certainly not relevant to the institutions here this evening—but I think it is something to bear in mind. There are some women's colleges, as there are some feminists, for whom the differences between women and men loom large; and they speak of the efficacy of women's colleges in terms of their ability to adapt to women's distinctive styles of living and learning. Now I happen to be very suspicious of forms of feminism that take our society's folk beliefs about gender and run with them.

This is not a matter of thinking that men and women are exactly the same, and surely in general they tend to get dealt somewhat different hands in the poker game of life. But nonetheless, I think it is important to bear in mind that gender stereotypes are a paradigm case of what the sociologist Robert Merton called the self-fulfilling prophecy. Believing them makes them so. I like to emphasize that what women's colleges are basically about is that they are places that serve the interests of women, not places where women can think differently or learn differently or speak differently. Instead, they really are the proverbial "rooms of one's own." I think Virginia Woolf was absolutely right about that.

So, why do we continue to need women's colleges to move forward the project of gender equity? The answer is simple: in a society that is unequal, women still have a compelling interest in the project of gender equity. And gender equity is the project of colleges for women. As we know, the line of human history is not one of continual progress in an upward direction. The project of gender equity is one that involves eternal vigilance, and women's colleges can be counted upon to embrace that vigilance and to play a central role in maintaining it.

I'll just say one final brief word since I want to leave plenty of time for discussion. As I think we realize, women's education is one of THE most important international global issues of our times. It is a major indicator of any society's overall well-being, and it is key to economic and political development. There are women's institutions across the world that are looking to their sister institutions in the United States to be their colleagues, to be supportive of them. And I think it is of the essence that we be there for them. Thank you. (Applause)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Thank you very much. Obviously to this audience this next speaker needs no introduction; and if anyone among you doesn't know her, you're probably in the wrong place tonight. (Laughter.) Carmen Ambar is someone who has come to this institution with a real dedication to the mission of Douglass. She is going to discuss the role of higher education in shaping society, and the contribution that women's institutions make to the wider society.

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR

Well, of course, welcome to Douglass College! We don't have a lot of time, so I want to start with a basic proposition about women's education and about women's colleges. I want to talk about how they transform society, and what they have to offer society.

Let me give you the perspective that I'm coming from, because I truly believe that institutions of higher education are about reshaping and moving and advancing society. I'm originally from Little Rock, Arkansas. I was born and raised there. I grew up there under shadow of the civil rights crisis, the Central High crisis, and the Little Rock Nine. I come from the perspective of being a member of a group seeking access to educational opportunities, recognizing what they can do for historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups. So that gives you a sense of my perspective.

I also want to make this proposition about women's colleges with respect to the status of women and where people fit in society—and where women fit in society. I believe women's colleges have very special roles. But let me give you a story I often hear. Parents will come to you sometimes and say, "You know I don't think women's colleges are relevant anymore, because I asked my daughter if she wanted to go to a women's college and she said no. And so that must mean that women's colleges are no longer viable." I see the panelists are sort of shaking their heads (Laughter), and so they have also run into this situation! I don't know how the panelists respond to that question. But one of the things I ask such parents is, "Did you know the answer to that question for your daughter before you asked it? Did you know what she was going to say before you posed the question? And most of the time they will say to me, "Well no, I wasn't quite sure what she was going to say. And I say, "Well that's the point."

Now stay with me here for a moment, because I think that the widespread view about women's colleges as no longer viable is an unexamined belief that the larger society now hands down to us. The fact is, we don't know what the specific needs are going to be for every individual in our society. We can't automatically know what my specific needs are going to be, or yours. But we CAN know the sort of broad needs of society, the ills that we are all going to have to deal with, the general issues our society is going to face. And we can know, too, in a broad way, the needs of certain people in specific groups or categories, including women and people of color.

So John Rawls, thirty years ago, says this to us. If you're going to create a just society, then here is how you should go about it. You should start by imagining that in creating this just society, you're not going to know your own specific gender, your age, your socio-economic status, your race, or anything else. So in this society you're creating, you're not going to know your own particular characteristics. We have to get behind the veil of ignorance, then, and ask what types of institutions we would create if we didn't know what our own status in those institutions would be. That's a really interesting question, once you start to think about not knowing quite where you would sit.

I would suggest to you, with respect to higher education and with respect to women's colleges, that if you didn't know where you would sit in a society, the institutions you would be likeliest to design and establish would create the broadest net possible, the broadest array of choices and options—because you wouldn't know where you'd be.

Now, where are women? Some say that since women are now over half the student population in higher education in this country, they no longer need special attention, such as choices that include colleges for women. But let's talk about where women REALLY are overall, even in this rich nation. Let me ask you to imagine with me, one at a time. We're going to create a fifty-first state in the United States. We've got fifty, we're going to create fifty one. And this fifty-first state is going to be the state of women. That's where we women all are, in this fifty-first state. So let me tell you what's happening in this fifty-first state of women.

First, the citizens of this state earn only 74% of the wages of the male citizens in the other fifty states. So, 74 cents on the dollar, that's what's happening in the fifty-first state. In the fifty-first state, one in 6 of its citizens are unemployed. So that's what's happening in this fifty-first state of women. In addition, 90% of the citizens in that state of women are working in the country's lowest paid occupations. That is what's happening in this fifty-first state of women. In this fifty-first state, too, the citizens are dealing with the fact that they face a rape or an attempted rape every three minutes by perpetrators crossing state lines who are rarely, if ever, brought to justice.

Now one bit of irony and, I suppose, good news for this fifty-first state is that because its citizens are all women, their representatives in Congress are all women, including both their senators. (Applause.) But, more bad news, in this fifty-first state of women, all citizens are working 35 hours extra per week, typically in unpaid labor. So now if you are a mom, and you have children, and you're tired tonight, it's probably because you're working an extra 35 hours a week that you're not being paid for. So that's what's happening in our fifty-first state. What is more, these women citizens are twice as likely to lack pension benefits, retirement income, and insurance. Now I don't know about you, but my guess is you probably wouldn't choose to live in this fifty-first state if those were the conditions you faced. I'm not suggesting here that women haven't progressed. I'm not suggesting that women haven't advanced. But you do need to know what the overall secondary status of women actually is, even in this country.

Now, a fundamental question. What's the reality here? Would you deny or devalue any preventive or mitigating measure to deal with these larger societal ills? Would you do that even after you became aware of what the real status of women is? I would suggest to you that women's colleges are on the cutting edge of dealing with these issues. Why? Because study after study demonstrates that they are an indispensable option for young women, an option that is more likely to provide them with knowledge about women's status, an option that is more likely to offer leadership training, to have a directed and supportive staff, and to create academic environments that foster confidence and purpose. These institutions pay attention to women's issues and women's advancement, they're institutions specifically dedicated to that purpose. And if we're about shaping society—which I believe institutions of higher education ought to be about—then I would suggest that we absolutely need to have women's colleges in the mix.

