From the Mills to Marcy

The early history of the State University of New York Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome

Officially, the history of the State University of New York Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome began on June 14, 1966, when the State University of New York Board of Trustees established the Upper Division College at Herkimer-Rome-Utica. The origins of the institution are both older and younger than the founding date, and the story of SUNYIT's early years is a complicated one. *From the Mills to Marcy* draws on campus archival material, historical newspaper articles, and interviews with some of those who contributed in important ways to the institution's development. It is the first published history of the Mohawk Valley's public, four-year college.

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John Swann
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In the fall of 2005, a new staff member told me she had been unable to locate a thorough history of the college. Apart from scattered references to our founding in annual reports and other official publications, no reliable record of our early days existed. The conversation was part of a planning session for the institution’s 40th anniversary year, and it prompted me to begin what was intended to be an online historical overview of several hundred words. A history on the college website, I thought, would be of special interest during the anniversary year – one that could be easily expanded and updated in years to come. As the months went by, the project grew beyond that early notion into this book.

Where to begin? Some colleges can trace their founding to a single event, or to an individual. As the record revealed, this institution was the vision of many “founders” who fought for years to establish what they believed the region needed, and deserved: a public institution of higher education. The story begins with a brief explanation of what higher education opportunities were here early on, and proceeds through the years when advocates sought to establish and develop this college. No attempt is made to provide an “up-to-the minute” recounting or analysis of the most recent events in our history, except to summarize them in a way that brings us into the early part of the 21st century.

Much of the narrative herein relies on newspaper accounts from the last four decades; other publications (many from the college archives and from private collections) provided valuable insight as well. Archival interviews provided by the Office of Instructional Resources were helpful; in several instances, I interviewed individuals (in person, by telephone and through email exchanges) who were kind enough to share their memories of the college’s especially tumultuous early years. Jerome Donovan, Richard Benedetto, Mary Jane Przestrzelski, John Zogby and many others provided interesting and insightful recollections.
Although the “tale grew in the telling,” this work was not intended to examine the college’s first 40 years exhaustively. Rather, through a variety of representative sources it will, I hope, provide a foundation for those who wish to construct a more complete history of the college at some future time. Since this is still a relatively young institution, providing too much detail might risk burdening the reader with an unnecessarily lengthy work. Also, a fairly concise and straightforward history is entirely appropriate for an institution founded to serve those who were looking for, in a sense, a concise and straightforward education.

This project would not have been possible without the support, cooperation and assistance of many current and past staff, faculty and friends of SUNYIT. First and foremost, the layout and design of this volume are the work of Lynne Browne whose expertise, help and advice were invaluable. Thanks also to Michael De Cicco and Matt Kopytowski for their assistance. Special thanks to Milt Smith, Dan Murphy, Ron Sarner, and all those who read part or all of early drafts, and provided feedback. The Cayan Library’s Dan Schabert, Barb Grimes, and Ron Foster were especially helpful. Finally, the example set by my wife Patricia Swann’s academic research and writings, as well as her constant encouragement and support, provided both inspiration and guidance.

“The minor events of history are valuable,” Mark Twain wrote, “although not always showy and picturesque.” I hope you find some value in this story of the events, and people, who took the idea of a college and transformed it into reality.

John Swann
October 1, 2006
Introduction

Higher education in the Mohawk Valley

Higher education in the Mohawk Valley and Central New York State is almost as old as the nation itself. As was the case in most of the former colonies, religious denominations were the driving force behind the early institutions that became the region’s best-known colleges and universities.

In 1793, the Rev. Samuel Kirkland, a Presbyterian missionary to the Oneida Indians, established the Hamilton Oneida Academy, the institution now known as Hamilton College, in Clinton, N.Y.\(^1\) In 1817, six clergymen and seven laymen formed the Baptist Education Society of the State of New York in Hamilton, N.Y., and opened a school one year later. It evolved into the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution in 1823, Madison University in 1846, and Colgate University in 1890.\(^2\) Syracuse University was chartered in 1870 as a Methodist-Episcopal institution and became nonsectarian in 1920.\(^3\)

In many states, public and private colleges developed similarly throughout the first half of the 19\(^{th}\) century. The Morrill Act of 1862 provided the wherewithal in many states for the establishment of public colleges to provide a practical higher education emphasizing agriculture; in New York, it prompted Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White to found Cornell University in 1865.\(^4\) Although Cornell remained a private institution, it was New York’s sole federal land-grant institution, and the state legislature established several state-assisted, “statutory” colleges at Cornell between 1894 and 1944: Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Home Economics, and Industrial and Labor Relations.\(^5\) Massachusetts was the only other state to designate a private institution (M.I.T.) as its land-grant institution.\(^6\)

Although private colleges in the region are among the oldest in the country, public higher education is relatively young.
Recognizing the absence of state-supported higher education, Governor Thomas E. Dewey and the legislature appointed the Temporary Commission on the Need for a State University chaired by Owen D. Young. Its recommendations prompted the state to form the State University of New York in 1948; New York became the last of the lower 48 states to establish an official state university, bringing together 32 existing units.⁷

Post-secondary education in Utica developed in both the private and public sectors. Utica School of Commerce, one of the earliest private business colleges in New York State, was founded by Thomas J. Risinger in 1896.⁸ Mohawk Valley Community College, the first community college established in the state, was founded in 1946 as the New York State Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences at Utica. Its early offerings were aimed at preparing students for technical and semiprofessional employment. The college became a constituent unit of SUNY in 1950.⁹ Utica College can trace its beginnings to the Great Depression, when Syracuse University first established a presence in the Mohawk Valley. In 1933, SU established a “collegiate center” in Utica, and in 1942 organized three University extension centers in Utica, Rome, and Herkimer, laying the groundwork for the official founding of Utica College of Syracuse University; the new college began offering courses at Oneida Square in the fall of 1946. Oneida Square was home to Utica College until 1961, when a new campus was dedicated off Burrstone Road.¹⁰

Despite the presence of these institutions and Colgate and Hamilton nearby, by the middle of the 20th century many in the community were convinced that Utica lagged behind other cities in its opportunities for higher education.
“One of the greatest needs”

“One year after World War II,” a newspaper reporter observed nearly three decades later, “Utica was the only major city in the state without a college.”1 With the war’s end in 1945, men and women returning to civilian life faced many issues: housing, employment, education, and retraining. Many returning veterans went to school (or went back to school) because they hoped to get ahead in the post-war economy, and because of the GI Bill. Passed in June 1944, the bill “almost instantly changed the social landscape of America . . . [providing] universal access to higher education.”2 Private and public institutions worked to meet the demand. The State University of New York continued to grow, and by the time the University of Buffalo merged with SUNY in 1962 Utica-Rome was the largest of the state’s metropolitan areas without convenient access to a four-year SUNY campus.3

Public officials and community leaders in Oneida County became convinced of the need for greater higher educational opportunity in the Mohawk Valley. In 1962, a proposal surfaced that supported turning Mohawk Valley Technical Institute (which later became Mohawk Valley Community College) into a four-year institution: Mohawk University.4 State Assembly candidate Solomon Moldoff unveiled a plan to make the new four-year college part of the State University System; Mohawk University, according to Moldoff’s plan, would eventually add graduate programs and a research park, both of which could attract new industry and jobs to the area. The institution’s academic offerings would include engineering, education, medicine, and a school of optometry. Despite the “vast economic and educational benefits” Moldoff said his plan would bring to the area,5 it failed to attract serious support, and Moldoff was defeated in November 1962 by the incumbent Republican, Assemblyman William S. Calli.
By 1964, Oneida County Executive Charles T. Lanigan, a former mayor of Rome, was formally seeking New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller’s support to establish a State University campus in Oneida County; Lanigan’s November 1964 letter reminds the Governor that this is an issue they’ve already discussed.

I have in the past been in contact with you concerning one of the greatest needs of the Oneida-Herkimer County area. By this I mean our lack of any large State University in this area. We are the only metropolitan area in the State of New York that does not have the great benefits that may be derived from the location of such an important educational facility. We have a good two-year community college . . . we have good private universities . . . it still is necessary, however, for a large proportion of students from this area to go out of Oneida and Herkimer Counties to attend college. When industries look at us as a possible location for their plants, the handicap of the lack of sufficient quantity of advanced educational facilities is a drawback which is difficult to overcome.6

Rockefeller’s response was supportive but non-committal:

[If] the establishment of a unit of the State University would attract new industries and provide significant assistance for economic development, your request deserves serious consideration. I am . . . referring your letter to Dr. Samuel Gould, President of the State University, for reply. If I can be of assistance, please let me know.7
Over the course of the next year, support for a new college grew. Lanigan proposed and the Oneida County Board of Supervisors approved funding for an outside study of the “higher education needs of the Mohawk Valley.” The county hired Dr. Michael Brick, professor of higher education at Columbia University Teachers College, to conduct the study.8

The view from Rome

At the same time, the Rome Chamber of Commerce was in the midst of a year-long study of the area’s higher educational needs. In November 1965, the resultant report concluded a new science and engineering college should be established in Rome:

If this area is to keep pace with future prosperity and growth in America, the supply of technically and scientifically educated people – and the means of providing this education – must be increased in the community . . . committee members are convinced that the people of Rome are ready and willing to expend the time, money and effort to establish the needed engineering and science facility in Rome . . . within the next two years.9

Establishing the new college was “crucial” to the future of the Rome area, the study said, and the presence of “one of the larger concentrations of scientists, engineers and technicians in the northeast,” at Rome’s Griffiss Air Force Base (GAFB), should determine the location. GAFB, the Rome Air Development Center and the college, the report said, would support each other; locating the proposed college close to the base was a must. The proposed college, the Daily Sentinel editorialized, “may start as a full- or part-time graduate school, growing into a full-bloom four-year undergraduate and graduate institution. It needs, and will have, the sponsorship of a distinguished college.”10 Within a week, the Chamber committee was in contact with “officials of several engineering colleges with a view to establishing a branch
school in the Rome area.” Committee members held discussions with Syracuse University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Clarkson College of Technology and Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, and said it would cost $5-6 million to establish a branch college in Rome.

An advocate arrives

A few weeks before the Chamber unveiled its study, the state legislative redistricting process prompted special elections to fill one-year terms, and voters in New York’s 51st State Senate district chose a Republican member of the Oneida County Board of Supervisors, James H. Donovan of Chadwicks. Born on a farm in Marcy, N.Y., Donovan was educated in a one-room schoolhouse, graduated from Whitesboro High School, and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Marriage, family and a thriving construction business followed the war; public service and politics were not far behind. His political career started with the Chadwicks School Board, and included service as town councilman, town supervisor, and county lawmaker before the 1965 election sent him to Albany. The 41-year-old former school board president would be an advocate for a new college in the area and, over the next quarter-century, a powerful figure in the Senate, chairing its Education Committee and representing Oneida County longer than any other State Senator in history.

The Brick Report

In December 1965, at the same time the Rome Chamber’s proposed branch college was a topic of public discussion, Lanigan delivered Brick’s report to Gould and other state officials. Brick asserted that his study, The Need for Higher Education Facilities in the Mohawk Valley, showed “need exists in the Mohawk Valley.”
Valley Area for a tax-supported college offering baccalaureate and master’s programs; and that the State University of New York should establish such an institution.” In conjunction with Brick’s study, an advisory committee of five community leaders representing Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties was established.

The report delivered by Brick cited a number of factors, including: a growing population of high school graduates and college-age Mohawk Valley residents, projected growth in those populations, and the inability of existing four-year colleges in the region to accommodate that growth. The report’s analysis of government data portrayed a region with chronic economic challenges: high unemployment, population growth and average income lagging behind the rest of the state, and higher out-migration than New York’s other metropolitan areas. He also argued that “the cost of private college tuition, even with some scholarship assistance, makes higher education prohibitive for a large percentage of qualified high school graduates who come from low or modest income families.”

While Mohawk Valley Community College and Fulton-Montgomery Community College enabled those students to obtain the first two years of college (“tax-supported” and “close to home”), they were left “in as unfortunate a position as before for a third and fourth year of higher education.”

The Brick Report reasoned that college-age Mohawk Valley residents – even those who would ultimately leave the area – should be “educated so that they can compete with youngsters from other parts of the State . . . [and] there is always the possibility of reversing [economic trends] . . . This is the opinion of many of the community leaders in the Mohawk Valley Area.”

SUNY need not establish a four-year college to offer residents of the region the opportunity for a four-year college education, the Brick Report proposed, because two-year institutions were in place (or were proposed, as was the case with Herkimer County Community College).
What is therefore advocated is that the proposed college in the Mohawk Valley Area omit the usual first and second years, and specialize entirely in the third and fourth years of liberal arts, science, and professional training of teaching, engineering, business, nursing, and other fields common to the same years in the senior colleges of the State University. Careers in practically all these fields require varying amounts of graduate study; so an additional year is recommended, leading to the master’s degree.  

Brick’s recommendation also pointed to a reality in higher education prevalent in the 1960s that would help determine the new college’s primary mission for the rest of the 20th century:

With the growing number of graduates of the community colleges in the Mohawk Valley Area seeking transfer places, it is of interest to note that the private and public colleges in the Mohawk Valley were reported in the Regents Statewide Plan to have no places available for transfer students in the Fall of 1963.  

Citing successful “upper-division” colleges in Michigan and Florida, The Brick Report recommended that “a state-supported, upper-division institution would best fulfill the educational needs of the Mohawk Valley Area and should be established immediately.”

Throughout the report, Brick emphasized that his intent was to explore the need for such a college, not how it would be established or what specific programs it would offer:

The purpose of the study was to determine whether there were sufficient unmet educational needs to warrant the establishment of additional higher education facilities in the Mohawk Valley Area.
A new college

With the Brick Report in hand, Lanigan, Donovan, and other supporters began the public push that would result in the SUNY Board of Trustees and the New York State Board of Regents establishing “Upper Division College at Herkimer-Rome-Utica” in 1966. The original resolution, approved on June 14, 1966, called for the establishment in the “Herkimer-Utica-Rome area” of a new college “with strong emphasis upon the sciences and technology…confined to upper divisional and graduate programs below the doctoral level.”25 The New York State Board of Regents followed suit at a meeting on November 18, 1966, and issued a statement:

Upper division colleges were suggested in 1956 and 1964 Regents statewide plans and are still supported. The strong and growing need for manpower in the fields of sciences and engineering indicates that such emphasis in the new college could help meet an important need. This recommendation is approved in principle and specific studies and proposals with regard to the establishment of the college are encouraged.26

As weeks went by, two Oneida County groups, the Council of Teachers Association and the School Boards Association, took the position that SUNY was dragging its feet. Partly in reaction to fewer dollars in the proposed state budget for Upper Division, they launched a publicity campaign claiming SUNY was discriminating against Oneida and Herkimer counties by “spending $1.2 billion all over the state with not one penny spent here.” SUNY said the timetable for Upper Division remained intact.27
Two colleges or one?

Even without a campus, president, faculty, or students, Upper Division was a hotly debated topic – and in May 1967 a new issue was raised. A group of 60 Utica College faculty members (nearly two-thirds of the entire faculty) signed a petition asking SUNY to explore UC joining the SUNY System, perhaps as the new campus of Upper Division. Members of the faculty union, the American Association of University Professors, who favored the concept feared UC would not be able to compete with the proposed college; they wanted UC to either join SUNY and become the upper division institution, or simply join SUNY. But if many faculty wanted to move toward a SUNY merger, others weren’t so sure.