That is hardly to say that women in coeducational environments don't have great experiences, or cannot achieve. But it IS to say that women's colleges are a valuable option that should continue to be available. Now, let's go back to that parent who says, "I asked my daughter if she was interested in a women's college, she said no, and that must mean that those colleges

are not viable.” Here’s the point. Smart parents now, more than ever, are taking the trouble to inform themselves about different institutions and what they offer for their children. They are getting behind that veil of ignorance. And increasingly – you look at the numbers – smart parents are bringing to their daughters the data on what women’s colleges actually DO for women. They are saying, “Look again!” They are taking the trouble to inform themselves, and their daughters, about the difference women’s colleges can make.

Parents, and students themselves, not only have the ability to ask themselves about whether they would consider a women’s college. They also have the ability to inform themselves, to do the same investigations about a women’s college as about any other college. The option of a women’s college is still on the table, and I would say to you that if we’re about reshaping society and changing and moving and advancing women, that if we don’t think about women’s colleges as an option, then we are simply missing out.

I believe further that if you have a priority, and if you truly value something, such as enhancing women’s educational and social options, then you work any structural issues around that priority. You don’t do the reverse, right? You keep the priority and you work the structural issues around the priority, because that’s what you value. I know for a fact that getting behind that veil of ignorance and really saying to yourself, “I don’t know where I’m going to stand in society,” is a difficult and challenging thing for any of us to do. But I would suggest that if we are to be a truly democratic society, and believe that we want to shape and advance not only higher education, but the state, this country, and this world, then we absolutely have to get behind that veil of ignorance. I know for a fact that we’ll all decide that women’s colleges are absolutely right. Thank you. (Applause)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Carol Christ is the President of Smith College, and she is going to spend some time with us talking about her perspective – first looking from a big research university, Berkeley, and then moving to Smith. The juxtaposition of Berkeley and Smith offers some rather profound comparative perspectives, and what she experienced can help enlighten our discussion tonight. (Applause.)

CAROL CHRIST

I want first to say how wonderful it is to be back at Douglass. In coming back, I remember so vividly the experiences here that shaped me profoundly, including the professor who inspired my career and still is a model for me in my mind of what I’d like to achieve in my writing and my teaching.

I want to talk, as Governor Whitman said, about the relationship between two very different kinds of institutions, and about undergraduate education in two very different kinds of institutions—liberal arts colleges for women and research universities.

I take it that the goal of the proposal that would eliminate Douglass College as well as the other colleges composing Rutgers is the improvement of undergraduate education at the State University, and therefore it’s relevant to the very core of the matter in front of us to ask

what it is we know about undergraduate education at these different kinds of institutions. And specifically what do we know about the education of women? Women are now the majority of the college-going population. 60% of the B.A.s in the United States go to women.

Now I came to Smith, as Governor Whitman said, from a thirty-year career in a major research university, so I had the experience of thinking hard about undergraduate education in two very different and very excellent contexts. When I came to Smith I wasn't surprised to find certain things that were much stronger. For example, there were smaller classes and thus a smaller student/faculty ratio, greater faculty engagement in undergraduate teaching, no T.A.s, a stronger sense of intellectual community. Although undergraduate women at Berkeley were not exactly shrinking violets, I was also not surprised that women at Smith were more active and confident in their participation in class, and more engaged in leadership roles beyond the classroom.

What did surprise me is how much better a women's college is in motivating its students to study fields that are non-traditional for women, and this was most stunning to me in science and engineering and the scientific and technological disciplines. In women's colleges, students generally major in science in larger percentages than they do in co-ed schools. In fact I did the figures right away when I came to Smith from Berkeley and found out there was a higher percentage of students, women students, majoring in science and going on to Ph.D. programs in science fields than at Berkeley. And I want to share with you another figure I found absolutely stunning. That is that the departments at Smith of Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science and Chemistry had more women in them on the faculty, in absolute numbers, than those same departments had at Berkeley! You talk about equal educational opportunity!

But what is happening at Berkeley and at other major research institutions [in the disparity between male and female faculty in math and science fields] is an equally stunning example of inequity of educational opportunity. This isn't just an issue of equity, either; it is also an issue of national competitiveness. I'm sure that many of you are familiar with Tom Friedman's argument in his book *The World is Flat* that we are falling behind other countries in our education of scientists and engineers. If we're doing so poor a job at motivating half the population to study science and engineering, this is a huge problem for us.

We also know that leaders in the sciences, both men and women, come disproportionately from liberal arts colleges. There's a really interesting essay by a man named Thomas Cech, who is currently president of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. It's called "Science at Liberal Arts Colleges," and it explores this surprising finding about how disproportionate numbers of both male and female leaders in science were trained at liberal arts colleges. Cech hypothesizes that there are two factors that account for this fact: first, the closeness of the teaching and research relationship between faculty and undergraduate students at liberal arts colleges, and second, what he calls "intellectual cross-training"—the broad education that exposes students to modes of inquiry in a large range of disciplines. These effects are amplified at women's liberal arts colleges, which have a track record, as I've said, of a higher proportion of science majors and a lower attrition in these majors than their co-educational counterparts.

I'd like to close by saying a few words about the challenges of creating both student communities and student learning environments at large research universities. Although our large state universities like Rutgers educate thousands of undergraduate students, their size, their relative impersonality and the weight they place on graduate programs in research often combine to give undergraduates short shrift. It's easy to get lost, and it's easy as a consequence to look for and find your most meaningful community in a purely social group like a fraternity or sorority. Because the University of California has so many campuses, many of them founded in the 1960s, it provides a kind of laboratory experiment in creating undergraduate community in a state university.

One thing is now clear. Those among the more recently established campuses that have succeeded best are the ones that created an undergraduate college system: Santa Cruz and San Diego. An undergraduate college system is not incompatible with a research university. Indeed, experience has shown that colleges mitigate some of the challenges that large research universities present to undergraduates. To improve undergraduate education, research universities have to become more like liberal arts colleges, not less like them. And to educate women undergraduates as powerfully as they can, they need to learn from women's colleges. Thank you. (Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Thank you very much, Carol. Now every team needs to have a clean-up hitter—even though our numbers are not quite right because as our fifth speaker, she's one more than would normally fit that description! But Dr. Johnnetta Cole has been breaking barriers all her life, and we are really pleased to have her here tonight to talk about her observations on the evolution of women's colleges—not that she was there at the very beginning! I don't mean to imply that, as I'm sure you understand. (Laughter.) But as someone who has had a history of being extremely engaged in higher education, looking at it from the perspective of minority institutions and women's institutions, Johnnetta Cole can bring a perspective that I think will be very helpful to kind of round up the panel and allow us to move forward into the discussion. (Applause.)

JOHNETTA COLE

Thank you Sister Governor. And my sisters and brothers all, good evening. (Audience: "Good evening.") One of the many wise things that my mom taught me was this. She said a woman will be known by the company she keeps. And look at the company I am in tonight! (Applause.) Three deeply respected—and loved by me—sister presidents, and this extraordinary sister dean. It is good to be in your company.

Well, there is certainly no shortage of views about all forms of education, including of course the education of women. And as Douglass College knows so well, it's not hard to get a debate going about women's colleges. But I think there is one point on which I can get agreement. I can get an "Amen" and I can get an "Awomen," too! And that is that education is a highly effective means for the advancement of an individual and for the improvement of a whole society. Those who practiced slavery understood this clearly, and that is why it was against

the law for slaves to read or write. They might advance themselves. I've never heard this put more poignantly than by a Mississippi slave owner. The year was 1832, and he said, "Knowledge and slavery are incompatible."

We can easily find statements from an earlier period in our country when it was the view of many that educating a woman would not be good for her or anybody else. First of all, it would encourage her to advance herself. Second it would possibly give her the intolerable notion that she could think for herself or, worse yet, that she would think differently from her husband. Now these notions about the education of black folks and the education of women formed the basis for excluding each from higher education institutions in our country. So as you know, historically black colleges and women's colleges were founded so that each of these marginalized groups could indeed reap the benefits of higher education. I'm fond of saying that today if historically black colleges did not exist, and if women's colleges did not exist, it would STILL be necessary for us to invent them. So since we have them, why don't we support them? (Applause.)

Of course, it is clearly the case that in this nation of ours, if every woman decided that she wanted to go to a women's college, there would be no room at the inn. Just as if every African-American decided that he or she wished to go to an historically black college, there would not be sufficient room. But for those who do make that choice—and I agree with my sisters here that one of the strengths of American higher education is the range of choices—it can be just incredibly life changing, presenting experiences that are amazing and often so full of grace. And while these institutions do not educate the majority of either African-Americans or women, just as our Hispanic-serving institutions do not serve the majority of Hispanic women and men (although it's conceivable that tribal colleges do educate the majority of native American folk), just look for a moment at what happens to the women who ARE educated at women's colleges. Look what happens to the African-Americans who ARE educated in HBCUs [Historically Black Colleges and Universities].

We have got to ask the question: why these disproportionate levels of satisfaction and achievement? Is it something in the water? (Laughter.) Is it gooby dust that has spread? I think we might begin to seek an answer in knowing that the best in the educational process somehow tends to happen more often, in my view, in these "special mission" institutions. We say that education is about discovering the world, but also about discovering one's self. Where does a woman do this best? I've watched her do this at Spelman College and at Bennett College. And all I can say is "Look out, once a young woman discovers herself!"

We say that education is not only about coming to understand the world, but about coming to understand one's role in helping to make the world better. I'm deeply impressed by the way that both historically black colleges and women's colleges convey this sense of responsibility, not only for self but for seeking some way to make the world better. And what about the world? In so many co-educational institutions, the education is just too narrow. I often say these places still uphold the three w's. They have a curriculum that is fundamentally white, western and womanless. It is at a women's college that one learns not only history but HERstory. It is more likely at historically black colleges, and at our women's colleges, that students receive preparation for the whole world of people that is out there.

And so I can say to you from experience—and I have to admit I am the only human being, living or dead, to “president” our only two historically black colleges for women (Applause)—that at Spelman and at Bennett College for women, just as at each of our approximately 60 women’s colleges in the United States, hear this. It is our signature line from the Women’s College Coalition: “At a women’s college we are not against men, but **Oh**, are we **for** women!” Thank you.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Thank you very much, Johnnetta. We’ve had some very impassioned pleas for women’s colleges. And we’ve had some very important reflections on statistics, and on what’s happened with, and because of, and for, women’s education over the years, here and around the globe. We’ve looked at the difference that women’s education, and colleges for women, have made to society, And we have considered the importance today, and in the future, of women’s education as well as of continuing if changed roles of colleges for women, which is really what tonight’s discussion is all about.

What I’d like to do now is to throw open the questioning; and I would ask if you have questions, come up to the mikes. But let me just throw out an initial question. Here it is. Each one of your institutions has a slightly different relationship with surrounding institutions. Obviously here at Douglass there is a very close and very entwined relationship with Rutgers. The proposal that has been put out for changes here would be to change Douglass from a college to a campus. As I understand the proposal, this would preserve some of the features, for instance the dormitories for women, and some of the life that separates Douglass from Rutgers; but essentially the proposal would meld everything else into a single unit. What do you see from your experience with women’s colleges in such circumstances? There’d still be a “Douglass,” but not the same, right?

NANCY BEKAVAC

I take it that a *campus* is the same as saying it will be a *branch*. That’s a real estate term. It’s an address. It’s not a functioning institution. Douglass is a functioning institution. It has people devoted to the students enrolled in it. They know who they are. The administrators, the staff, know who the students are and they create programs for them. I mean, Douglass has got its own college council, they’ve got a student council, they’ve got governance, they’ve got their own institutions, clubs and organizations. That creates a home. Douglass is their home. That’s different from being in Wayne 3B of a larger institution. That’s not home. That’s an address.

CAROL CHRIST

One of the most powerful ways in which Smith works its magic on young women, develops their self-confidence and potential for leadership, is that they take on an institutional identity. They become part of that hundred and thirty-year-old parade of Smith women. If you’re just a campus, you lose the benefit of that, and of that powerful institutional identity.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Any other members of the panel want to opine on that? Are there any questions from the audience? Let's talk about women's education as providing leaders for women in the institutions. We heard some statistics on raw numbers which are very impressive. Carol, I think that you brought those up. Do the rest of you, have you found that in your institutions, that there are more women who are serving as faculty? Are there more women role models there for students, and does that make a difference, do you think, in the mentoring? Johnnetta, do you want to take that one?

JOHNNETTA COLE

We're not talking about some complicated situation. We're saying that at a women's college a student cannot go more than two minutes without confronting a woman who is in an established leadership role or a student who is in such a role. After all, among the students, who's going to be editor of the newspaper, who's going to be the head of the student government association, who's leading the march to "take back the night," who is just insisting that there must be a new student organization for students who are not heterosexual. These are all leadership roles. It becomes so natural.