“I don’t know what the professors had in mind, but they certainly weren’t voicing the sentiment of the [UC] administration,” Utica College Foundation Chairman Moses Hubbard told the Utica Daily Press. It was “too early,” said UC President Dr. J. Kenneth Donahue, to consider “going state.” Some in the community said the idea deserved careful study. One member of the UC Foundation, Bank of Utica president Roger Sinnott, was also a member of the SUNY Board of Trustees: “It would be of tremendous advantage to the area if Utica would become a unit of the State University.” The following month, the UC Foundation board formed a committee to study the issue. After its first meeting, the committee’s chair told the Utica Daily Press, “I don’t think there is any great hurry about it. We can’t do anything about it this academic year [1967-68]. I don’t see how anybody can make plans to take over the place by September 1.”

Whatever its future held, UC continued to move forward. Over the summer, it announced an increase in tuition – to $1,330, effective in the fall 1968 semester – and celebrated the completion of its second residence hall complex. As the calendar year drew to a close, the merger issue was far from resolved. The UC Foundation Board asked Syracuse University trustees for permission to explore UC’s future status and a possible relationship
with SUNY, but UC President Donahue urged independence: “The institution must remain totally committed to its continuance as a four-year, private, liberal arts college,” he wrote in a college newsletter.\textsuperscript{36} The UC Faculty Council approved a proposal for a committee representing the faculty and the UC Foundation; the proposed committee would explore the issue and hold talks with state officials. Donahue called the idea “acceptable” and said he would be willing to lead the discussions,\textsuperscript{37} and the UC Student Assembly endorsed the proposed committee.\textsuperscript{38}

The Syracuse University Board of Trustees took a step important to the issue in February 1968, when an executive committee approved a resolution authorizing UC to determine its future status. The trustees’ action effectively cancelled an earlier Syracuse dictate that Utica College could establish independence from Syracuse only if UC remained a private institution, and it cleared the way for a merger with SUNY.\textsuperscript{39}

“Obstacles to merger”

Some UC faculty continued to push for a merger, citing financial pressures on UC and anticipated competition from Upper Division, but others suggested there was room for both UC and a state college in Utica.\textsuperscript{40} Finally, UC and SUNY held their first, formal meeting on the subject in Albany. SUNY Chancellor Samuel B. Gould and other SUNY officials met with UC Foundation President Boyd Golder, President Donahue, and representative members of the faculty and the Foundation. The meeting resulted in an agreement for UC and SUNY to study independently “the various possibilities of relationship between the two institutions, including merger.”\textsuperscript{41}

The issues raised over the next several months were complicated; supporters and opponents were divided into far more than two camps. Some backers of public higher education saw a merger of UC with Upper Division as an economical alternative to building a new campus. Other supporters of Upper Division
opposed the merger, pointing to the benefits a new institution – on a newly constructed campus – would bring to the region. Some members of the Utica College family, including faculty and Foundation members, believed a merger would be the best way for UC to improve its financial health and become a viable institution in the long run, but others said UC’s future was bright as a private institution. They warned that a merger might result in the loss of UC’s unique characteristics, and alter its commitment to four-year liberal arts programs.

By the end of 1968, money appeared to be a significant obstacle. In December, SUNY Chancellor Gould responded negatively to Syracuse University’s position that the “release” of UC from its relationship with SU would require a “significant” payment from SUNY to SU. By January 1969, Senator Donovan noted that “very serious obstacles to merger exist.” It became clear that there would be no SUNY-UC merger, and the issue was dead – for the time being.

Getting started

Still existing in name only, “Upper-Division” had no campus – but there were plenty of ideas. SUNY began planning the college’s first classes (to be offered at a temporary location), as area officials weighed in on a site for a new, multi-million dollar campus. In June 1969, the office of Acting Chancellor Ernest J. Boyer announced that the first courses would be for elementary and high school teachers of English and social studies, and a spokesman said classes would begin in fall 1969 at a temporary site to be announced in the near future. SUNY System administrators were appointed to oversee the fledgling college until a campus president could be selected. Thomas Peterson, SUNY’s associate for academic personnel, was responsible for “coordinating activities.”

Like many aspects of the college’s founding, even the selection of a temporary site was not without controversy. SUNY announced in early July that a site in West Frankfort would be
used temporarily for Upper-Division, prompting Assemblyman William R. Sears and other officials to back the selection of Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome as both a temporary and permanent location for the college. Donovan urged SUNY to choose temporary and permanent campus sites in the Utica-Rome area. But SUNY administrators selected a location in Herkimer County for Upper Division’s first classes.

Upper Division began offering graduate education classes to graduate students, using classrooms at West Frankfort Elementary School in the 1969 fall semester. Some 300 students enrolled in the first available programs: a Master of Science degree in Education, and teacher and administrator certificates. Initially, courses were offered in conjunction with SUNY Cortland and were taught by Cortland’s faculty. Bruce Keeney was the first full-time employee hired; he served as the college librarian. Mary Jane Peters, “secretary for all operations of the college during its first year,” was the second full-time employee hired:

I took a civil service test at Frankfort-Schuyler High School, and got a letter saying there were two possible jobs, and this one would be at the new West Frankfort Elementary School building only a mile away from my house. So I went to the State Office Building in Utica and was interviewed. I didn’t think I had a chance, but I got the job. I graduated [from high school] in June and got the job that summer, started work on August 28. I didn’t know what to expect. I went to West Frankfort Elementary. I didn’t know where to go or who was going to be my boss or anything. Mr. Keeney introduced himself, and we were a perfect match for work. But I had no typewriter, no desk, nothing at first. We were in three classrooms . . . but there wasn’t much in them to start with, not even a typewriter. Mr. Keeney had me type purchase requisitions and I had to borrow a manual typewriter from the elementary school librarian.
Over the next two years, she was much more than the college secretary. Her duties included “registering students, and collecting their money – we locked it in a filing cabinet – handling all the mail, everything.” The quarters were cramped, but the working conditions were pleasant, if unusual at times – in part because of the rural setting. The elementary school was near farmland, open fields, and pastures. With no air conditioning in the building, “it was hot in the summer, and we propped open two big double-doors one day to let some air in, and a couple of cows walked right into the building.”

I do want to give a lot of credit to Mr. Keeney. If it wasn’t for him . . . he did a lot of work. He worked every day, weekends too; even stayed overnight some times. He had to communicate with both Albany and Cortland in the early days. He’d worked alongside you just as hard . . . he had the library at heart and did a lot of work for the college. He was an unsung hero. We worked very hard and very well together.49

Build it here

Choosing a temporary location was just the beginning; picking a permanent campus would take longer. As early as November 1966, local officials began laying claim to the proposed campus. The Herkimer County Area Development Corporation had started its advocacy early, establishing the “Upper-Division College Committee” in 1966. The committee recommended the state consider the 1,000 acre Wood Creek site (which ended up on SUNY’s short list) and a site near West Frankfort.50 Utica Mayor Frank Dulan recruited the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce to work toward encouraging the state to locate the new college close to Utica. For his part, Lanigan said location would be up to the state.51 In 1968, even though SUNY’s request for $7.5 million to begin construction had been rejected by the New
York State Legislature, formal study of the location issue began. A study was commissioned by SUNY to consider 13 potential sites.

The SUNY study resulted in a report by architect and consultant E. Keith McPheeters of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute recommending six sites for further study. They were located in Oriskany, Rome, Clinton, Utica (on or adjacent to the Utica College campus), Frankfort, and near Wood Creek, a location which straddled the boundary line between the towns of Deerfield and Schuyler – and thus Oneida and Herkimer Counties.52 While SUNY considered those sites and others, elected officials and community advocates argued the merits of specific and general sites: Utica or Rome (or somewhere in between the two cities), Oneida County or Herkimer County. The mayors of Utica and Rome headed the “Utica-Rome Upper-Division College Committee,” which proposed a 1,500-acre site off Route 69 in Oriskany.53 The Oneida County Board of Legislators approved a resolution urging the state to choose a site within Oneida County for the permanent campus.54

“Zeroing in” on Marcy

By the summer of 1969, SUNY said it was “zeroing in” on a site. Donovan said four or more sites were under serious consideration: Marcy, the “Cosby Manor Road area,” Oriskany, and a location off Route 12 in New Hartford.55 The mayors of Rome, Sherrill, Boonville, Camden, Clinton, New York Mills, Vernon and Waterville signed a petition urging SUNY to locate the college “west of Utica and east of Rome,” partly in response to a Griffiss Air Force Base official’s plea. Brigadier General Franklin A. Nichols told officials that locating the college within five to 10 miles of the base was important for the continuing support of military personnel and their families,56 a view expressed repeatedly over the next several years. “Air Force personnel who were stationed at Griffiss Air Force Base had to be able to get to the
campus and back to the base very conveniently, and the argument was they would be in some state of readiness\textsuperscript{57} that required them not to go not more than 10 or 15 minutes from the airfield,” a former college official later recalled.\textsuperscript{58}

As the regional political debate continued, and after considering the expert analysis of several proposed sites, SUNY Trustees approved the selection of a site for the permanent campus at a meeting on October 31, 1969. The choice was Marcy. Affected landowners, many of whom were unaware their homes were part of the location under consideration, were unhappy. “The first I heard about it was when I saw television cameramen on our land,” said one.\textsuperscript{59} The chosen site, according to SUNY Chancellor Samuel B. Gould, met SUNY’s criteria for locating the new campus, among them: access to transportation, proximity to the region’s commuter population, land use and size.\textsuperscript{60} The State eventually acquired more than 60 parcels of land in the Town of Marcy, immediately north and west of the City of Utica, a site totaling more than 800 acres.\textsuperscript{61}

An early view (ca. 1970) of one portion of the campus acreage.
1970s

Transfer students arrive

At Upper Division’s temporary home in West Frankfort, plans were underway for something new: the first classes for transfer students were planned for the 1970 spring semester. Courses would be offered in “engineering science, accounting, social studies, and English.” Area teachers working on a master’s degree through SUNY Cortland’s offerings still made up the majority of the student body. One of those teachers was John Zogby, a Utica native who would develop a variety of connections with the college in years to come.

In the fall 1970 semester, Upper Division began offering classes at a second temporary location, Griffiss Air Force Base. Courses in electrical engineering, engineering applied science, industrial relations, and corporation finance were taught in the MVCC Extension Center, building 905.

Another indicator of the college’s developing structure was Governor Rockefeller’s April 1970 appointment of the first College Council, whose nine members would oversee college operations and hire Upper Division’s first president. Chaired by Rome attorney George B. Grow, its members were listed by the Observer-Dispatch as: “Mrs. Lewis M. Kayes, Jr., Herkimer; Anthony J. Ferro, Utica; Max Philipson, Utica; Vernon J. Harris, Utica; Dr. John S. Burgess, Rome; Richard A. Frye, Utica; Victor T. Ehre, New Hartford; and George R. Cogar, Frankfort.” The group began the task of choosing Upper Division’s first president, a task which would take several months. By January 1971, the council was in the process of reviewing the résumés of 150 applicants.
Moving to the mills

With the addition of undergraduate transfer students, and growing demand from area teachers for graduate courses, the need for more space became evident. “I think we outgrew the space quickly because [students] were eager to sign up for these classes,” Mary Jane (Peters) Przestrzelski recalled. “We certainly needed more room.”

Anticipating continued growth, Upper Division moved in May 1971 to a new “temporary” location that would help sustain the institution and educate thousands of students for more than a decade. The college agreed to a three-and-a-half-year lease of the former Globe Mill Factory at 811 Court Street, in West Utica. With 20,000 square feet, Upper Division had space for a library, seven classrooms each seating at least 30 students, 18 faculty offices, administrative offices, and room to grow. The first classes in the new location were offered in a 1971 summer session. From 300 students in 1969, enrollment had doubled, with some 600 students taking classes on Court Street and at Griffiss in the fall of 1971.

Apart from the Globe Mill move, 1971 was a year of ups and downs for Upper Division. In February, optimistic officials
projected the start of construction in the coming fall, and SUNY Chancellor Ernest L. Boyer said SUNY was considering offering a first-in-the-nation “experimental three-year college degree program” at the new college. But a few months later, the bad news outweighed the good. State legislators proposed, then reduced, then deleted $21.5 million for campus construction from the 1971-72 budget.

Dr. Harold Delaney, the SUNY official who oversaw the early operations of the college, summed up the peculiar nature of the newest member of SUNY in his “Report on the Interim Operation” of Upper Division College:

September 1971 was the beginning of the third academic year of what perhaps has been the most interesting operation of any of the units of State University. This was the beginning of the third year in which there was no president and no resident faculty.

The first president arrives

In November, Robert W. MacVittie, then president of SUNY Geneseo, was appointed the first president of SUNY’s new college. He told the Observer-Dispatch he hoped to “develop a long range plan to work on the college.” But six weeks into MacVittie’s presidency, New York State’s looming fiscal crisis prompted SUNY Trustees to consider freezing or abandoning construction; they settled on a year’s delay. MacVittie made plans to hire faculty and staff, and expand operations at the temporary Globe Mill site. SUNY, meanwhile, considered a system-wide plan for zero growth that included cuts elsewhere and the closure of Upper Division. MacVittie said closing was only one option under consideration, and that he was still optimistic. During the fall months, he presided at a series of seven “Initial College Planning Conferences” with officials from two-year colleges across the state. An advisory committee with members
representing “the two-year college presidents, the senior colleges, and some area personnel” was formed to advise MacVittie “on the development of the institution as a total entity.” In addition to discussing “several critical issues that were important for initial planning,” the committee examined what MacVittie called “a lesser issue,” the naming of the college.

[The name will be] an attempt to give some identity and distinctness, since it is the first upper division college in the State University of New York. It was reported that the College Council seemed to feel that Central State College – An Upper Division College of SUNY – would be satisfactory. Since it appeared that other appropriate names had been pre-empted through the establishments of earlier institutions (Mohawk Valley Community College and Herkimer Community College), the general consensus of the planning groups seemed to support Central State College.16

Like MacVittie’s presidency, the name “Central State College” would be short-lived.17

“Save the Upper Division College”

The New Year arrived, and with it came another blow: a huge cut in Upper Division’s funding in Governor Rockefeller’s proposed budget. Without legislative intervention, the college would get 72 percent less in operating funds in 1972-73 than it had received in 1971-72, $175,000 compared to $624,000.18 MacVittie made plans to depart after just two-and-a-half months on the job. With planning and funding for the new college apparently stalled, he resigned and returned to Geneseo. Despite what had happened, he said he still believed the upper division concept would work for the new college. “Everything still remains, but the recommended lessening of the financial support even below this year was more than disconcerting . . . I share the
disappointment with many [and] believe that I can continue to make my best contribution to SUNY in my former position at Geneseo during financially difficult times for our state and SUNY.”19

Supporters of the college, including the area’s chambers of commerce, launched a “Save the Upper Division College” campaign. Elected officials including Senator James H. Donovan and Assemblyman John T. Buckley vowed to find the funds necessary to keep the college alive.20

Then, in late February, SUNY officials said revenue from a proposed SUNY-wide tuition increase might be used to save Upper Division. “It will take cooperation of the governor, the legislature and the trustees,” said SUNY trustee and Utica attorney Hugh R. Jones, “but the chances are good.”21 By the time the state budget was approved in May, SUNY had secured an additional $400,000, giving the college $575,000 – enough money to operate for another year.22

With funding in hand to continue Globe Mill operations, Upper Division’s future was still questionable. Oneida County Executive William E. Bryant, hoping to prod the state into increasing funding, directed county planners to prepare a new study, which reiterated what supporters of Upper Division had been saying for years: that the absence of higher education institutions in the Mohawk Valley was, in part, responsible for the region’s economic woes.