One of the things that does tend to happen in a co-ed institution, is that all of that early training and those societal notions about a women's place come full forward, and a young woman has the possibility, in my view, of shrinking more there than in any women's institution. I can tell you what we say at Bennett, it's what we said at Spelman too. At a women's institution we understand that there's a problem with a woman standing behind a man. She can't see where she's going. (Laughter and applause.)

JUDITH SHAPIRO

This is a slightly different tangent, but I would like to take up on what Carmen was saying about the young women who may or may not be telling their mothers whether they are interested in women's colleges—or their mothers assuming their daughters don't want to go to a women's college. For the very same reasons that women's colleges are needed, there may indeed be an admissions challenge in getting young women to think about wanting to go to a women's college. What is interesting, though, is once you get them in the door, they are hooked! I mean women come to Barnard for a variety of reasons. New York City doesn't hurt, or the fact that they can combine a liberal arts college with all the resources of a university across the street. So the fact that it's a women's college may not be the most powerful thing getting them in the door. And not surprisingly, given the very attitudes that women's colleges are seeking to combat. But once they get there, do they ever get it. They really, really get it, and they're proud of it, and they don't want it ever not to be there for them. (Applause.)

CARMEN AMBAR

The other point about women's leadership I'd like to elaborate on is one of the things Johnnetta talked about. Initially, as she says, it's almost a pure numbers thing. When I walk into the student government association at Douglass College, every student leader there is a woman—from the president, to the vice-president, to the secretary, to the treasurer. They are not in those sort of pigeonholed “women's roles,” instead they are taking on all aspects of leadership. But in addition, I think that there's something special about a definable institution that is dedicated to women's leadership and advancement. In our discussions here at Douglass and among the administrative staff, we talk about how to design programs to focus on women's leadership, and we are dedicated to that mission.

Then too, when you look at the institutes and centers that have sprung up around Douglass—the Institute for Women's Leadership with the Center for American Women and Politics, the Institute for Research on Women, the Center for Women and Work, the Women's and Gender Studies department, the Center for Women's Global Leadership—all these things I would suggest sprang up because there was the foundation of this women's college here. The College has been a place that valued and supported women, and I would suggest that if you no longer have a definable institution that is Douglass College, you will diminish those centers and institutes, and in addition you will not lure to you what you want and need: namely, people who are dedicated to this particular mission of women's education. That doesn't mean that wonderful things for women cannot happen in co-educational environments, but there is something different and special about a dedicated, definable institution set there purposely for the advancement of women.

NANCY BEKAVAC

I want to bring up two things. First of all, going to the first faculty meeting I attended at Scripps College, what I remember was the powerful effect on me of one faculty member after another, men and women, standing up and saying when a student does such and such, SHE, or when a student comes in, HER. Now, I had been at coeducational institutions before. I taught at UCLA, and I taught at Dartmouth. In all that time, did I ever hear a faculty member stand up and talk about a student, SHE? No, unless it was an identifiable student that was female.

The second thing about Scripps. I know that one of the issues here has to do with faculty, and whether faculty are assigned to Douglass College. Scripps College, Claremont-McKenna College and Pitzer College, that's three—not five—three schools, together share one faculty that teaches sciences. So we have a central science facility, and we have faculty that teach all of our students. So, ALL of the Scripps students in ALL of their science courses are in coeducational classes. They have the same faculty in the same classrooms at the same time.

What is the result? Scripps women major in the sciences—chemistry, physics, mathematics, and biology—at almost twice the rate as women at Pitzer and Claremont-McKenna do. Now, it's not in the water, it's not in the air, there is nothing magic about it, except perhaps that at a women's college, it never dawns on students that they shouldn't be chemistry majors, physics majors or biology majors. Somehow, though, it does dawn on the women at the other colleges that are, you know, a thousand yards away, that THEY shouldn't be science majors. I report this; I cannot explain, it. It is, as they say at my place, a true fact. (Laughter and applause)

JOHNETTA COLE

I just want to add one note to sister president Nancy's comment, and that is that there is so much information, and so many attitudes communicated through body language and the unspoken word in the classroom. I am struck by how many students say to me that what they appreciate most of all in a women's colleges is that no one ever gives off that message that says, "Honey, are you sure you can do physics?" It is not hard to understand why women major in these fields in women's colleges. It's because every conceivable message is they get in those places is, "Of course you can." (Applause.)

CARMEN AMBAR

I think one of the things I want to add about that comes from a lot of discussion here about co-educational experiences, and the majority of classes Douglass students take being co-educational. So let me give you an example from Douglass. We have a Scholars Program here at Douglass. That Scholars Program provides single-sex academic experiences for young women who are selected for this competitive program. They take seminars together. If you look at those seminars over the past ten years, the seminars that have been managed by Douglass College have been between thirty to forty percent specifically focused on women or women's issues.

Now I would dare to say that in a large university-wide program that you wouldn't see that number of seminars focused on women. Also, if you look at the theses written by students in our honors program, you will find that about half in the past ten years have focused on women's issues. That's what a women's college can do, having that specific, dedicated focus. And it can happen whether or not a college has a dedicated faculty of its own. What we try to provide here at Douglass is a balance in co-educational and single-sex academic, co-curricular and programmatic experiences. We try to do the best that we can to give students the benefits of a women's college in a big research institution. You can have the best of both worlds here.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Can we have a couple questions from the audience? I think you may have to turn on this first microphone. Go ahead and try it now. She'll turn it on for you.

LEANNA BROWN

What a wonderful, wonderful evening it was around all these panelists. (Applause.) Plus the President of Rutgers was there to greet you all as you came to this campus. But in case he wasn't, may I say I am here to greet you as former State Senator Leanna Brown, and to represent the legislature here tonight. I hope you all read Fran Woods' editorial [on saving Douglass College, in the *Newark Star Ledger*, November 20, 2005] yesterday, did you? (Applause) This is what we are talking about here! Will you all take thousands of copies of this back to your institutions? Bottom line, Fran Woods said that the reason you need women's education and women's institutions is because they produce women leaders, for instance here in the State of New Jersey we have Christine Todd Whitman, OK? (Applause.)

I'm a Smith graduate, OK? I won't go on to say how many of us women have been in the legislature and all that. To those of you that are on the governing board of Rutgers I sincerely hope that this is the last time you're having this discussion. I was in the legislature in the 1980s, and there was a lovely little discussion then about what was going to happen to Rutgers' agricultural college. We've had that battle, we've won that battle; and we're going to win this battle [about Douglass] and then we're going to go out to discuss other issues!