The lack of high education facilities has continued to contribute to a depressed economy and presents a dismal outlook for high school graduates whose misfortune is to have been born in the one region of the State of New York that provides no public higher education beyond the community college level.23

Donovan urged SUNY trustees to appoint a new president, and to restart stalled site work on the Marcy property.24 In
August, SUNY released its multi-year master plan; Upper Division supporters were encouraged to find the struggling college described in the plan as an “emerging college” with a “unique mission.”\textsuperscript{25} And, in September, SUNY trustees unanimously approved a five-point plan to develop the new college. The plan called for the recruiting and hiring of a president, appointment of both full-time and adjunct faculty, continued operation of the Utica campus while planning for a permanent campus, increased funding for both operations and new construction, and an advisory committee to assure “public and private . . . inter-institutional cooperation.”\textsuperscript{26}

“The State University Board of Trustees has given the Upper Division College another green light, although it’s a somewhat pale shade of green at the moment,” editorialized the Utica \textit{Utica Daily Press}. The editorial pointed out that the resolution lacked the financial wherewithal to move the college forward; getting the necessary money would be up to the legislature.\textsuperscript{27} SUNY then requested the legislature approve $16.6 million for construction of a new Upper Division College campus in Marcy.\textsuperscript{28} In November Governor Rockefeller held a town meeting at the Oneida County Airport, announcing that $1.4 million in state funds had been released for planning the new campus.\textsuperscript{29} By year’s end, plans were announced for the first bachelor’s degree programs: in “business and management, engineering, and health science technologies, starting in the fall of 1973.”\textsuperscript{30}

With an architectural firm at work on plans for the new campus and the hiring of a president not far off, a \textit{Utica Daily Press} editorial said things were looking up.

For years everyone has agreed that a major upper division college would be a major boon to this area, as a major employer an as an aid in attracting new industry. It appears that a bona fide campus will be humming with activity in another three or four years.\textsuperscript{31}
A new name

Not entirely content with all the positive developments, SUNY trustees voted to change the college’s name, from Upper Division College at Herkimer-Utica-Rome to the “State University College at Utica-Rome.”32 The name was, an editorial writer observed, “somewhat awkward but official.” It was the first name change for the struggling college; it would not be the last.

The early months of 1973 saw renewed support. Governor Rockefeller asked the legislature for $15 million to construct the new campus, and an additional $190,000 in operating funds. (Enrollment was projected to grow to 200 full-time students and 784 part-time students by fall 1973.33) In January, State University College at Utica-Rome announced it would offer its first undergraduate course in the spring semester, in computer science. The course was called “Structure of Compilers for Algorithmic Languages.”34

On the campus of SUNY Morrisville, Donovan’s son, Jerome, was finishing up an associate’s degree in business administration, and considering where he might complete a bachelor’s degree. Although he had known about his father’s work to establish a college in the Mohawk Valley for several years (Donovan said in a 2006 interview), it was as a Morrisville student that he first considered becoming one of Utica-Rome’s first undergraduate students. “I can recall Dad saying: ‘They’re going to start an undergraduate program in Utica. You might want to take a look at that.’”35

A new president

“The history of ‘Upper Division’ has been up and down until this year,” Observer-Dispatch reporter Mike Woods wrote in February 1973.36 After some difficult formative years, and several setbacks, so much depended on the naming of a president who would believe in the college’s unique mission – someone with the necessary combination of experience and commitment.

William R. Kunsela had been president of the State
University Agricultural and Technical College at Delhi since 1955. With a doctorate in teacher education, he had served on the faculty of Cornell University’s school of education for eight years, and had been a consultant to the United Nations, the World Bank, the government of Israel, and the Ford Foundation. As president of SUNY Delhi he had revitalized the college, developing its curriculum and the physical campus. Enrollment had grown from about 200 students to more than 2,000. He was, a SUNY spokesman said, “a [recognized] leader in the field of technical and occupational education.”

On February 28, 1973, SUNY trustees voted to appoint Kunsela president of the State University College at Utica-Rome. He was 55, an “advocate” of the upper-division concept, and a firm believer in the new college’s potential. “There is a bit of urgency about this job,” he told a reporter after a few months on the job. “There needs to be rapid significant improvement…I think we’re going to do a lot in innovation. Many of our students will be first generation college students…we’ll have to innovate to reach [them].” In May, Kunsela hired Milt Smith to serve as Assistant to the President. “Bill was one of the finest men that I ever had the opportunity to know or to work with,” Smith recalled in a 2005 interview.

We had members of the staff and of the faculty early on [who] didn’t really like the man. They thought that he was a martinet, and he was; he had high expectations. He set the bar very high for himself, and he set it for everyone else. He had a great sense of knowing what we
needed to do to survive in a very inhospitable environment, and a lot of people didn’t understand how inhospitable that environment was . . . because of local interests, academic competition, political competition and infighting, and then of course the whole business of SUNY Central, trying to deal with the hierarchy down there.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{“Close knit” college}

Summer session had record enrollment; 643 students signed up for 27 courses. The first class of 58 undergraduates began attending classes in the fall; 50 of them were full-time students,\textsuperscript{41} and Jerome Donovan was one of the 50. (The first – and only – undergraduate program that academic year was Business and Public Management.) The small number of students and college employees coped with a not-yet-developed facility, Donovan recalled, and those somewhat primitive beginnings of the Globe Mill era forged strong bonds.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{July 2, 1973: President Kunsela welcomes Ronald Doty of Groton, N.Y., the first full-time undergraduate student to enroll at the college.}
\end{figure}

At the time, there were only four full-time faculty, so obviously we had very small classes. And everyone, I mean everyone – students, faculty and staff – were all trying to make the best out of a less than ideal situation, so we were really like a family. Most of us were self-starters. We were coming in with little or nothing there; we didn’t have recreational facilities, social programming,
we had to make it up as we went along. We had parties at a nearby church hall basement. The Rainbow Bar & Grill became the unofficial college pub where some students would eat lunch, and there were times when students and some faculty would meet there after evening courses. We were very close-knit.42

Plans for the new campus continued; in October, the college released an architect’s conceptual drawing with “the first campus building in the center of a sprawling hilly acreage . . . to the left of the central building, a 30,000 square foot laboratory building is shown.”43 Construction was slated to start in the spring of 1974, and be completed by 1976.44

The New York State Board of Regents granted the college authority to grant Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Professional Studies degrees, but delayed authorization of the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Technology degrees; President Kunsela expressed disappointment, especially about the B.A. “That will prevent us from serving community college graduates who want a liberal arts degree.” The college, he said, still hoped to enroll 1,500 students for the 1975-76 academic year. “We’re going to have to work like hell to grow that fast.”45

Private colleges and the Association of Engineering Colleges of New York State expressed opposition to the new college’s plan to offer engineering and engineering technology programs; LeMoyne and Clarkson were especially outspoken.46 During the 1973-74 academic year, the students, faculty, and the administration took steps to solidify the college image, adopting brown and gold as the official school colors, and embracing a newly designed college logo. The work of Thomas Yacovella, a partner in the Utica firm CY&R Advertising and Public Relations, the logo had multiple meanings; ironically, even though the college was no longer officially called “Upper Division College,” the new logo reflected the old name.
The mark is a stylized derivation of the letters UDC. The “U” forms the upper half of the mark, and in the designer’s eyes represents the upper division curriculum. The “D” and the “C” form the lower half of the mark . . . [they] represent the first two years of college.47

The logo was also said to represent a chalice; a “cup of learning” for future generations of students. In addition to its use on thousands of items, it found a place in the center of the official college seal – a rendering of the Seal of the State of New York with the UDC logo in the middle. In one form or another, the UDC logo would remain in use for nearly three decades.

With enrollment up and increased state funding, the temporary campus was thriving. The Governor and Board of Regents approved “an innovative nursing program” for the college, to enable graduates of diploma schools and those with associate degrees in nursing to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.48 But the permanent campus was far from a certainty. By summer 1974 state lawmakers had approved more than $15 million for campus construction, and Governor Malcolm Wilson assured area residents that, despite delays, the new campus would be built: “The educational needs of this area warrant construction, as planned.”49 The first work on the site occurred during the 1974 construction season; two firms did preliminary work on the East Campus and West Campus roads.50 Area lawmakers announced a timetable putting the completion of the first building campus two years away;51 the college released detailed plans and drawings for the first campus building, the Administration-Library-Classroom complex, and officials said additional buildings would be finished by the end of the decade.52

Academically, the college was growing. In addition to Business and Public Management, programs offered during the 1974-75 academic year were: Human Services, Criminal
Justice, Health Care Management, Nursing, Behavioral Science, Social Science, American Studies, and General Studies. John Zogby, who had taken a graduate course at the college’s Frankfort location before finishing his master’s degree at Syracuse University, started teaching history as an adjunct in the fall 1974 semester:

It was wonderful, it was fascinating, and I loved it . . . it was really a close-knit campus. You really knew everybody, even as an adjunct faculty member. You got to know all the students, all the faculty. What you saw was a place that was going to grow.

Two colleges or one? (part two)

Then, on Christmas Day 1974, came the announcement that a merger with Utica College was a possibility. Kunsela said nothing had been decided, but that talks had been going on for months. Oneida County Executive William Bryant said if the negotiations were successful, plans for a new campus would be abandoned; he urged SUNY to make public details of the talks. “I think the public should know what is being decided. This community has been taken on a roller coaster ride with the Upper Division for years.” In Albany, officials said economics prompted them to consider a merger. “Buying a campus already built,” said one, “is going to be cheaper than building a new one.” Within days, a group of eleven community leaders led by State Senator Donovan announced their collective opposition to the merger, and their support for construction of the new campus. Governor Wilson, three days before leaving office, ordered SUNY to proceed with the first phase of construction. In
January 1975, the Utica College Foundation Board rejected the proposal. Talk of a merger, or “takeover,” was gone – for the time being.59

Still, action on the construction of the new campus was slow to come. Governor Hugh L. Carey, on his third day in office, ordered a temporary freeze on construction. Bryant sent Carey an updated version of the Brick Report. “There is no question that the region’s lack of growth is a direct corollary to the region’s lack of institutions of higher education,” Bryant wrote.

[Since the Brick Report was issued] economic conditions in the region have worsened and an Upper Division College was created, a program of growth planned, and then budget cuts [curtailed] its expansion and, in fact, threatened its existence. Meanwhile, students in this region who graduate from two-year colleges are forced to go out of the region to continue their higher education . . . the only alternative for such students is one local private college which, of necessity, has been forced to raise tuition to a level that excludes many of the young people of this region.60

Carey’s proposed budget included both increased operating funds for the college, and the elusive $15 million for campus construction. But the possibility of a two-college solution soon returned. Bryant sent Carey nine alternative proposals for consideration, among them a merger with Utica College as an alternative to the new campus.61 SUNY officials told Bryant they were prepared to start new talks; the chair of UC’s Foundation Board said the board was “willing to listen,”62 but a week later the board rejected continuing takeover talks with SUNY.63 By March 1975, legislators had removed construction money for the new campus from the state budget, and Kunsela said he was considering the possibility of another interim campus to accommodate continuing growth.64
First Commencement

With the future campus still a question mark, on May 18, 1975, the college held its first Commencement, honoring 163 graduates at the Stanley Theater of the Performing Arts. Faculty, staff, candidates for graduation, College Council members and other participants processed into the Stanley as organist George Davis played Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance*. The singing of the National Anthem was followed by an invocation, offered by the Rev. John S. Hutchinson of Utica’s First Presbyterian Church. Among those taking part in the ceremony were President Kunsela; Shirley E. Wurz, vice president for student affairs; John M. Brophy, vice president for academic affairs; and Robert J. Kopecek, vice president for administration. Robert R. Meijer, acting dean of arts and sciences, delivered the commencement address; the student address was delivered by graduating senior and president of the Utica-Rome Student Association Thomas W. Libous (who was later elected to the New York State Senate). Libous also presented the Class of 1975’s gift to the college, a ceremonial mace for use at future commencement and convocation ceremonies.

Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Professional Studies degrees were conferred in business and public management, criminal justice, human services, health care management; Bachelor of Arts degrees were awarded in general studies, American studies, behavioral sciences, and social sciences. Master of Science in Education degrees in elementary education, health education,
and secondary education were awarded in conjunction with SUNY Cortland. Taking part in the conferring of degrees were the college deans: Robert D. Leidig, Edward J. Sabol, Frank M. Ganis, and Robert R. Meijer; and George J. Cummings, assistant vice president. Following a benediction offered by the college’s Newman Chaplain, Rev. John S. Finnegan, and the recessional (*The March of the Priests* by Mendelssohn), a reception was held in the Stanley’s upper lobby.\(^{65}\)

Another first in 1975: *Genesis*, the college yearbook, was published for the first time. The hundred-page volume documented a developing campus culture. Clubs and organizations included: the Utica-Rome Student Association (URSA) Senate, Intramural Club, the *Paper Sun* (the college’s first student newspaper), Outdoor Club, Veterans Club, *Snowflake* staff, Student Activities, We the People, Married Students Club, Business Club and Drama Club. *Genesis ’75* contained a letter from the college president addressed to the Class of 1975. “This is a special occasion for you and for us,” Kunsela wrote. “Your Upper Division College is going to need your moral, spiritual, intellectual and financial support in the years ahead.” The yearbook’s inside front cover photo depicted the Globe Mill building; the inside back cover photo showed a scale model of the Marcy campus’s first building. There were also dozens of informal snapshots of students, faculty and staff; formal photos of the first graduates; and portraits of administrators, staff and faculty.

Donovan announced that SUNY and other state officials were considering a plan that would give the college a new campus on the site of the Marcy Psychiatric Center – if the Marcy and Utica Psychiatric Centers were merged on the Utica center site. (The state was said to be considering such a merger.)\(^{66}\) A state official characterized the discussions as “very preliminary,” and Kunsela said he would prefer a new campus.\(^{67}\) A few weeks later, he announced an expansion of facilities to accommodate growing enrollment and the need for more space. Renting another 40,000 square feet of space in the Globe Mill building for the coming
academic year, Kunsela said, was a temporary measure. With applications for admission double the previous year’s, the college expected record enrollment for the fall semester.

Donovan continued to push for a new campus. While both he and Carey supported funding the new college, Donovan wanted state funding earmarked for campus construction only; the Governor said the $15 million should be used for either construction or the acquisition of “an existing site such as Utica College, should it become available.” Donovan launched a petition drive to demonstrate public support for the college and the new campus, and to “bring pressure” on Carey to keep “his promise” to build the new campus in Marcy.

Construction delayed, merger rejected

In the fall 1975 semester, nearly 2,900 students enrolled – a record. Full-time undergraduates jumped from about 500 the previous year to 870. Mohawk Valley Community College also reported record enrollment, but the number of full-time and
part-time students at Utica College dropped.\textsuperscript{72} The fall semester had scarcely begun when Chancellor Ernest Boyer announced a moratorium on all SUNY campus construction projects. For Utica-Rome, Boyer said his action meant “the prospects for construction of a new campus are dim. It would be foolish to not see that fact.”\textsuperscript{73} Work continued on the additional space at Court Street, which would be available for use at the start of the New Year.\textsuperscript{74} For John Cook, who joined the faculty in fall 1975, coming to a college temporarily located in old buildings was nothing new:

I had started my full-time academic career at [Rochester Institute of Technology], and RIT at that time was in a converted downtown building in Rochester [as it planned a new, suburban campus] . . . The idea of being in rehabbed buildings was not a major issue, and surprisingly enough I think it was not a major issue for a lot of other faculty and a lot of students. They felt like pioneers. A lot of the other early students seemed to take on that idea that this was the wagon train and they were headed for the ‘Land of Gold’ or something like that. It was kind of fun.