So, two other issues. First, I'd like to point out that when you talk about how women's colleges give women special opportunities, you also need to talk about how they produce wonderful, wonderful opportunities for men. I dated my husband all the way through Smith. You know why? He is not intimidated by women. Isn't that nice? Second, a quick question for you. Are you finding your graduates demonstrating a little different twist in this day and age? Is the home seeming a little more important than it used to be? Are we putting all of this emphasis on education only to have some of the younger people taking a retreat, wanting a time-out? I say this as somebody who has raised two sons.

JUDITH SHAPIRO

I would point out for those of you who may have read the front page story in the [New York] Times a while back on the Yale women students [planning to “opt out” of careers in favor of raising children]. The first thing I would say is that the article would not be considered in any way a first-rate piece of social science research. The people who appeared in the story were actually distressed by it, and so it is not to be taken too terribly seriously.

One thing the students are doing at Barnard, and elsewhere I am sure, that is different from my generation is they're actually thinking more about how they might put together family and career. I mean, I think my own fellow students, we were all on planet Xenon! You know, we weren't thinking about it, we didn't know what we were going to do, we just sort of went muddling through. Now, the fact of the matter is that that these young people today are probably going to live to be a hundred. Wouldn't it be good if society were to find a way for their not having to establish a family AND establish a career during one relatively narrow slice of a life cycle—for those who wish to do both? We should be making this a lot easier, because in a hundred years you can get a lot done! (Laughter.)

Still, for those who are sure they want to have family life, I do not find that Barnard women are thinking: “Oh well, I'll just stay at home.” If you look throughout history and cross-culturally, staying at home and just raising children full time is a choice for the greatly privileged. I mean, in societies all over the world, women didn't do child-rearing full time, they just had the kind of work that was compatible with childrearing, which, for example, cardiovascular surgery is not. And you know what? Women in the United States understand that for the most part now, they don't have the luxury of being able to just stay at home. Nor, I think, as we read about the cycle of marriage and the family, do very many women count on the fact that, “Oh, some man is going to support me reliably for the rest of my life.” I think one has to be kind of clueless to think they will be able to just “opt out” of the work world for more than a brief period of their lives. At least among the students at my college, I'm seeing that they're really thinking about how they are going to balance the various pieces of their lives.

CAROL CHRIST

I think the media have done a particularly bad job at covering what is a complex issue, which is the tension between what I think are inhumane expectations about eighty-hour weeks or what I sometimes call our “seven-eleven culture,” and the human need to nurture and raise a family. The only story that at least some journalistic outlooks are happy with is the “opt-out revolution” or the mommy track, and that’s just not giving credit to the many, many ways in which women do put it all together.

JOHNETTA COLE

I’m curious if anyone else is experiencing this. A strong entrepreneurial spirit. You encounter a Bennett sister and she will say, “I majored in Biology, minored in Chemistry, and I’m going to be a doctor but I’m going to have my own clinic.” Or, “I’m an elementary ed major, I’m going to go on and get all of the degrees I need, but I’m going to have my own day-care center.” A strong sense that she cannot only do the ordinary, she can now become an entrepreneur, and I think that is perhaps again the empowering that goes on at women’s colleges.

NANCY BEKAVAC

I would say what’s really interesting is the way in which students ask alumnae who come back, they ask faculty members, they ask staff, how they have balanced their lives. That shows new understanding about the question of balancing a life and work. They are seeing that this is a task that is going to require planning, and I would say that I’ve heard more of that kind of talk over the last eight to ten years than was there previously. I think much of the idea of “I’ll do something on my own, I will control my work life” comes from that desire to find balance.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Next question.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT

First, congratulations panelists! It’s wonderful to see our deans once again and to you, Governor Whitman, for being here. It’s a wonderful event. The question I have is primarily for Carmen Ambar, but if there are other panelists who’d like to comment on this, I’d love to hear their comments as well. Dean Ambar, in looking at the proposals of the Task Force one might ask, well what’s so different? What is it that you, with the modest-sized staff that you have, what is it that you feel would not be accomplished by what is in the Task Force proposals?

CARMEN AMBAR

Well first of all, the Task Force proposal is really a stripping of the college structure—student affairs and academic affairs. And when you do that, you are eliminating the institution, that is the staff and resources, the people specifically devoted to these special opportunities. So that’s the first issue. You are eliminating the definable institution that is there to advance these special programs. Also, when you look at the special programs that are here at Douglass and

through all of the various centers, I think one of the things that is contradictory about the Task Force proposal is its notion that we should still have a campus “reserved for women” and we should still be able to continue to have all these special academic programs—but not the institution that has created and promoted them.

In fact, when you look at what’s happened at Douglass over the past twenty-five years—I’m talking about after 1980, after Douglass no longer had a dedicated faculty of its own – what you find is that most of the special opportunities and programs that people tout as wonderful here at Douglass were created in that post-1980 period. So you’re talking about eliminating a specific group of people who are dedicated to that advancement. And when you ask yourself whether these things can go on without a college, you have to look to history, you have to look at Harvard, for example, and what happened to Radcliffe, or to Duke. You absolutely know that the focus on special opportunities for women is bound to diminish over time—not because people are evil, not because they don’t believe in those opportunities continuing, but we all know how difficult it is to keep the issues you care about on the radar screen of a large institution.

So if you don’t have some group of people there dedicated to women’s education and women’s advancement saying, “Hey, hey, hey, we’re important, let’s think about it; let’s devote some resources, let’s devote some time!”—you just won’t have that happen. And I think that’s something that would be a detriment not only to the core Douglass College student body, but to the broader university as a whole, because despite the mis-impressions out there, that fact is that the vast majority of these wonderful Douglass programs are open to other students at Rutgers/New Brunswick. I have also pointed out recently that we can even expand these programs if needed. If you have this definable institution, as we do now, you can find a way for other students to participate in a variety of ways. But if you don’t have that, you really are going to have a problem.

I think the other issue, frankly, is that when we talk about some of the challenges of this complex university, and you look at the things that students often complain about such as transportation, housing, dining, or financial aid—you go down this list and what you see is that these are the things that are already centralized here at Rutgers! They’re not the pieces that are sitting with the colleges. The fact is, the colleges actually mitigate these other experiences related to our huge size, in that there are people there on the college campuses who are going to answer the phone, try to help you through it, try to maneuver you through the system. To suggest that not having these colleges here is going to sort of eliminate the bureaucracy, I think, is not being honest with ourselves about what the real challenges to undergraduate education at Rutgers are.

And so I would say when you talk about what would be missing if the Task Force proposal is implemented, you are talking about a definable institution, you are talking about dedicated resources and staff, you are talking about some special programs like single-sex opportunities that are available in our Scholars Program, and you can go down the list with more and more. But those are some of the broad categories.

NANCY BEKAVAC

You know the terrible irony here is that all over this country huge public universities are trying desperately to figure out “How do we invent colleges?” By “colleges,” they mean smaller, more supportive learning communities. Why, when you have colleges that have already been invented, would you get rid of them—so that in another twenty years, you’re going to have another task force that’s going to say, “Oh, now we have to invent some colleges.” Why would you do that? (Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

I just want to ask one quick question. I was always under the impression that the difference between a university and a college was that a university had a series of colleges. (Laughter.)

JUDITH SHAPIRO

The term is often meant to indicate graduate programs but indeed...(More laughter.)

CARMEN AMBAR

I’d like to say one more thing here. Just so people know where I am on this, I never suggested that there aren’t things that need to change about our college system at Rutgers. Those of us who have been here—and I’ve only been at Rutgers thirty-six months, now—but I’ve been here long enough to know that some things have to change, and no one is objecting to that. I just would suggest humbly that we can change those things that we need to change and still provide these small intimate educational experiences and still have a Douglass College—and that would be better not only for the Douglass College student body but for the rest of Rutgers and for the State of New Jersey. (Applause.)

BRIGID FARRELL

Good evening, my name is Brigid Farrell and I’m a Douglass College senior and also the student representative to the Board of Governors. I have read the Duke study and most wholeheartedly agree that that ideal of “effortless perfection” for women students does exist here at Rutgers University. As a student who transferred from Rutgers College to Douglass College, who takes co-educational classes for the most part, and who has many friends who attend co-educational colleges here and elsewhere, I feel that while this model of “effortless perfection” is a huge problem, Douglass College is able to address it at least better than the other colleges have. So my question to Dean Ambar is what do you think Douglass is doing to address this model that women students have to deal with. And to the other presidents, what do you think we can do better because of the fact that students here attend coeducational classes for the most part?

NANCY BEKAVAC

On the effortless perfection, I personally have given up reading *Vogue*. (Laughter.) Actually one of the things I thought about is whether we could just get all the women in the world to get their 401Ks together and buy Conde Nast. (Laughter.) Sometimes I think about these things—um, late at night, no, when I’m getting my hair cut. I say to myself, “What you have

to do is carry inside yourself the notion that you may not be perfect” (although YOU, I must say, are close to perfect from what I can see!); “but the fact is, whatever you are, you are.” What you look like to others is less important than what you see in yourself. That’s what you carry every day to every class. You look out, you look in, and you don’t worry about what other people see. The point is, to carry your strength within you and help your sisters and your brothers do exactly the same thing. And don’t waste your money on Conde Nast publications. (Laughter.)

CARMEN AMBAR

I think the way we try to do it here at Douglass is to convey to students that they should see themselves as works in progress. It’s not about “effortless perfection,” it’s a four-year experience here at Douglass, and it’s comprehensive. It starts, frankly, with the fact that we parade in front of you a group of women who are incredibly accomplished in many different ways and who talk about how they made that happen. Whether it’s through the “Shaping a Life” course we offer, or through the mentoring program at the Douglass Project on Math, Science and Engineering, or through special opportunities, like bringing in Mary Robinson [former President of Ireland and U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights], as we did a while ago.

We bring these accomplished women to give you a sense of what success is like, but also to give you a sense of your own possibilities. And by having leadership programs, such as the Leading Edge program, or the Global Village focusing on Human Rights, or the Leadership House, what we try to do is show the way, open doors and present opportunities. So when I see a student walk across the stage at Douglass’ graduation, I ask myself “What kinds of experiences should she have had? Did we do the best job we could of giving her options?”

It’s our role as the folks who try to move this institution along to make those opportunities happen. So whether it’s working with alumnae to have Founder’s Day happen, so you can see all these accomplished Douglass alumnae, or whether it’s through focusing on study abroad. We are working really hard these days, for example, to have guaranteed study abroad scholarships for young women who live in the Global Village. Why? Because we want you to experience the world and to think about your place in the world from the standpoint of what women’s roles are, and what society looks like for other women around the world. When you see yourself in that juxtaposed way, what happens is that you begin to see yourself differently.

And so it’s through those types of experiences—and Douglass students are required to undertake some of them, encouraged to take advantage of others – that what young women begin to see are more possibilities for themselves. One of the things that I’ve said lately, and this is not the only reason why I think Douglass is a powerful place, but I do think it is remarkable that we have seen such an outpouring of support for the college from Douglass students worried about the proposed restructuring. I know that some people have dismissed this as sentimentality, or holding onto something irrelevant, or just passion without substance. But I would suggest it is because there is truly something special happening here that has created a connection and devotion to this institution. It shouldn’t be dismissed as a sort of passion for no reason.

The real question should be, why do they care so much about the place? What is it that's happening here that makes them so dedicated, and makes them care so much about this institution? And it's not just current students, it's Douglass alumnae from 2004 back to the earliest days of the college. Although the institution has obviously changed a great deal since its founding in 1918, somehow it has managed to inspire a constant dedication and commitment. That's something I think women's colleges do. I know we talk about "the Douglass Difference," but all of us here on the panel can talk about the special philanthropy from alumnae of women's colleges, about loyalty to institution, about satisfaction rates, and more. And one silver lining of this current controversy for us at Douglass is that it has shown once again, and dramatically, that despite many changes, including all their co-educational classes, our students recognize and prize and celebrate what has not changed here – and that is the many ways this college has kept its focus on women and on advancing opportunities for women.

CAROL CHRIST

You raise a really important question, which is what can women's colleges give women to enable them move more strongly through co-educational settings. Here at Douglass, in a residential women's college environment, students already encounter such settings more regularly in most of their classrooms; but after a student goes to Smith, for example, she will encounter co-educational graduate school classes or co-educational workplaces. Smith alumnae who discuss this issue with me often talk about how learning in an all women's environment promotes a sense of being able to discover the authenticity of who they are themselves. Having had the freedom in an all women's environment to discover that authenticity, they feel they can more easily take it with them into co-educational settings.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Next question.

CELESTE BARRETTO

My name is Celeste Barretto, and I'm the president of the Douglass College Government Association. First, on behalf of the students at Douglass, I'd like to thank you all for being here, because we have been working diligently on this issue since July, so—[GOVERNOR WHITMAN interjects: Watch the Today show tomorrow morning, hopefully Douglass students will be on the Today show! (Applause.)]