December’s developments gave those involved a sense of déjà vu: a deal with Utica College was once again in the news. Boyer met with the Utica College Foundation Board to raise the issue (Utica College students picketed the meeting to express opposition to a merger), telling reporters afterward that SUNY would reconsider a takeover of UC only at the invitation of the Foundation Board. But Board President Dr. Ronald Goldstone said UC would remain private “as long as it’s possible.”\textsuperscript{75}

With additional space available in the old Globe Mill building on Court Street, and continued enrollment growth, the college converted a nearby building into a recreational center with space for student activities. Although temporary, the center provided much-needed gathering space for students. Still
lacking campus space for elaborate student activities, students presented a production of the musical “Charlie Brown” at New York Mills High School. Kunsela said a permanent campus was coming – one way or another. “Something’s got to give. This school WILL have a future.”

By the end of March 1976, SUNY sent a strong message that a new campus had receded further into the future. Chancellor Boyer ruled out a Utica College merger as too costly, and predicted the college would remain in the Globe Mill building for three or four years. Kunsela and other officials discussed the possibility of expanding into other buildings, or the use of mobile labs.

The second annual Commencement was held on May 23, in the Utica Memorial Auditorium. The graduates – more than 400 were eligible – were the first who had completed their full program of study at the college. The main address was delivered by John M. Brophy, vice president for academic affairs from 1973-75, who spoke of the challenges the institution had overcome in the face of a troubled regional economy. “To make the college succeed and grow in such a climate,” he said, “has taken a combination of faith and action.”

In June, SUNY unveiled a revised 10-year master plan, outlining potential new academic programs for the college; the plan mentioned the continued offering of undergraduate programs in business, health, human services, criminal justice and vocational teacher education. Also envisioned were efforts to establish mechanical and electrical technology, applied health, recreation, computer science, and specialized teacher education programs. Development of “unique” master’s degree programs in professional disciplines was also included. But construction or acquisition of a new campus, one official said, would be on hold for at least four to five years.

At the same time, Kunsela said the state was giving serious consideration to an idea floated a year earlier: relocation of the college to the site of Marcy Psychiatric Center. Such a move,
Kunsela said, would be “difficult.” A few months later, he announced his opposition to the relocation because the Psychiatric Center site was too large and operating the college there would be too costly. Instead, Kunsela said he was pursuing a lease agreement with the owners of the former Potter Street School to accommodate continuing growth; the fall semester saw record enrollment. In a few months, the college was pursuing a one-dollar lease agreement with the Rome City School District for use of the former Barringer Street School building. Kunsela said the space would provide a single
location to serve about 300 Rome residents already taking classes at several Rome extension sites.\textsuperscript{82}

**Build it somewhere**

As SUNY’s construction moratorium blocked construction of a new campus, local community leaders continued to push for a permanent campus to be located somewhere:

- Oneida County Executive William Bryant asked the Board of Regents to consider a merger with Utica College.\textsuperscript{83}
- State Regent Emlyn I. Griffith, a Rome attorney, said the college should be exempted from the construction moratorium, but Griffith said a UC merger should remain an option.\textsuperscript{84}
- Utica Mayor Edward Hanna said the city should consider locating the college downtown, perhaps in the Boston Store building.\textsuperscript{85}
- A business group led by Charles Gaetano offered to finance and construct the new campus in Marcy and lease it back to the state.\textsuperscript{86}
- Assemblyman Nicholas Calogero said the completion of the new campus was the area’s top economic development priority.\textsuperscript{87}

The New Year – 1977 – arrived, and with it came another idea, this one from County Executive Bryant: Oneida County, he proposed, would borrow more than $16 million to build the Marcy campus or to pay for a merger with Utica College. Governor Hugh Carey said Bryant’s plan was worthy of “further consideration,” and Kunsela said the proposal “looks like a breakthrough.”\textsuperscript{88} Over the next several months, Carey asked SUNY to conduct a formal analysis of the college and the delayed development of a permanent campus. The SUNY Board of Trustees appointed a task force to study the college’s future, and to make recommendations concerning the institution’s academic mission, its academic programs, number and kind of students to be served,
relationship with other institutions, financial support and facilities requirements.\textsuperscript{89}

“Co-location”

In mid-March, Kunsela and the chair of the Trustees’ task force, Nan Johnson of Rochester, met with Harold Rankin, acting president of Utica College, and other officials at UC. Participants said the discussions focused on three likely concepts for the future of the college: a new campus in Marcy, a “co-habitation” of the two colleges on the existing Utica College campus, or a “co-location” of the two with SUNY’s new campus situated on land adjacent to UC’s.\textsuperscript{90}

At the same time, another group interested in the college’s future arrived on the scene. The “Alumni Association of the State University College at Utica-Rome” met for the first time, chose officers (Jerome Donovan was elected president), and approved a resolution urging SUNY trustees to support construction of the Marcy campus “without delay.”\textsuperscript{91} The College Council agreed, passing its own resolution; Senator Donovan wrote Johnson that the state had already invested more than $6 million in the Marcy site, and that all the proposed alternatives to building the new campus in Marcy would “restrict [the college’s] potential for growth and education service.”\textsuperscript{92}

Governor Carey weighed in, announcing his support for co-location; rising construction costs, Carey said, could discourage the state from building a new campus. The Governor said he would favor the college focusing on technical programs.\textsuperscript{93} Kunsela praised the Governor’s statement for its support of the college and its backing of establishing a permanent campus, but said he was “disappointed” in Carey’s endorsement of co-location.\textsuperscript{94} In the midst of the months-long public debate, the college honored another class of graduates at Commencement at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. Shirley E. Wurz, vice president for student affairs, delivered the main address at the May 22 ceremony.\textsuperscript{95}
Donovan: insist on “steak” not “bones”

Co-location continued to receive support from some quarters, but opponents, led by Senator Donovan, urged the community to stand firm and hold the state to its plan to build the Marcy campus. Donovan said too many in the area were willing to accept the state’s arguments that a new campus was unnecessary. “If your dog accepts bones, you don’t feed him steak,” he said in a speech delivered at the Marcy Town Hall. “And while other areas of the state press for steak, we tell state administrations that we will eat bones. And that is just what we’re getting.” In June, the SUNY Trustees’ task force delivered a final report favoring co-location. The Trustees directed the Chancellor to start talks with Utica College, so the two schools could sort out how they could exist and operate independently while occupying adjacent campus and sharing some services. The Marcy site, the Board said, was “not now feasible” for a permanent campus, but members said a permanent campus could be achieved by either building next to UC, or by expanding the Globe Mill location.

One analyst said delaying a decision on the permanent campus was little more than a political ploy. “What it seems to boil down to is that if a decision to build adjacent to Utica College is made this year,” wrote Richard Benedetto of Gannett News Service, “construction could start next year, re-election year for Democratic Gov. Hugh L. Carey.”

While several trustees cited “economic and academic” reasons for delay, Benedetto wrote, “SUNY insiders indicated that politics is also involved.” Kunsela said the delay was disappointing, but hoped “that the additional period of scrutiny will produce a wise and educationally acceptable solution to the campus problem.” The college, he said, was pleased that the trustees had recommended expansion of “technical course offerings” and had recommended allowing the college to offer the Bachelor of Technology degree.

While SUNY, UC and Syracuse University officials met over
the summer months, opposition to co-location came from several groups, including the Alumni Association. “[F]rom a student’s point of view,” the association’s board said in a letter to Governor Carey, “co-location will produce innumerable conditions which will detract from marketability of both Upper Division and Utica College.” Among those, the board said, were: extra-curricular activities, athletic facilities, parking, campus security, and the college’s identity. Co-location would lead to tension between the two colleges’ students and administrators. The alumni board reaffirmed its earlier expressions of support for the building of the Marcy campus.102

Senator Donovan continued to advocate for the Marcy campus, issuing a statement saying the conflicts between the two colleges’ academic offerings was “the most valid reason of all for rejecting cohabitation of the two colleges.” Using business and health programs as an example, Donovan said prospective students would have to choose between seemingly identical options – identical except for tuition, which was three times higher at UC than at SUNY ($3,200 vs. $1,000 in 1976). “No matter how you slice it,” Donovan said, “curriculum coordination will hurt both colleges and in the end, Utica College will suffer most.”103

**Co-location attracts support**

But talks continued, and the Utica College Foundation Board repeated its support for continuing negotiations. “Conceptually we are in substantial agreement on a shared campus plan for maintaining the identity of both institutions,” UC President Harold Rankin told Foundation Board members. “while eliminating the competition which now exists because of program duplication.”104 Co-location received public support from Oneida County Executive Bryant,105 the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Utica,106 and Observer-Dispatch Executive Editor Gil Smith, who wrote a decision to co-locate the two colleges would be “sound and responsible,” and would “keep SUNY here
... make two institutions stronger ... reduce taxpayer burden [and] lend a supporting hand to Utica College.”

In November, the SUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution calling co-location “feasible and desirable.” The Trustees directed SUNY Acting Chancellor James Kelly to begin talks with UC; Kelly expressed optimism that “an agreement can be worked out.” Senator Donovan was quick to respond. In an address to the Utica Rotary Club, he said co-location would “force Utica College out of the business of education.” Donovan criticized community leaders who backed co-location for their support of a concept that would, he said, worsen the region’s problems – not solve them.

It is a paradox when community leaders rightfully complain about stubborn high unemployment, exodus of industry and jobs, limited higher education opportunities, and then community leaders joyfully proclaim a co-location plan, which will exacerbate, rather than diminish these community liabilities...once the entire community was behind construction of the Upper Division at Marcy. The beneficiaries of co-location [would be] Syracuse University, the governor and those SUNY trustees who want the state’s higher education money to go to other campuses.

“State University College of Technology”

And as the old year waned, SUNY Trustees approved the college’s request for a new name “to better reflect the college’s objective to provide upper divisional technology programs.” The new name, the college’s third since its founding, would be the “State University College of Technology.” Kunsela was pleased. The name change, he said, “better reflects what we’re here for. It gets us out of the category of an arts and sciences college and
puts us exactly where we belong, in the category of a specialized college.” The Trustees also granted the college authority to offer a Bachelor of Technology degree in Electrical Technology, a move which Kunsela said would support area industries – especially General Electric, Griffiss Air Force Base, and Chicago Pneumatic. “As a specialized college we will be better able to focus on our mission to develop programs in the professional and occupational fields,” Kunsela said. “It’s what I came here to do in the first place.” Final approval would come later from the Board of Regents.110

Despite a continuing debate on co-location throughout 1978, other signs of progress were evident. In February, the Board of Regents gave final approval to the college’s plan to offer the “B. Tech” – the Bachelor of Technology degree, despite opposition from five colleges (including Rochester Institute of Technology, SUNY Binghamton and SUNY Buffalo) already offering the same degree.111 And, on May 28, Commencement honored 626 graduates at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. The college’s former vice president for academic affairs, Robert J. Kopecek, president of Pennsylvania’s Northhampton County Area Community College, delivered the main address. Bachelor’s degrees in business and public management, criminal justice, human services, nursing, and vocational-technical education were awarded to 578 graduates; master’s degrees in education went to 48 candidates for graduation.112
Co-location, merger ruled out

It was the increasingly public debate of co-location’s pros and cons that dominated the news in 1978 – all year long. The issue seemed to swing back and forth; at times, side-by-side colleges seemed certain, then unlikely. Consider some of that year’s headlines on the subject:

January 5  Kunsela Backs Plan for College Co-location, Utica Daily Press
February 1  The College Co-location Story, Negotiators Optimistic They’ll Reach Agreement, Observer-Dispatch
May 12  Co-location Discussions Bog Down, DP
May 19  Co-location Talks are ‘Back on Track,’ O-D
May 27  Co-location Talks Hit Serious Snag, O-D
May 27  Co-location Differences Minimized by Sheldon, DP
August 16  Co-location nixed by SUNY board; alternatives cited, DP

From summer through the fall, both co-location and then, within a few weeks, a proposed merger of the two colleges were discarded even as other possibilities for a new campus emerged. In August, Utica Mayor Stephen Pawlinga unveiled a $38 million plan to construct a new campus in a four-block area of downtown Utica; the proposed downtown campus would be founded by Broadway, the Oriskany Street East-West Arterial, Whitesboro Street and Genesee Street. The mayor said the city had been developing the plan secretly for months. A downtown campus, Pawlinga said, would be a “tool to stimulate the entire downtown area.”\textsuperscript{113}

Republican officials, led by Senator Donovan, said the downtown option would be too expensive, and they reiterated their support for building the new campus in Marcy. “The situation has gone on long enough,” said Assemblyman Nicholas Calogero. Pawlinga said his proposal had already received an “enthusiastic” reception from SUNY officials and the governor’s office.\textsuperscript{114}
Once co-location was rejected in mid-August, SUNY and Syracuse University (UC’s parent institution) launched serious merger talks in late September. Syracuse University Chancellor Melvin I. Eggers said an “attractive offer” from the state would be considered, but admitted the Utica College Foundation Board had reservations about the state acquiring UC. Such a merger, wrote Gannett News Service’s Richard Benedetto, “would, in effect, mean the disappearance of Utica College as a private institution. SUNY Trustees said the planned merger under consideration would result in the development of a “comprehensive state-operated institution offering programs now in effect at both colleges at the Utica College site.” Among those expressing opposition to a merger were the presidents of Mohawk Valley Community College and Herkimer County Community College, Governor Carey (who said he preferred a “free standing” College of Technology campus), and the Democratic candidate for Lieutenant-Governor, Mario M. Cuomo, who said he favored the “innovative” downtown campus plan over the merger or the Marcy campus option.

Governor Carey announced his support for a downtown campus in October and on the same day, Chancellor Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. suspended merger talks with Utica College. A week later the Utica College Foundation Board followed suit, passing a resolution that said no to any further negotiations. “We are saying we have no further interest in the merger possibility,” board member Francis E. Romano told a reporter.

Why was a co-location, merger, or some other cooperative arrangement between the two colleges ultimately rejected by both?

Some believe there was no single deal-breaker, just as there was no single reason why the state pursued the issue for so long. To begin with, according to Gannett’s Richard Benedetto, the local struggle to establish a new college and find a permanent campus for it was very much influenced by larger events outside the Mohawk Valley. “New York State was in financial difficulties, and that was a time – you had the New York City financial
crisis in 1975, and then the state itself had a fiscal crisis in 1976,” he recalled. “The state was looking for the cheapest way out at that point, wanting to provide some political largesse [to the Utica-Rome area] …but without perhaps a huge capital investment.” Interviewed in 2006, Benedetto said there were several reasons why some agreement between the two colleges never came to pass. “I think that the faculty were split, the community was very divided about it, funding from the state was a problem…I don’t think it was any one thing.”

Some members of the Utica College faculty saw the failed merger as a kind of call to action. It was, as one wrote later, “unstabilizing” for UC, a “disastrous attempt” and an “irresponsible decision by [both] Syracuse University and SUNY . . . [which] led to the unionization of the UC faculty.”

**Downtown vs. Marcy**

With the possibility of co-location gone, Governor Carey’s pre-election support for a downtown campus marked the beginning of a new debate: Utica or Marcy? Speaking the day after the November 1978 election, Utica Mayor Stephen Pawlinga said Carey’s re-election “virtually assured” that the new campus would be built downtown. Citing the lack of funding for the downtown option – and likely opposition from SUNY – Senator Donovan disagreed: “I don’t think the governor is going to build a campus downtown.” Oneida County Executive Bryant was quick to oppose the downtown plan; he asked federal officials to deny the city funding that had been requested in support of the downtown campus plan. Pawlinga announced that he and SUNY officials would travel to Flint, Michigan, to tour a downtown campus there. Three weeks after the election, SUNY Trustees approved a $100,000 feasibility study of the downtown site.

The College of Technology had already made a small move into the downtown area. After months of renovations, the former Potter School on Whitesboro Street was pressed into service in
September with 11 classrooms, four laboratories and a gymnasium. Not far from the Utica Memorial Auditorium, the college’s latest solution to its growing need for additional space was just a few blocks from Pawlinga’s proposed downtown campus. Students, faculty and staff found themselves traveling between the Globe Mill building on Court Street and “Potter Center,” now home to the college’s Division of Arts and Sciences, and the Division of Technology.\textsuperscript{127} The college also “completed rehabilitation of the Rome Center, formerly the Barringer School, used as an extension and conference center” in 1978.\textsuperscript{128}

In December, Lt. Gov.-elect Cuomo told the editorial board of the \textit{Observer-Dispatch} and \textit{Utica Daily Press} that moving forward with construction of the proposed campus was high on his list of priorities: “I’m going to stay very close to it.” Accompanied by Pawlinga, Cuomo offered a comparison with SUNY Buffalo’s campus in Amherst that indicated support for Pawlinga’s downtown plan (he had praised the plan in the weeks before the election). “Amherst is a mistake…if we had kept [SUNY Buffalo] in Buffalo we would have helped Buffalo.”\textsuperscript{129}

Just as 1978 became the year of the Utica College merger debate, 1979 would be the year the downtown campus option was discussed, debated and ultimately rejected. In January, County Executive Bryant wrote Carey asking him to reconsider his support for the downtown option. Pawlinga’s plan, Bryant wrote, had “site constraint problems,” and “potential…socio-economic problems with major far-reaching ramifications” because of the site’s proximity to some of the city’s public housing. A statement from Senator Donovan reiterated his support for the Marcy campus, and said the Governor should be “persuaded that a college should be more than a beautification project” for downtown Utica. Bryant and Donovan said Pawlinga’s chosen site was too small for the college’s needs.\textsuperscript{130} Kunsela agreed. Pawlinga’s plan, he said, would leave the college no room for future growth. In any case, Kunsela pointed out, SUNY’s study was really a “planning exercise” and not a true feasibility study; the location
of the campus was far from certain.131

Carey unveiled a proposed state budget in late January, recommending a $500,000 increase in operational funding for the college. The downtown campus, the Governor said, was an economic development priority. Kunsela welcomed the news, and said the increase in funding was a direct result of growing enrollment: from 3,000 full- and part-time students in the fall 1978 semester to a projected 3,100-plus students in fall 1979.132

In February, SUNY named a planning and architectural firm to conduct the downtown campus feasibility study,133 and a few weeks later Kunsela confirmed the college was seriously exploring the use of downtown Utica’s former Boston Store. “We’re looking for space to satisfy certain shortages…The Boston Store will meet our needs through 1982.” One likely move, Kunsela said, would be the college library’s 100,000 volumes.134 Officials went so far as to seek $550,000 to fund the project,135 but it was eventually discarded and the college made no move to the Boston Store building on Genesee Street. (The library was able to make use of available storage space at Globe Mill until its eventual re-location to the permanent campus.)136

“A major milestone”

Even though the location debate dominated news about the college, 1979 was significant in other ways. The college’s intercollegiate athletics program was established with the appointment of Lee Ellis as athletic director, and the launching of three sports: women’s basketball, women’s softball, and men’s basketball. Ellis coached the women’s teams, and the men’s team was coached – part-time – by former Syracuse University basketball captain Paul Piotrowski. Initially, the college was affiliated with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and competed with teams from community colleges and other junior varsity programs. Also in 1979, Vice President for Administration Robert D. Leidig announced “a major milestone in the develop-
ment of the college,” in the form of accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Middle States accreditation, Leidig said, added to the college’s legitimacy and was the result of years of effort. At its fifth annual Commencement, the college honored its largest graduating class to date: 602 undergraduate and 48 graduate degree recipients. Ellen P. Coher, director of nursing, delivered the main address, and the college’s newest program launched its first graduate: Richard A. Hooker of Syracuse received a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering technology.

The downtown debate continued. In May, the SUNY-funded study was delivered to the Board of Trustees. The consultant’s report said a downtown campus was “feasible,” but SUNY officials said privately they were discussing possible alternatives, perhaps other sites in the city, to Pawlinga’s chosen site. The mayor forged ahead: “To locate it elsewhere is an exercise in futility. The decision was made by the governor that it would be located in that area.” After meeting with SUNY officials, Donovan chided downtown campus supporters for suggesting that SUNY might relocate the college.

SUNY is committed to maintaining a college in this area. It’s a shame that some of those who favor a downtown location are suggesting that we won’t have a college if it doesn’t go downtown. It has become clear that the site proposed by the mayor of Utica is far too small . . . whatever downtown site for the college is finally proposed – and there will be several – it will be far too expensive to build. None of the downtown alternatives will be very desirable when compared to Marcy . . . where $8 million has already been spent, as the only feasible alternative, which is what the Marcy site was in the first place.

To accommodate the college and its anticipated growth, a suitable downtown site for the college would have to be more
than 40 acres, Donovan said, and that would take “millions of dollars off the tax rolls.”

The cost of a downtown campus

As the consultant’s analysis revealed, there was another potential difficulty with building a campus downtown: the cost. Pawlinga’s proposal had a price tag of $38 million, but the architectural firm told SUNY Trustees several alternatives for a downtown campus would cost at least $40 million and perhaps as much as $49 million. The downtown question was clearly becoming one of affordability, one SUNY official said, not feasibility. The Utica-Rome Student Association, the College of Technology’s student government group, staged a rally in opposition to Pawlinga’s proposed site. Joe Kelly worked for Donovan in the mid-1970s, and later became a reporter and columnist at the Observer-Dispatch and Utica Daily Press. In a 2006 interview, he said Donovan’s focus on the college was constant.

I remember how much he was involved with and how much attention he gave to [the college] . . . and how much at odds he was with Pawlinga. He was not very happy with the mayor. Donovan was very firm on that – he didn’t want it downtown. My recollection is that everyone was trying to find the right niche, in terms of the college; everybody seemed to have their own idea. But I think the Senator knew how important it was to get this right. You can’t stress enough his interest in the college and its future. It was on his mind constantly.

In September, the architectural firm gave the SUNY Board of Trustees a progress report containing six possible sites for the downtown campus, ranging in size from about 10 to more than 30 acres, and in price from $42 million to $47 million. All the alternatives were in the Liberty Street area favored by Pawlinga.
Options included using the Utica Memorial Auditorium for athletics, and the Hotel Utica for student housing. Chancellor Wharton said options other than downtown Utica were still under consideration. Pawlinga warned there was “an excellent chance of the area, and this city, losing the state College of Technology” but Kunsela disagreed, and said Pawlinga’s downtown plan was still very much an option. “The chancellor and the president of the board of trustees have assured us that the college will remain in the Mohawk Valley,” he said. “There is no indication, positive or negative, relative to the mayor’s proposal. If I were the mayor I would still be hopeful.”

The “$9 million picnic”

Led by the Utica-Rome Student Association, more than 200 students and other supports held an October rally and picnic on the proposed campus site. Student speakers urged SUNY to move forward with construction, pointing out that $9 million had already been spent on preliminary work at the site; a sign greeting the event’s participants read “Welcome to the $9 million picnic.” A few days later, Pawlinga wrote to the SUNY Trustees saying he would abide by whatever decision they made – as long as the college stayed in the area. He urged the Trustees to move quickly. “If they decide that all the city locations are bad,” the mayor told a reporter, “then I will fight to keep it in Oneida County. As long as they don’t move it out of the area.”

A week before Christmas, Carey backed away from his
enthusiastic support for a downtown campus. The reason: the price tag. “The architectural plans and costs on the downtown thing did not come in at a figure as attractive as we hoped it would,” he told Gannett News Service. “Given the capital budget of the university, it looked like a very, very expensive option.”\textsuperscript{152} The next day, SUNY Trustees approved a resolution authorizing the “planning and construction of the Marcy campus” in phases. The downtown option had been ruled out because it was “prohibitively expensive,” SUNY Trustees Chairman Donald Blinken said. Kunsela was “delighted,” and Donovan said he would sponsor the necessary legislation authorizing funding for construction. Building the campus in phases was a “logical” decision, Donovan said.\textsuperscript{153} Pawlinga joined in the tentative celebration. “We have gotten a decision; now let’s build a college. We must not sit back as if the battle was over;” the mayor warned. “We must keep the pressure on.” Kunsela agreed that the fight for a permanent campus was not yet won. “We have achieved it in part, but promises are one thing and a hole in the ground and bricks and mortar are another. It’s important that we continue to put pressure on the board of trustees.”\textsuperscript{154}

Donovan said student support for the Marcy campus, including a letter-writing campaign, had helped.\textsuperscript{155} But in later years, those involved in the process said it was Donovan himself who made all the difference. “Senator Donovan was an absolute stalwart in support of this institution; he was a key player,” Milt Smith recalled. “Jim, he was like a bulldog [on the issue of the Marcy campus].”\textsuperscript{156} According to Jerome Donovan, the reasons for his father’s stance on the issue were simple.

He didn’t want the area to be short-changed . . . he held fast to establishing the campus in Marcy, where there was room to grow. All the other measures, plans and locations had no room to grow. He also felt strongly that those alternatives failed to take into consideration long-term higher education and economic development needs of the Mohawk Valley.\textsuperscript{157}
Early days

A campus view along Stark Street.

An outside look at the campus pub and student center.

The front entrance of Building 2.
Student activities

Mills-era students gather on the Court Street campus.

New students, faculty and staff getting to know each other at a 1970s orientation program.
Inside 811 Court Street: a Student Association meeting.

The ski club gathered for their Genesis yearbook photo in 1982.
Men’s and women’s basketball programs were launched in 1979.

SUNY students used the New York Mills school district’s Beekman gym in the ’70s and early ’80s.
Former California governor Jerry Brown’s unsuccessful run for president in 1992 brought him to campus for a Kunsela Lecture Hall news conference and a “Perspectives on Politics” TV interview with faculty member Steven Schneider.
During a 1974 visit to Utica, Governor Wilson received a briefing from President Kunsela on plans for the Marcy campus.

An inside look at construction of the “C” wing of Kunsela Hall.
The Arts-Science-Technology Building begins to take shape in 1986. It was formally dedicated “James H. Donovan Hall” on May 18, 1991.
This 1991 photo, taken to illustrate construction progress on Adirondack Residence Hall (the first residential complex), shows the development of the campus up to that time.
The Campus Center’s lower lobby under construction. The building opened during the 1987-88 academic year.

Building the pedestrian bridge over Gridley Creek.
The Marcy campus shortly after completion of the Administration/Library-Classroom Building (Kunsela Hall).
Technology’s changing look

From the mills era to the development of the Marcy campus, applications of technology in classrooms, laboratories and offices have changed with the times.

ISAAC, the “Made in New York” robot and faculty member Atlas Hsie.
Permanent campus

Kunsela Hall

Donovan Hall
Past and present

From top:
Official college seal, UDC and SUNYIT logos, Wildcat first and second mascot logos.
Construction delayed – again

Supporters hoped 1980 would be the year construction would finally get underway. Kunsela said the phased construction was estimated at about $30 million, and that fiscal realities would likely result in a “no frills” campus, smaller than earlier envisioned. The likelihood of construction starting soon, Kunsela said, meant that the college would have to rethink its plans for the former Boston Store building.¹ But after a month of optimism, another setback: the executive committee of the SUNY Board of Trustees approved plans for the Marcy campus but delayed the start of construction. The entire SUNY system, Chancellor Wharton said, faced “a grave crisis” because of Gov. Carey’s proposed budget. With a possible $30 million cut in SUNY funding possible, Donovan said the trustees were acting to forestall criticism of moving ahead with the Marcy campus construction at the expense of other SUNY campuses across the state. “[E]ven though the two are not directly related…if they moved to build the first stage at Marcy, it might be counterproductive because the other college units might react adversely.”² Although the exact timing of construction was uncertain, Donovan said it was important for supporters to keep in mind that SUNY had approved the building of the Marcy campus.³ The SUNY Construction Fund unveiled plans for the campus, and supporters waited to see what state lawmakers would do with Carey’s proposed budget.

The college continued to develop. In April, officials announced formal approval for a new bachelor’s degree program, industrial engineering technology. It would accept its first students in fall 1980. Also in April, the college held an open house at the Potter School location to tout the new computer science program.⁴ The college’s sixth annual Commencement ceremony was held on May 25, with William A. Anders, vice president and
general manager of General Electric’s aircraft equipment division, delivering the main address at the Utica Memorial Auditorium.⁵

As the weeks passed, it became clear that construction would be delayed further. The legislature added money for SUNY to its version of the state budget, but Carey vetoed it. “With the governor’s veto we’re back to square one,” Donovan said. Still, Donovan and Kunsela expressed optimism; Carey supported the college, they said, and it was just a matter of time before construction would begin.⁶ Kunsela continued to look for additional temporary facilities, announcing two sites were under consideration for a plan to establish 50,000 square feet of laboratory space. The sites were the TARS shopping complex in Yorkville, and the Mill Square building at the corner of Court and State Streets in Utica; the college chose Mill Square a few months later.⁷ In December, Carey visited Utica for a town meeting. Five speakers, led by New York State Regent and Rome attorney Emlyn Griffith, urged Carey to act on the issue. Carey told reporters he wanted groundbreaking for the Marcy campus to occur in 1981.⁸
In January, the Governor asked Chancellor Wharton to move ahead with a plan for construction. Wharton promised prompt action, and Kunsela said Carey’s strong support for the Marcy campus was linked to plans for a technology park near the campus site. One option, Kunsela said, would be to set aside part of the campus property for future development.\textsuperscript{9} But even with positive signals coming from Albany, the campus issue was not yet resolved.

A few weeks later, a committee appointed by Utica Mayor Pawlinga proposed locating the college’s new administration building in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century main building of the Utica Psychiatric Center campus. “We think the Marcy thing is dead, and if we don’t do something quickly, we will lose the whole thing,” said committee chairman William Barry. Other officials expressed skepticism; Donovan called the proposal “totally unrealistic.”\textsuperscript{10} But three weeks later, SUNY Trustees Chairman Donald Blinken announced that the Psychiatric Center campus was one of five options under consideration. The others were: Marcy, downtown Utica, expansion of the Globe Mill campus, and co-location with Mohawk Valley Community College’s Utica campus.\textsuperscript{11}

**Two colleges or one? (part three)**

In March 1981, SUNY Chancellor Wharton unveiled a $33.8 million plan to locate the new college on an expanded MVCC campus in Utica; the plan called for the college’s graduate education programs to be offered in Rome. At a closed-door meeting with the area’s elected officials and community leaders, he encountered stiff opposition. Serving at the time as a member of his father’s Senate staff, Jerome Donovan was at the meeting.