Yes, we will. It is good to know we have so many people like yourselves working together with us on this issue, because it's a reminder to me every morning that I'm not crazy. (Laughter.) My question for the panel is a question that we have often been asked throughout this work that we've been doing. And it's this. If we need women's colleges, then don't we need not only Black colleges, Hispanic colleges, etc. but more on down the line? I find it very difficult to articulate an answer to this question, so I wanted to know how you would answer this question.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Johnnetta, do you want to take that one first?

JOHNNETTA COLE

It's a reasonable question. If you have women's colleges, why not men's colleges? If you have historically black colleges, why can't we have all white colleges? My response is one word. It's power. It's about power. As long as we live in a society where there is power and privilege in being white, and power and privilege in being male, there is in my view justification—in fact, a necessity—for these “special mission” institutions. Do I dream of the day when it's no longer necessary? Of course I do. But that day seems quite a ways away.

I also want to take this moment that I have the mike to say that when you strip sexism down, not only in terms of understanding it as grounded in male privilege, but also when you think of it as a daily experience of stereotype after stereotype, of “all women this,” or “all women that,” then you can appreciate even more the environments that exist at women's colleges. One of the things that happens at a women's college is that despite the fact that you're in the middle of a group that is all women, you are enormously struck by the diversity among these creatures. In short, if you have seen one woman, you haven't seen them all! And just that experience of having to put similarity and difference into the same frame is highly, highly instructive in a women's college.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Any other members of the panel want to address that? Next question.

NANCY BEKAVAC

I want to endorse Rutgers starting an historically black college. (Laughter.)

ADELAIDE ZAGOREN

I'm not sure if this is exactly a question in regard to the many things that were said up there on the panel. I'm Adelaide Zagoren. I was the Director of the Douglass Alumnae for twenty-six years, and I talk from that perspective. (Applause.) I agree with all of you that a women's college experience is definitely a four-year experience. It is not only educating a woman for a career, but to me it is educating her for life as well, because we have a long life to live, even after our “career” is over. And since we're teaching young women how to be leaders, and learn what our responsibilities are in this world, it becomes very, very important that we do it right!

One of the ways we've done it at a women's college is that we have 100% alumnae who are women, and they are on this campus and also bringing students to their homes and their offices every single year. We have the largest extern program in the entire country, and we send our students out to work with our alumnae for a week or two at a time during spring break and winter break, learning how to go right along with their mentor whether she is a doctor, or a lawyer, or a social worker, or a bank teller, or whatever she is. They are learning about a career and how you live it; and they learn through osmosis, really, how it works.

They learn how to live with a family and how to match up family with career. But they're also learning about responsibilities in this world, and I think that's a very important thing.

I know. I've grown up in New Brunswick and been around New Brunswick all my life. Many of the women in major leadership spots in this community and in this state are taken by Douglass women. That is how our hospitals, our social service agencies, our religious organizations, our academic and school groups function so well! Because many of the Douglass women have had inculcated into them during their whole four years the importance of making their communities better, whatever they choose to do. Like Christine Todd Whitman, who has chosen to work in politics and the world of government and who has done it so very well. And so responsibility to community is one more aspect of a women's college that is important. And here at Douglass the Alumnae have been able to come up with the money to pay for all these extra programs like the Scholars Program, like the many, many scholarships to send students to Europe or to work in Trenton or in Washington as interns. When there's something to be done, the alumnae are backing their college 100%, and I just want to make that clear. (Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

In the need for keeping us on schedule, we'll do just these last few questions, so the three of you standing up will be the last three questions for tonight.

MICHAL GREENBAUM

Good evening. My name is Michal Greenbaum. I'm the Douglass Class President of 2007 and am represented on the Douglass Government Association. My question this evening is: the students of the Government Association have been working with our constituents in helping to save our college from becoming a campus; and my question is this: what advice or guidance can you offer to us today in order to ensure that we win and keep our college from becoming a campus? (Laughter and Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Who's the organization genius here who wants to take that one on?

NANCY BEKAVAC

You're going to be on the *Today Show* tomorrow. We're hoping so! That's not so bad.

And you're mobilizing. You're working together with your alumnae. That is very important, too. And you might reach out to the student organizations of other women's colleges. I suggested to the head of your alumnae association that through the Women's College Coalition, the alumnae association reach out to the alumnae associations of the other colleges. After all, all of them, including Scripps which is in California, have alumnae who live in New Jersey, vote in New Jersey and pay taxes in New Jersey. They might send a message!

So just sit down and think of all the circles of influence you can bring to bear. I mean, I don't think you can get actually get Carl Rove's advice on this, but pretend that you have a really good political advisor and just sort of imagine your way through this. Don't, you know, try to buy spots at the Super Bowl or anything, but think about what you can do with the internet and with people you know. Start with people you know. Get those people you know to talk to the people THEY know, and get them to write an e-mail to members of the governing bodies, members of the administration, all those people. I pay attention to e-mails. I'm sure that the administrators at Rutgers pays attention to e-mails.

JOHNNETTA COLE

Especially when there are thousands of them.

NANCY BEKAVAC

Yes, it really jams up your e-mail. Just get out there, do it.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

You got some really good advice there. (Applause.)

LEIGH (last name inaudible)

My name is Leigh (last name inaudible) Douglass College class of 2000, and this question is geared more toward Governor Whitman. I realize that you went to an all women's high school, and I want to know how that influenced you in becoming a leader, and how that made you decide to go to a women's college afterwards.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Well, I'll tell you. The thing about being in all women's institutions to me is a little bit of what you heard about tonight. It never occurred to me that I couldn't do whatever I wanted. I was a little slow in learning, when I got into the political process, that there were actually men out there who thought I didn't belong there at all! And so that may have made it a little longer. I was a little slower going up the learning curve on that, but it never occurred to me I couldn't, and seriously that's what it's all about. It's about the ability to be on a peer level with everybody else, even when they're all leaders. I mean, whenever you look around you're going to see at least some other women who are leading; and you get to the point when you think, "Of course, women can do this."

One of the biggest problems we have, though, is that women are harder on other women than they are on men are in the political field. We don't vote for each other because so many of us go to co-educational institutions, frankly, where what we see is that men are the presidents of the student body, and men are taking other leadership roles, and that's what we notice and so we think, "Well, maybe women can't do all this kind of stuff." If you were ever to break down the voter list and see the numbers of women who vote for women versus the women who vote for men, I bet you'll find disproportionate numbers of the women who vote for women coming from women's institutions, because they know women can do it!

So it was really that kind of experience that allowed me to feel that I can go ahead into what was then pretty much an all men's world. And as you've heard, every woman here has been part of something that was at one point all male, and they all broke glass ceilings when they did what they did. Now not all came from female institutions, but for me it really helped.