All the area’s public officials, all the major players were there. Wharton was there to outline SUNY’s thinking about the viability of co-locating Upper Division with MVCC. But before he even started his presentation,
Senator Donovan got up and told him the community would accept nothing less than the original commitment to building the Marcy campus. My recollection was there no dissension. There was unanimity, and the Chancellor got the message. The Chancellor, said, if my recollection is correct, ‘We’re getting all kind of mixed signals – downtown, co-location, MVCC – what you’re telling me here is that you’re not a divided community.’ 12

Around the same time, Donovan recalled, the Senator met one-on-one with SUNY Trustees Chairman Blinken to set the record straight: “At that meeting, the Senator convinced Blinken that the political leadership in the area and educational leaders were united in their support for the Marcy campus, that millions have already been spent [to acquire property and begin development of the site] and that Blinken and the trustees needed to fulfill the promise that had been made to the area.” And in a few weeks, the Trustees effectively ruled out co-location with MVCC.13 “Whatever the merits of the plan, and there are many, if it’s not politically viable there’s no point in belaboring a dead horse, or at least a very ill one,” Blinken said. The focus shifted quickly to what kinds of academic programs would be offered on the new campus. Some community leaders advocated a “high technology college,” while others supported a broader mission. “They’re talking about two different things. Rome wants high technology (programs) and Jim Donovan wants liberal arts with some technology,” said one trustee.14

The trustees asked Chancellor Wharton to study a possible shift in the college’s mission that would reduce or eliminate programs in several areas, including criminal justice, human services, nursing, and vocational technical education. The possibility of a Marcy campus with fewer programs – and fewer students – was unpopular with some officials. “I am unalterably opposed to sacrificing programs for bricks and mortar,” said E. Porter Felt, chairman of the Utica Chamber of Commerce.”
Kunsela said the trustees had, perhaps, read too much into calls for a “high technology” college. “We’ve been extremely successful in our present mission – why change it now?” But Donovan urged community leaders to remain focused. “Let’s get the college in Marcy first and then worry about what kind of programs it is going to have. First, let’s get it established and then we’ll watch it grow. We’ve got to keep the focus on the Marcy campus.”

Marcy campus approved

In April 1981, the trustees acted. The Marcy campus was approved, but several programs were recommended to be “gradually withdrawn and transferred to other campuses,” leaving the college to concentrate on mostly technology-related disciplines. Fewer students would be enrolled at the new campus than the college was used to; enrollment would not “exceed 1,400 full-time equivalent students,” according to the resolution. Despite the recommendations on mission and enrollment, supporters of the Marcy campus declared victory. Senator Donovan said it was one of his “proudest efforts.”

The SUNY Board of Trustees took an action that concluded, on my part, a long and, at times, lonesome fight to locate the $50 million College of Technology at Marcy. We won. No co-location. No downtown campus. No merger. The Marcy campus is alive and will grow with the space age.

Oneida County Executive Sherwood Boehlert agreed, calling the trustees’ action a “thrill” and a number one economic development priority for the county.

“We’ve all pulled together in the same direction at the same time. We’ve had unity, something that’s been long overdue. A lot of people deserve a lot of credit for
this significant accomplishment, but the greatest credit is due the community at large which rallied together – business, labor, media, the men and women in every neighborhood. Special praise is due Senator Donovan, who was persistent, patient and productive. 17

Kunsela said the trustees’ action eliminating academic programs was “quite a disappointment,” but said the college had to move forward.

[Curriculum] is their decision to make; that’s what the law says. Until the decision is made, you can try to influence it. After it’s made, you go along with it . . . I don’t think this is the time to engage in academic battle. The priority has to be getting a permanent home for the college. 18

Area officials look on as Governor Hugh Carey makes it official, signing legislation to release funds for campus construction. Hundreds of spectators gathered for the ceremony in front of Utica’s State Office Building on July 23, 1981.
The college celebrated the decision, renaming the April 26 President’s Ball the “President’s Victory Ball.”

With growing anticipation of a bright future, the college celebrated its seventh annual Commencement at the Utica Memorial Auditorium on May 17; Emlyn I. Griffith, Rome attorney and member of the New York State Board of Regents, was the featured speaker. In June, the Senate approved a bill authorizing construction; in July, the Assembly followed suit. All that was needed was Governor Carey’s signature.

Right man, right place, right time

On the same day a bill-signing ceremony was announced, the college received word of another decision that would influence the institution’s future direction. Kunsela announced he would retire in 1982. “He has accepted it as his fate,” a reporter wrote, “to plan and build college buildings but never to actually move into them.”

Those who worked closely with him said Kunsela’s contributions to the developing college were unique. “He was the right man at the right place at the right time,” Milt Smith recalled.

He had a reputation of being a tiger, and it was deserved, but if you knew Bill closely, if you didn’t let him push you around, and you had established mutual respect – and that was possible, at least at my level – he was a pussycat on the inside. Very feeling man, compassionate man, concerned for others. He was a lot deeper in terms of his commitment and sense of mission – and that’s a word he used often – than a lot of people gave him credit for.

On July 23, 1981, a few days after Kunsela’s announcement, Governor Carey signed the bill releasing construction funds for the Marcy campus. Hundreds watched the outdoor ceremony in
front of downtown Utica’s State Office Building. Carey praised Utica Mayor (and fellow Democrat) Stephen Pawlinga, and called the legislation a “major milestone.”

We have come very far this year toward the realization of a dream begun in the mid 1960s. As a matter of fact, I daresay that more may have been accomplished in meeting the education and permanent building needs of the Upper Division College in less than 365 days than in the preceding 15 years. In signing this bill into law, I want to acknowledge the efforts of Senator Jim Donovan and Assemblyman Bill Sears. Their support of the College of Technology is longstanding. I also want to pay special recognition to . . . Assemblyman Richard Ruggiero.23

A formal groundbreaking ceremony was just a few months away.

With the campus issue resolved, attention turned to what kind of college would be the result. The trustees’ recommendation that several programs be transferred from the college was the subject of debate and discussion for months, on and off campus. James J. Countryman, vice president for academic affairs, said the college was waiting for SUNY officials in Albany to decide the fate of the nursing program,24 and Alumni Association President Jerome Donovan wrote Wharton to urge that nursing be preserved.25 Nursing received a reprieve of sorts; SUNY agreed to allow the college to admit new students in the fall of 1982, but insisted the program would be phased out in three years. The director of the nursing program, Ellen Coher, said SUNY’s decision was a “gross error in judgment.”26

In the middle of the ongoing debate, the college announced that the nursing program had been granted
initial accreditation by the National League for Nursing. “I view this as confirmation that the substance and quality of our nursing program meet the criteria established by the National League for Nursing,” Coher said. Founded in 1974, nursing’s record was remarkable: 789 bachelor’s degrees had been awarded to registered nurses, and the program was the only one of its kind – public upper division baccalaureate nursing – in the state.27

New campus – which programs?

For many in the community, the bright prospect of a new campus was darkened by the likelihood that some academic programs would be transferred to other institutions. Wharton said many at the college and in the community might want the so-called non-technical programs to remain at the college, but that wasn’t enough. “When we made the decision that re-directed the college back to its original mission, we did so after elected officials and concerned citizens made it clear to us the top priorities for the college were choosing a permanent site and giving it a strong engineering technology program,” Wharton said at a regional hearing in the college pub. “We are not saying the programs being transferred are not needed. They are something the community would like to have. There is no campus where there isn’t something else the community wants. But the issue is determining priorities.”28

Advocates, including students, faculty and area residents, urged SUNY to keep the targeted programs at the college.29 But Wharton was firm. “Technology was the original purpose of the college. We want to fulfill that purpose, which has been delayed.”30 Those opposing SUNY’s plan included the College Council, which passed a resolution supporting retention of the programs. David N. Hurd, College Council chairman, said SUNY “appear[ed] to be moving too quickly and without adequate consultation . . . I hope that the trustees and central staff will reconsider.”31 On January 27, 1982, SUNY Trustees approved a plan that reaffirmed the decision to phase out the programs and
create engineering and technology programs across the state so that residents of each region would have easy access to them.32

Hundreds attended the long-awaited ceremonial groundbreaking on October 30, 1981, on a portion of the site near Flanagan Road. Because of uncertain weather, a huge tent had been set up for the occasion. “It was a great event,” Jerome Donovan recalled. “It was a confirmation that Dad’s convictions were [going to be made] manifest. It was an exciting time, to see the promise fulfilled... that there was going to be a brand-new state-of-the-art campus built there on the hill.”33

“The question was not whether there should be a college but how much we could afford to invest in it,” SUNY Trustees Chairman Blinken told those at the event. “I predict that in the long run the State University Board of Trustees will consider this one of our proudest and most successful achievements.”34 Others taking part in the ceremony were; E. Porter Felt, representing the Marcy, Rome and Utica chambers of commerce; area

*Image description:
Jerome Donovan ’75, first Alumni Association president, takes a turn at the October 1981 campus groundbreaking. Others pictured include: President Kunsela and Governor Carey, far left; State Senator Donovan, immediate right of Jerome Donovan; and Oneida County Executive Boehlert, far right.
assemblymen William R. Sears and Richard S. Ruggiero; Senator Donovan; and Kunsela. Governor Carey delivered the main address, and turned the first shovelful of earth. The Utica-Rome Student Association sponsored a reception at the Old Mayfair Restaurant near the site of the planned campus.

Once the formal ceremony was over, construction began in earnest. In November, crews were removing trees, moving earth and continuing other work on the site. The preliminary work, according to one estimate, would take about a year.\textsuperscript{35} In early 1982, the state revised its target for completing the first building. The new completion date, Kunsela said, would be June 1, 1985.\textsuperscript{36}

A new president

With the campus now under construction, the summer of 1982 saw a leadership transition that would shape the institution over its next two decades. Kunsela was succeeded by Peter J. Cayan, who had been president of North Country Community College in Saranac Lake, N.Y., for six years. The first 13 years of his academic career had been spent at SUNY Delhi, where he was a member of the faculty and later dean in the school of business management; Kunsela was president of SUNY Delhi for most of Cayan’s time there. “Bill was always excited when he talked about this college,” Cayan said later. “That was a very encouraging thing when I looked at coming here. I think Bill’s enthusiasm helped the college.”\textsuperscript{37}

The SUNY Board of Trustees confirmed Cayan’s appointment as president on May 26, 1982, a few days after Kunsela
presided over his last College of Technology Commencement. David N. Hurd, chairman of the College Council, delivered the main address at the May 23 ceremony held at the Utica Memorial Auditorium.

Kunsela’s retirement took effect August 1. The two presidents faced different challenges and had contrasting styles, according to Milt Smith.

[Cayan] was a very different man, in many ways. He was more appropriate to the continuation of the college than Bill might have been [just as] Bill was more appropriate to the establishment of the college than Peter might have been. Peter was a charming guy, different from Bill from the get-go. Bill was . . . rough and ready. Peter was gracious, cut an impeccable figure, carried himself well. He was more of the classic image of a college president.38

Cayan was 52, and faced the daunting task of dealing with a college in transition. “It’s a delicate situation,” he said, referring to the planned deactivation of some programs. “It’s a very emotional issue . . . we as a college have a mission, as set by the chancellor and the . . . board of trustees. I am charged with carrying out that mission. You don’t defy the chancellor and the board. I am not unconcerned about the effect this will have on the faculty and the community. I am not insensitive.”39

Advocates for the nursing program met with success; in September, the trustees approved a plan to keep the program at the college. “It’s a victory for all of us,” Senator Donovan said.40 The future for the other programs the trustees had identified was less certain. Students staged a protest at the college in support of criminal justice and human service programs,41 but SUNY was unmoved. Utica College made plans to expand its criminal justice program, absorbing some members of the College of
Technology faculty.42

A year after the ceremonial groundbreaking, campus construction was ahead of schedule. By November 1982, the skeleton of the first building was taking shape; roads and parking lots had been paved. Contractors said the project would likely be completed well in advance of the college’s planned 1985 fall semester opening.43 The campus was evolving in other ways as well; Jim Klein had succeeded Paul Piotrowski as men’s basketball coach in 1981, and Klein was hired as coordinator of athletics and recreation to succeed Lee Ellis in 1982. In 1983, the college joined the Eastern College Athletic Conference.44

With the new campus under construction, and a new president preparing for the eventual move to Marcy, many at the college looked forward to the next few years with a sense of anticipation. Cayan set the tone. “It’s an exciting experience to design a campus from the ground up on raw land, and in the Marcy setting we’re going to get a result that I know will be aesthetically satisfying.” And, although early plans had outlined a larger campus with room to grow, SUNY’s direction meant a carefully planned downsizing of enrollment in preparation for the move. Cayan said stricter admission policies would help prepare the college for its enrollment target on the Marcy campus: 1,200 full-time and 1,000 part-time students. But that didn’t rule out future growth. “The targeted enrollment doesn’t

The Administration-Library-Classroom Building (Kunsela Hall) rises on the Marcy campus property.
lock us in for all time,” Cayan said, “but there’s just so much money SUNY has to work with at the moment. There’s certainly plenty of room for expansion at Marcy, and if we don’t get it in our time, then maybe later.”

A moving experience

Moving books, computers, equipment, furniture and people from the old campus to the new one would be no easy task. Plans were made to make the move over a two-year period; the first to go would be the library, most administrative offices, computing center and the computer and informational sciences center, among others. Summer 1985 was the planned timeframe for the initial move. “We’ll operate in a split-campus mode for two years,” said Robert Leidig, vice president for administration, “and in the summer of 1987, we’ll move the remainder of the campus.” Congressman Don Fuqua, Chairman of the House Committee on Science and Technology, was the featured speaker Commencement on May 20 at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. Just a few weeks later – mid-summer 1984 – construction of the huge (140,000 square feet) Administration-Library-Classroom Building was eight months ahead of schedule.

Also in 1984, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmed the college’s institutional accreditation for a period of 10 years, and new athletic offerings included men’s and women’s tennis and golf; men’s cross country and soccer; and women’s basketball. John Zogby, adjunct faculty member, started the polling and market research firm that became Zogby International.

By mid-June 1985, the transition was underway, “involving 230 people, 119,000 books and hundreds of pieces of equipment . . . as the College of Technology begins its move into the Marcy campus,” as a reporter described it. “Classes are scheduled to be held in the new building beginning in the fall . . . and it will take most of the summer to move in and get everything set up . . . [t]he college is scheduled to operate half in Utica
and half in Marcy for three years before the entire program is moved to Marcy.”

A month later, significant progress had been made. “The college’s administration, library and computer center are now in the newly erected administration-library-classroom building...the first step of turning the Marcy campus into a functional entity.” College officials announced plans to shuttle students from the Marcy campus to the Globe Mill building at 811 Court Street, to Mill Square at Court and State streets, and to Potter Center on Whitesboro Street. On the Marcy campus, a second building under construction would house maintenance, mailing and garage facilities (the “service center” was completed in October 1985); groundbreaking for the campus’s third building – “the health, physical education and recreation facility” – would take place in the months ahead. The plan was for all classes to be offered on the Marcy campus starting in the fall of 1988, when “the second academic building is completed.”

With the formal dedication of the new campus still several weeks away, Cayan and the president and publisher of the Observer-Dispatch and Utica Daily Press announced funding for a fine arts gallery on the building’s first floor. The $50,000 Gannett Foundation grant announced in September would furnish and equip a Gannett Gallery in a space of 1,000 square feet near the building’s main entrance. Since the college had earlier established the Mill Gallery in the 811 Court Street building (its first show, in 1983, was an exhibition from the Smithsonian), the new gallery was seen as a natural expansion of an important part of campus culture. The new gallery would open with the formal dedication of the campus in November. The college’s first significant connection with NASA’s space program was established in 1985 when official College of Technology banner and flags were included in the Official Flight Kit aboard Space Shuttle “Discovery” on STS mission 51-D, April 12-19. NASA astronauts and officials would later visit the campus, speaking to students at a variety of events.
The campus dedication

Awaited for so long by so many, the dedication of the new campus would be no simple affair. A week’s worth of events was planned. The official schedule included a press conference in the Administration-Library-Classroom (ALC) Building kicking off dedication week with the reading of proclamations; a two-day telecommunications conference (“for top-level managers and administrators from business and education”) at Utica’s Sheraton Inn and Conference Center “where speakers and panel members will discuss ‘Acquiring a Communications System;’” the dedication of the Gannett Art Gallery, the opening of its first juried show, and an awards ceremony; performances by SUNY Jazz and the SUNY College at Purchase Woodwind ensemble; and, on Friday, November 8, the campus dedication ceremony and laying of the ALC cornerstone.

New York Governor Mario M. Cuomo was the featured speaker at the dedication ceremony. Arriving on campus by helicopter,
Cuomo told the audience the new campus was a demonstration of New York’s commitment to excellence in public higher education. “This new campus is a sign of our optimism, of our confidence in all that we can achieve together…on behalf of all New Yorkers, I dedicate it to excellence, to optimism, to the future of the thousands of students who will come here to learn, to search, to serve.”56 In the middle of the ceremony, the crowd responded with a standing ovation to the announcement that the ALC building would eventually be named William R. Kunsela Hall in honor of the former president.57

Some of the officials taking part in the dedication reflected on the 20-year struggle from the 1966 founding of the college to the realization of a new, permanent campus; among them SUNY Board of Trustees Chairman Donald Blinken: “[W]hat really made the difference was the overwhelming desire on the part of the greater Utica-Rome, Oneida County community to have a first-class, modern facility that could effectively serve not only this region, but all the people of New York State.”58 And, as Donovan biographer Ed Byrne later wrote, the campus was both a significant victory and a career milestone for the Senator:

His years in office were marked by continuing struggles not just over where the college would be built, but whether it should be built at all. At the forefront of that struggle was Senator Donovan, who never wavered in his belief that it should be built in the Town of Marcy . . . Donovan was unwavering, as he was throughout his political career, when he believed he was right. 59

John Zogby, who had seen the early development of the college first-hand as a student and adjunct faculty member while building a reputation as a keen political observer, said Donovan’s leadership was critical in overcoming many obstacles to the college’s establishment. In a 2006 interview, Zogby recalled some of the big issues that contributed to the on-again, off-again
character of the institution’s first two decades:

The early history of the college straddled the Rockefeller era and the post-Rockefeller era. Not only were there a variety of state crises, but you had an educational boom. The Rockefeller era brought the notion of a State University of New York into high gear, with many campuses building and burgeoning. It was in that atmosphere that the college was established. The problem was that the area’s lack of political clout at the time, combined with the state’s other crises, and with the population projections – which were not rosy at all, to put it all mildly – resulted in the college becoming a kind of orphan, shuffled aside. In that context, on the macro level the timing could not have been worse.60

What made the difference, Zogby said, was the tenacity of several committed individuals:

Local leadership stuck with it . . . having Jim Donovan climb the ladder of leadership – and he was clearly there – combined with Richard Ruggiero representing the area in the Assembly, in the majority party . . . you have the benefit of a committee chair who was a genuine power in Albany, and two governors – Carey and Cuomo – who both realized the importance of Upstate politically.

With the formal dedication of the campus past, the process of moving people, things and activities to the permanent campus continued. It was a transition that continued for much of the rest of the decade.
Technology and the new campus

During the 1984-85 academic year, the college established a Telecommunications Institute through a partnership with NYNEX Business Information Systems. Cayan hailed it as a “showpiece of cooperation between industry and education.”

The institute is designed to provide an educational training environment in the telecommunications field, utilizing the latest state-of-the-art equipment in voice-data communication and integration. The College of Technology will provide the basic facilities and faculty for the institute, while NYNEX provides equipment (including its revolutionary PBX switching equipment), consultative services, and an executive-on-loan program to ensure continued updating of the institute’s offerings.

The Telecommunications Institute’s early work was a “union of the College’s programs in business/public management, engineering technology, and computer science with the resources of NYNEX.” Research projects included “messaging, electronic mailboxing, and enhancement of line capabilities,” as well as “delivering education to remote sites, putting together a state-wide telecommunications training program for SUNY faculty, and working with the State Education Department to transmit techniques to public schools in response to the Regents Action Plan.” An early director of the Institute, James Walsh, also taught telecommunications policy at the college as an adjunct; at the same time, he was serving as president of the Syracuse City Council. In 1988, he was elected to Congress.

Technology was emphasized throughout the institution, as the college began to equip the new campus. Main academic computing equipment for the campus was supplied by Gould, Inc., in 1984-85. It included

. . . two Model 32/6005 computers – one with a six megabyte memory and the other with a four megabyte
memory . . . the equipment is designed to serve the bulk of academic computing needs on campus. With this increased capacity, students’ computing needs will be well served. [T]he College maintains over 325 terminals primarily for student use. As a result, the College has the lowest number of students per terminal ratio of any unit within the State University. 63

In 1986, the $8.9 million Health-Physical Education-Recreation Building (later known as the Campus Center) and the $12.7 million Arts-Sciences-Technology Building began to take shape. Congressman Sherwood L. Boehlert was the featured speaker at Commencement, held at the Utica Memorial Auditorium, on May 17, 1986.

An administrative innovation with long-lasting benefits, the Management Assistance Center (MAC) was established in 1987 to eliminate duplication of resources and confusion for those seeking business and economic assistance. Founded and developed by Albert B. “Al” Mario, MAC would become “an umbrella agency provid[ing] professional services to the area business community…the Advanced Management Program, Small Business Institute, Small Business Development Center, and the Entrepreneurial Education Resource Center…and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)” were some of its key components. By the time it moved from its temporary headquarters in the Mill Square complex to Kunsela Hall in 1990-91, MAC have served more than 1,200 clients.64 Mario was an influential and active contributor to the college’s growth in a number of areas.

Born in Utica and a graduate of Proctor High School, he was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War.
His professional experience ranged from Utica’s Brunner Manufacturing Co., to management trainer with the Rome Air Development Center (RADC). His academic career began at Utica College, where his role as an adjunct teaching courses in economics and finance spanned 20 years. After a successful career at Rome Air Development Center, he retired from the position of Deputy Director of the Center’s Procurement Division and accepted an assistant professor position at [SUNY College of Technology]; he taught finance and business management courses. In addition, he founded and developed the school’s Management Assistance Center...65

He was also fondly remembered by one faculty member as “a fixture at all the Commencements, trying to keep order. Students would smuggle in beach balls and stuff and he would confiscate them.”66

On October 30, 1987, the campus was again the site of a dedication ceremony as the ALC was formally named “William R. Kunsela Hall.” The 70-year-old Kunsela returned from his retirement home in Sarasota, Fla., for the occasion. “I am extremely grateful for the honor,” Kunsela told the crowd. “You can’t think of a nicer thing to happen at the end of a professional career.” As he did at the ceremonial campus groundbreaking in 1981, College Council Chairman David N. Hurd served as master of ceremonies. Speakers at the Kunsela Hall dedication included: Assemblyman Ralph J. Eannace, Jr., College Foundation Chairman Victor T. Ehre, SUNY Trustee Edward V. Mele, State Regent Emlyn I. Griffith, Oneida County Executive John D. Plumley, and Senator Donovan. The dedication concluded with the unveiling of a plaque in the Kunsela Hall entranceway.67
“SUNY Institute of Technology”

As the first campus building received a new name, the name of the college itself was under review. In 1987, when it became clear that SUNY’s agriculture and technical colleges would all change their names to “College of Technology,” many on campus were concerned about the potential impact. As an ad hoc committee report put it,

[T]he former Ag and Techs are lower division schools with primarily associate degree programs while the College of Technology is an upper division and graduate College offering baccalaureate and masters degrees . . . Any confusion as to the level and type of the College’s programs puts its effort to recruit potential students in serious jeopardy. In fact, since the former Ag and Techs changed their names, the faculty and staff of the College of Technology have experienced numerous and repeated occasions where it was assumed that the College of Technology was a lower division school.

The committee concluded that the College of Technology should change its name, and considered the alternatives. “[T]he possibilities are very limited in that the various alternatives lead to the type of confusion we are attempting to avoid with respect to Ag and Techs or they do not adequately define our mission.” After examining the names and academic offerings of more than 30 similar institutions across the country, a committee member reported that the most common name for colleges similar to the College of Technology was “Institute of Technology.” Such institutions typically offered bachelor’s degrees in the engineering technologies, computer science, business, the applied sciences (such as nursing) and some arts and science programs; graduate degrees at these institutions tended to be in the engineering technologies, computer science and business. “We are forced to the conclusion,” the committee wrote,
\... that the name SUNY Institute of Technology best distinguishes us from other SUNY schools and simultaneously identifies us with those schools in the United States whose mission is close to our own. If the principle role of an institutional name is to succinctly describe its nature and distinguish it from essentially different organizations, SUNY Institute of Technology is the compelling choice for the College name in the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{69}

After a wide-ranging discussion across the campus lasting more than a year, Cayan wrote Acting Chancellor Jerome B. Komisar in June 1988 to formally request the name change. Both the College Council and the Alumni Association, Cayan pointed out, supported the proposal. Final approval from SUNY came in April 1989, when the Board of Trustees passed a resolution recognizing the College of Technology would be known as “SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome.”

With the opening of the Campus Center in the 1987-88 academic year, the college had its own athletic facilities – ending the use of the New York Mills Junior-Senior High School’s Beekman gym. The Wildcat men’s basketball team played the first game on its permanent home court in the Campus Center. Additional athletic offerings included women’s volleyball and softball.\textsuperscript{70} The move out of the Globe Mill, Mill Square and Potter Center buildings would continue until the entire campus was relocated to Marcy, which planners hoped would occur by fall 1988.

On May 21, 1988, graduates and their families celebrated at Commencement. The Utica Memorial Auditorium was again the site for the occasion, and \textit{New York Times} photographer Dith Pran – whose harrowing experiences in Cambodia were made famous in the film \textit{The Killing Fields} – delivered the main address.
Donovan’s legacy

As the new campus continued to grow, Senator Donovan supported its development through funding for special projects:

- 1988 – $800,000 to install a satellite uplink and support the telecommunications program
- 1989-90 – $800,000 for telecommunications, TWIST, gifted and talented students, and CAD/CAM for teachers programs

On May 18, 1991, in recognition of the unique role he had played in the establishment and development of the college, Donovan was honored posthumously with the dedication of the Arts/Science/Technology Building as “James H. Donovan Hall.” He had succumbed to cancer in August 1990 at age 66. At the ceremony, a commemorative plaque and a portrait were unveiled. Donovan’s family presented the Foundation with a check for $25,000, “a thousand dollars for each year of the Senator’s 25 years of service to his district and the senate.” The donation was added to the James H. Donovan Scholarship Fund, started in 1986 by his family and friends to offer merit scholarships for students attending the college from Donovan’s senate district. According to Donovan’s staff member and biographer Ed Byrne, the college was a lasting legacy the Senator had worked tirelessly to achieve.

In all of his 25 years in the Senate, the $55 million campus, now called the Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome, was probably his greatest victory. He had to overcome the most obstacles, and more importantly, the finished product reached his goal of enabling local students to get four-year-degrees at home.

The Senator remained committed to the college throughout his career and, according to Jerome Donovan, would have been “encouraged” by the institution’s continuing development.
He recognized, and he was fascinated with the evolving technology. He took a keen interest in the use of technology in the classrooms – computers in laboratories and things of that nature – he was fascinated with the cutting edge of technology and the promise it held. He put the time and energy into [the college] because he was constantly confronted with . . . not surrendering his judgment to the opinions of others, those who had less than a promising vision of the Mohawk Valley’s future. He always looked to the long term. Time is the great equalizer of truth. Looking at the landscape now, the Senator was proven correct.

The passing of Senator Donovan came as the college was transitioning from its “Mills Era.” May Commencement in 1989, for example, honored the last class from the “factory campus,” as one graduate put it. Some 880 students were eligible to take part in the ceremony at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. Former SUNY Chancellor Wharton was the featured speaker on May 20, and the post-event reception was held for the first time on the new campus. The new decade would see the campus develop in many ways.

By the 1989-1990 academic year, the college had awarded more than 7,500 degrees since the first Commencement in 1975. More than 1,250 full-time and 900 part-time students were enrolled in the College of Technology’s degree programs: accounting, business/public management, computer/information science, computer information systems, computer technology, electrical engineering technology, finance, general studies, health services management, industrial engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology, medical record administration, nursing, photonics, psychology, science, sociology, and telecommunications. Master’s degree programs were offered in business management, computer/information science, and nursing administration. (An additional bachelor’s degree program, technical
communication, was approved in 1990 and was first offered in the 1991 fall semester.\textsuperscript{77})

The Arts/Science/Technology Building had formally opened in the fall 1989 semester, and the physical campus continued to take shape throughout the year. Landscaping and work on the campus athletic fields was completed; this project included a nature trail nearly a mile long.\textsuperscript{78} Lt. Gov. Stan Lundine was the featured speaker at Commencement, at the Utica Memorial Auditorium, on May 12.

Also during the 1989-90 academic year, the first annual IEEE Mohawk Valley Technology Conference, a collaboration of Rome Laboratory, Photonics Development Corporation, IEEE, and the college, was held. Athletics cleared some important hurdles; in 1990 the college was accepted as the 323\textsuperscript{rd} member of NCAA Division III, and work was completed on soccer, baseball, softball and recreation fields.\textsuperscript{79}
Living on campus

Throughout 1990, the first residential complex was under construction and the campus was preparing for its first resident students; the planning by student affairs and other offices began a year before the scheduled arrival of the first group of students. On September 1, 1991, the first of 350 students moved into the new complex (later named Adirondack Residence Hall) which consisted of 25 townhouse-style buildings, each building comprising four apartments. The arrival of residential students was another milestone for the new campus, Cayan said in his Annual Report to the Chancellor, especially significant because of its “all-commuter” student population during its first two decades.

The Residence Halls mark the final stage in the transition of the college into a fully matured institution. The college has come to be a full-service residential campus providing a traditional college experience for students with both on- and off-campus housing options and lifestyles.  

Residence Hall construction.
Turning 25

In 1991, SUNY Institute of Technology marked the 25th anniversary of its founding with a number of observances. The Donovan Hall dedication on May 18 was the first such event that year. Alumni Weekend’s theme in June was “Treasuring the Silver ’91,” and a community open house brought more than 1,000 people to the campus on October 5. The day after, the college held its first Convocation October 6. In addition to celebrating the 25th anniversary year, the Sunday afternoon ceremony in Kunsela Lecture Hall provided a suitable occasion for the awarding of an honorary degree, doctor of humane letters, to the renowned cellist and music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich. The ceremony began with a formal academic procession, and included a performance by a choral group from SUNY Potsdam’s Crane School of Music; George Pattastravrou, director of the Syracuse University School of Music, delivered the main address. Because of Kunsela Lecture Hall’s limited seating capacity, the ceremony was transmitted via closed-circuit television to the residence halls and to two Kunsela Hall classrooms.

The year-long anniversary celebration concluded with an International Ballet Festival and Symposium on campus, followed by a college-sponsored Utica Symphony Orchestra concert at the Stanley Performing Arts Center. Artists from the First International Glasnost Ballet Freedom Tour performed works intended to celebrate the “rise of democracy in Russia and Eastern Europe.”

After the silver anniversary celebration, the early 1990s saw continued growth across campus. In 1992, the School of Nursing received a grant to develop and implement a Master of Science in Nursing with a Major in Adult Nurse Practitioner. On May 16, Commencement at the Utica Memorial Auditorium honored the Class of 1992; Dolores Wharton, founder and president of the Fund for Corporate Initiatives, Inc., was the featured speaker. In 1993, a distance learning program was established, and eight
Russian students were enrolled into the Master of Science in Computer Science program. Ronald Sarner, professor of computer science, was promoted to the rank of distinguished service professor, SUNY’s highest faculty rank. State Senator Thomas W. Libous, Class of 1975, became the first alumnus to address graduates at Commencement.