CARMEN AMBAR

One of the interesting things that Governor Whitman said about leadership relates to an issue about women leaders that many of you here know has come up recently at the University. Many have pointed out what is perfectly true, that women's leadership is not restricted to Douglass, that it happens at all the colleges. But the question that I would ask—especially when someone goes on to say that since there are 52% women here at Rutgers we no longer need a women's college! – is: Are these women leading in positions of genuine influence? I am talking here about positions that entail the ability to shape and change institutions. One of the things that is impressive about Douglass is that our student government is all women. What is more, the student representative to the Board of Governors is a Douglass College student. So it is not just a question about any leadership position, it's a question about positions with real influence and positions with the ability to change institutions.

When I look at a corporation and you tell me there are 52% women there, my question is, OK, but let's look at the president, let's look at the vice-president, let's look at the senior management. Where are the women leaders *there*? That's the question that we have to ask, and that's what women's colleges do differently. I would suggest that what you need to do is look at women leaders across the entire spectrum in an organization, and determine which ones are in positions of true influence with the ability to make change. (Applause)

HEATHER MENDOZA

Hi. My name is Heather Mendoza and I'm a Douglass College senior. My question is for anybody on the panel who wants to take it. It has to do with the requirements of your various colleges. Part of the Task Force's proposal is actually to standardize the curriculum, which means we would no longer have a requirement for the mission courses. As of right now, two of these are required of Douglass students. I personally took those two and decided to take more. I'm not minoring in Women's Studies or anything like that, I just found them very interesting and very eye opening; and I'm wondering how do your various colleges incorporate mission courses into the requirements.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Judith.

JUDITH SHAPIRO

I would just note that Barnard and Columbia have a very close partnership, but even forgetting about issues having to do specifically with women, they have very, very different curricula. Barnard, for example, has a very strong first-year program. It also has a whole year of a required laboratory science and a strong math requirement, which I happen to think relates to feminist issues in our society, because these are all too likely to be seen as fields

that women will not necessarily feel they belong in. I really am not that expert on the local situation here, and I recognize you may have to do your planning phase by phase. But I would not think that ultimately there would be a need to standardize the curricula of the colleges for a whole variety of reasons. You could even share faculty, and I think that's the case at the Claremont Colleges that Nancy can speak to, and still have various differences in your curricula.

NANCY BEKAVAC

Yes. Scripps is one of five Claremont Colleges. All the colleges cross-enroll freely. There's no charge. Everybody goes to each other's college. Each of the five colleges has different requirements. Scripps happens to have a particular core curriculum that goes three semesters, through the first semester of sophomore year. But if you're going to have a college, if you're going to have an institution that speaks to a particular mission, of course you want to have a curriculum that goes with the mission, otherwise the mission is just something you post on the wall, like the safety regulations in the washroom. A mission is what guides you, what animates you, what demonstrates your purpose; and the way you achieve that purpose is by teaching to the mission. So that's my idea of what a mission is, otherwise it's just something you frame on the wall.

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Carmen.

CARMEN AMBAR

Yes, and one of the things we have been saying all along is that we can absolutely find a way to have a common core curriculum, as the Task Force proposes, and still have a college like Douglass that would have some special curricular requirements that would still fit into that common core curriculum. So you would have broad categories—for example, the Task Force is suggesting an aesthetics requirement. Then you could have a list of courses that will fulfill the category requirements, and that would encompass mission courses like we now have at Douglass. Douglass students might then be required to take certain courses, but they would be able to fulfill the common core curriculum that the university is proposing at the same time.

And so I definitely think, and I've said this from the beginning, that there is a way to get here from there in terms of this overall proposal, while still retaining special college courses. Those of us who have been advocating for Douglass College, in fact, are not suggesting that the Task Force proposals on curriculum are bad. There are many, many things we agree with completely. You can absolutely accomplish the goals set forth in the Task Force and still maintain a Douglass College. And so the question I ask is, if we can do all these things recommended by the Task Force and keep the College, then why shouldn't we? (Applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Johnnetta. Do you want to say something?

JOHNETTA COLE

Certainly at Bennett College we insist that as a women's institution we have the responsibility to help students come to have a greater understanding of themselves as well as of the world. There's also a requirement there that I want to lift up, and I do it in part out of my role not as a college president, but as the Chair of the Board of the United Way of America. You cannot graduate from Bennett College for Women without a certain number of credit hours in community service. It does seem to me that while there've been an awful lot of changes in the world, positive ones, there's a whole lot we've got yet to do. And if women's colleges do not feel a particular responsibility to help to change this world, we're in trouble. If I can quote that wonderful abolitionist and feminist, Sojourner Truth, she said that if one day, in a garden called Eden, one woman turned the world upside down, then surely all of these women – such as those at a women's college—can turn it right side up again. (Laughter and applause.)

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

I want to thank this panel very much for being absolutely extraordinary, and you know we have here four college presidents and a college dean who are enormously accomplished and who took time to be here speaking of a passion about women's education. Not all have had an-all women's educational experience in their lives, but they're all part of it now, and they all understand its importance.

I started by saying that just because Douglass was the first public institution in New Jersey to open its doors to women and that it has now become the largest public women's institution in the country, that those weren't good enough reasons to continue with it just blindly. But when you consider where this state is with women leaders, particularly elected officials, that we rate down there; I'd like to think New Jersey is a little bit further up, rather than being among the bottom fifteen states for women leaders!

Looking at it another way, we women are better than 52% of the population. I believe we ought to think long and hard about walking away from that tradition [of having a women's college as part of Rutgers] and walking away from the opportunities that an institution like Douglass offers for women in the State of New Jersey. So, thank you all very much for being here. Mary.

MARY HARTMAN

I see Jewel Plummer Cobb. (Applause)

JEWEL PLUMMER COBB

There have been so many wonderful points made this evening. It hardly seems necessary to make another one, but I am tempted to say something about the former deans of Douglass College. I don't know whether many of you remember—in fact, I'm sure you do. “Polly” [Mary Ingraham] Bunting, who was here as dean, went on to become president of Radcliffe. And you remember Ruth Adams? She became President of Wellesley. And since I left Douglass, with good training here I might say, I went on to become president of California State University at Fullerton, and I owed a lot to special experiences I had here at a women's college. So there must be something about women's colleges and leadership. Thank you. (Applause)

MARY HARTMAN

Thank you Jewel Plummer Cobb. Thanks to this extraordinary panel. You have given us a superb—indeed an historic evening. Yes, a “HERstoric” evening—I stand corrected! You've also given us a standing applause evening. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

Transcribed by Dee Buchanan