In 1992-93, the college’s intercollegiate sports program was accepted by the SUNY Athletic Conference, and women’s soccer and men’s baseball were added. The women’s basketball team became the first college team to advance to SUNYAC postseason play. In 1994, Kevin Grimmer (who had joined the college in 1984 as an assistant basketball coach and intramural director) took over as head coach of the men’s basketball team. Kevin Edick, who joined the staff as men’s soccer coach in 1988, assumed coaching duties for the women’s basketball team.

Brown and gold, blue and gray

Twenty years had passed since the college adopted its official colors – brown and gold – and logo. In 1994, Cayan created a Task Force on Institutional Symbols to examine colors, logo, seal and mascot “to see if changes need to be made.” After an extensive exploration of the issues, and input from students, alumni and other constituencies, new school colors – blue and gray – were adopted. The college’s “UDC” logo, seal and Wildcat mascot were retained.7

Academic offerings continued to evolve with the growth of the campus. By the 1995-96 academic year, undergraduates could choose from

accounting, business/public management, civil technology, computer engineering technology, computer and information science, computer information systems, electrical engineering technology, finance, general studies, health information management, health services management, industrial engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology, nursing, photonics, pre-law
option, professional and technical communication, psychology, sociology, telecommunications.8

Academic minors included anthropology; computer/information science; computer information systems; economics; health services management; manufacturing/quality assurance technology; mathematics; physics; professional and technical communication; science, technology, and society; and sociology. Available graduate programs were: adult nurse practitioner, advanced technology, business management, computer and information science, nursing administration, telecommunications.9 New programs would soon follow: graduate degrees in telecommunications and accountancy, and a bachelor of science in applied mathematics.

Groundbreaking for a second residence hall complex took place on September 13, with Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito and other officials joining Cayan at the ceremony. The second complex would accommodate 184 students; the design would be “consistent with existing residence halls located on the western
end of the campus and feature single- and double-occupancy apartment-like living quarters.\textsuperscript{10}

Seven Russian students, four of whom were the first global students to defend their graduate theses over the Internet, were awarded master’s degrees at the spring 1995 Commencement on May 13. The main address was delivered by Herbert L. Rosedale, president of the American Family Foundation.

**Online and uplinked**

For many Americans, the 1990s was the “Internet Decade.” Early uses of computer technology on campus were explored by the computer science faculty well before the wider world had ever heard of the Internet or the World Wide Web. One of these was “DogNet,” a project that was, in the beginning, “. . . a bunch of machines running some version of Unix – the campus had been using a Unix operating system since 1978, for central computing – and in a sense, it was before its time: having a batch of personal computers hooked together, talking to each other,” Ron Sarner, distinguished service professor of computer science, said in a 2006 interview. “DogNet was Scott’s [Spetka].” Each computer had a “dog” name.” The computer science faculty, Sarner said, also were “doing distributed email very early on, on and off campus.”\textsuperscript{11}

In 1993, the first version of Mosaic, the first popular Web browser, was launched.\textsuperscript{12} As awareness of the Internet and the Web grew, the college (like many other similar institutions) realized its value as a means of communicating to the general public, and specific groups – especially prospective students. DogNet by this time was an Internet presence, even before the college had an “official” website. “DogNet was up and running, and people were going to DogNet looking for general information about the college,” Daniel Schabert, director of libraries and instructional resources, recalled. “But of course DogNet just had information about computer science programs.”\textsuperscript{13}
Daniel J. Murphy, who had joined the faculty in September 1991 as an assistant professor of technical communication, defended his doctoral dissertation in June 1994, and “the word ‘Web’ never came up.” But in the months that followed, that changed.

I think the only person [on campus] who had Mosaic up and running was Scott Spetka. That’s when early Web sites started coming about, and we as a campus realized we needed some sort of presence. I worked with a library employee,\textsuperscript{14} and with her technical expertise and my technical communication design background we came up with the college’s first Web site. She took an image from a college catalog, and the background color was dark blue. There were some links, but it was pretty primitive. The college determined that the site would have the URL ‘www.sunyit.edu,’ and that was in early 1995.\textsuperscript{15}

A campus-wide committee was created in 1997 to look at the issue. In 1998, the college’s first official, comprehensive website was launched. Schabert, who served on the committee, said it was a limited success, but a step in the right direction. “We did what we could do, and it got us on the map.” As the online world quickly evolved, the campus moved to redesign the site. In 2000, Schabert chaired a Web Committee; the group came up with a new website which was launched in time for the start of the fall 2000 semester.

Still teaching as an adjunct in the early 1990s, John Zogby was increasingly sought after by national and, eventually, international media outlets as the decade wore on. Most of his frequent appearances on network and cable TV news programs originated from the Instructional Resources studio on the ground floor of Kunsela Hall, thanks to the Donovan-funded satellite uplink established a few years previous. Other public officials made use of the uplink as well, and over time it brought a number of candidates for office and other well-known public figures to campus.
Library’s growing pains

With the addition of new programs and growth in enrollment, the campus was ready to expand in a new direction. More than a decade had passed since the dedication of the first building, which of necessity had contained everything the campus of the late 1980s had to offer – including the library.

According to Schabert, limited library space had been identified by the SUNY Construction Fund as an issue to be dealt with even as the new campus was being planned. Cayan and others on campus knew the college’s continuing evolution and growth would result in a greater need for space and additional services, both limited by the library’s location in a wing of Kunsela Hall. Campus planners debated the merits of an addition to the library wing versus a new, separate building; planning for a new library progressed. “In 1991, it was very evident that we didn’t have enough room for staff to work, for study space for students, for [academic] journals and the necessary expansion of the entire collection,” Schabert said. “You had no proper traffic flow for library users and staff…the space was really not very good, and wasn’t organized well.” Library staff took some temporary measures to ease the storage situation, and a campus-wide committee was formed in 1994 to look at the library’s long-term issues.

The President wanted a separate building, and it was looked at in terms of a multi-use ‘library and communications building.’ Plans at the time included University Police, the Learning Center, and a 24-hour computer lab/study room, as possible tenants along with the library itself, of course. The SUNY Construction Fund wanted us to add on to the existing library wing [as a less expensive alternative to constructing a new building]. Cayan said ‘no’ to that. Meanwhile, we were running out of space. So Cayan agreed to consider adding on to the existing library wing. The Construction Fund came back with a
$14 million budget for the project, and the architects came in to look at the possibilities. They did a study, and came back with four possible designs for expanding the library (wing). None of them were acceptable to the college.\(^{16}\)

In addition, Schabert said, all of the options for expanding the existing wing were almost as expensive as a new building, so in 1997 the Construction Fund agreed that the campus could build a new building as long as it stayed within the budget for renovating and expanding the old wing. Two possible sites were considered, one near Kunsela Hall and another one across the ravine, near the Campus Center.

Cayan and Governor George Pataki, flanked by many of the area’s public officials and SUNY representatives, gathered on the campus near Kunsela Hall on August 24, 1998, for a ceremonial groundbreaking. The new building would be more than double the size of the old library, and would combine the best new technology with traditional library resources. With a $14 million budget for the project coming from the state’s five-year capital plan, construction would begin by the end of summer 1999. Occupancy of the new library was expected by spring

\(\text{The new library under construction.}\)
2001. Among the building’s planned features were: more individual and group study areas; better online access; and a “fully wired bibliographic instruction room.”

The year ended with another first. The December ceremony for graduates that had started as a reception had grown; 1998 was the first year it was organized as a formal commencement with regalia, a procession, and all the other ceremonial elements previously associated only with the May event. The manager of the Mars Exploration Program office at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Donna Shirley, was the featured speaker. December Commencement arrived at a time when the college and its future direction were being publicly debated.

Change in mission proposed

For years, the college had pursued a change in its mission that would allow the admission of freshmen into certain programs. Permission to add four-year undergraduate programs was sought from SUNY – unsuccessfully – in a Mission Review document submitted in 1998. “We . . . wish to admit freshmen in select programs to enlarge our applicant pool and to compete for talented students who are recruited directly from high school,” the Mission Review’s “Campus Self-Description” stated. The request cited the increased number of options available to transfer students from four-year institutions, and the continuing decline in the number of transfer-only colleges nationwide; the college was one of only seven such institutions at the time.

Officials at MVCC opposed the proposed change. “This doesn’t make sense,” MVCC President Dr. Michael I. Schafer told the Observer-Dispatch. “We should be building a stronger relationship. We should be working together daily and concentrating on making a smooth transition for the students as – as if it were one institution from the students’ point of view.” The chairman of MVCC’s Board of Trustees, N. Joseph Yagey, said there was no need for the change. “MVCC is providing the curriculum needed . . . if a need was there, that would be different.”
As the news of the college’s proposed mission change became public, Herkimer County Community College President Ronald Williams and MVCC President Schafer met with Cayan to discuss how the three institutions might better cooperate and collaborate to “improve the region’s economic climate through the combined efforts of the three institutions, and improve [their] efficiency and effectiveness.”\textsuperscript{22} An initial meeting in December 1998 led to broader talks among the three presidents and other administrators, and to a proposal for a “SUNY Mohawk Valley Confederation.” The proposed entity would provide a framework for the three institutions to work more closely together and share resources in a variety of areas, including the development of joint programs, institutional marketing, and coordination of training for area workers.

The discussions took place over a period of several months, and included a concept called “Leatherstocking University.” This “new type of public higher education structure . . . would not only benefit all three campuses, but [would] also greatly expand the choices for graduating students in the region [through] a collaboration that appears as ‘seamless’ as possible to students and area residents. . . .”\textsuperscript{23} Although the three institutions continued to explore ways of improving their collaborative efforts, “Leatherstocking University” as such did not come to pass. And for the time being, the mission remained unchanged. The issue continued to be discussed on campus, and gathered momentum in the last years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
New century, new era

The “new millennium” consumed the popular culture for months before and after the arrival of the year 2000. In many ways for the college, the new century and a new era began with the announcement in 2001 that the institution founded as Upper Division College was about to launch four-year programs.

Governor George E. Pataki and SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King came to campus on March 7 to make the formal announcement in Café Kunsela, which was crowded with elected officials, representatives of MVCC, HCCC, other community leaders, and media representatives. Pataki told the gathering the college would “[expand] from a two-year college to a four-year college . . . promoting high technology job growth and economic development in the Mohawk Valley. The transition . . . represents the first-time in SUNY’s 53-year history that the Mohawk Valley will have a four-year college.” Mayor Joseph A. Griffo, SUNYIT President Peter J. Cayan, and SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King applauded his leadership.

Café Kunsela, March 7, 2001: Rome Mayor Joseph A. Griffo, SUNYIT President Peter J. Cayan and SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King applaud as Gov. George E. Pataki announces the change in mission allowing SUNYIT to offer four-year programs.
Valley will be home to a four-year State University [campus]. This expansion will enhance SUNY’s efforts to promote high-tech job growth and economic development here in the Mohawk Valley and across the State.”

King said the college, Mohawk Valley Community College, and Herkimer County Community College would continue to work together, building on the “quality and variety of academic programs offered at the Institute of Technology and the region’s two community colleges. The addition of select four-year programs at the Institute of Technology will serve to broaden these opportunities for the Mohawk Valley, even as the three institutions and other University campuses work together to offer distinct and complementary degree programs.” Formal approvals from both SUNY and the State Education Department came months after the March 2001 announcement.

The Governor’s visit to campus in March 2001 came as construction of the new library got underway, almost three years to the day after his participation in the 1998 ceremonial groundbreaking. The campus, officials at SUNY, and the general public were able to watch the library rise through a webcam mounted on the roof of Kunsela Hall; the camera offered real-time video images and archival photos of the ongoing construction project.

At Commencement on May 5, more than 450 graduates were honored at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. State Senator Raymond A. Meier, who had been supportive of the move to four-year programs (along with Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito) delivered the main address.

Throughout 2001 and into 2002, the work of preparing for the college’s first freshmen continued. President Cayan and members of the campus Enrollment Management Committee worked with consultants to help determine what programs should be offered to incoming freshmen, and to get recruitment-related recommendations. Athletics also played a significant role, as the prospect of recruiting four-year student-athletes was seen as an
opportunity to build programs whose performance and staying power were challenged by years of talented transfer students graduating and leaving their teams after just two years.

Two forums were held in January 2002 to publicize the coming change in mission and to seek public input. Ron Sarner, executive vice president for academic affairs, presented the transition plan at a meeting of the Genesis Group at Hotel Utica, and to an on-campus meeting of the Mohawk Valley Chamber Alliance.5 The proposed four-year programs were announced in the presentations: business, accounting, finance, applied mathematics, health services management, health information management, computer and information science, computer information systems, computer engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology, and industrial engineering technology.

As a practical matter, recruiting the first class of freshmen was a challenge for an institution that had never before taken its recruitment message to high school students and their parents. Recruiting transfer students had meant reaching a different population, primarily students already enrolled in community colleges and other two-year institutions. The college faced an additional challenge: it had to introduce itself as a new, viable choice to high school students across the state who, in many cases, had never heard of “SUNY’s only all-transfer institution.” Having submitted a plan to SUNY System Administration detailing how it would set about recruiting its first freshmen, the college began working with consultant firms to move the transition from conception to reality. Those involved in the process that would fundamentally change the character of the campus were optimistic; they also knew their work had just begun. “The next couple of years will be a wild ride for all of us,” Sarner said.6

To help introduce the college to prospective students and their parents – and to address lingering identity issues wrought by the name changes of the past three decades – a new logo and a new identity were unveiled in 2002. Although the legal name
remained unchanged, the college that students, alumni, and area residents had called Upper Division, UDC, SUNY Tech, and SUNY Utica/Rome would now be known as “SUNYIT.” Pronounced “SUNY-I-T,” the new short-form name was represented in the logo, designed by Michael De Cicco, director of publications, in which the acronym’s six lower-case letters are topped by a sweeping orbit, with a star dotting the letter “i.” Schabert said members of the campus Marketing Committee and others involved in the decision felt it was important that the short-form name reflect both membership in the State University of New York system and the special mission of the campus.

SUNY is the largest system of public higher education in the country. It’s a brand that is increasingly well-known in the U.S. and abroad. The term ‘I.T.’ is important to us. In the 21st century, I.T. means ‘information technology’ to many people, and among institutes of technology across the country I.T. is a commonly understood name abbreviation: MIT, RIT, IIT. So ‘SUNYIT’ was the logical choice.7

New emphasis on the preferred short-form name was an attempt to address the long-simmering issue of identity. Because the college had been known by three legal names prior to the 1989 adoption of SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome, students, alumni and area residents had adopted many nicknames for the campus: Upper Division, UDC, SUNY Tech, SUNY Utica/Rome. The name was a source of continuing confusion, especially for the media – as a former Observer-Dispatch reporter recalled.

I remember in the 1980s one of our editors issued a memo one day saying ‘this is what you will call the college from now on,’ because the day before we had run three different stories in different editions of the paper – with three different names.8
“We think it’s important that we let people know: ‘You may have known us by some other name in the past, but we’re committed to calling this institution SUNY-I-T,’” said Marybeth Lyons, director of admissions.9

End of an era

As the academic year drew to a close, another transition was on the minds of faculty and staff. President Cayan gave the campus 12 months’ notice, announcing he would retire at the end of June 2002 in his 20th year as president. “After careful consideration, I have decided this timetable is in the best interests of the Institute, and it’s right for me personally, too.” Planning for the mission change and other projects, President Cayan said, would occupy his final year at SUNYIT. “I have a lot of work to do in the months ahead, and I want to set the stage for the next era at the Institute of Technology.”10 A few weeks after the President’s announcement his two decades of leadership were acknowledged in a lasting tribute, as SUNY Trustees approved a resolution naming the library under construction the “Peter J. Cayan Library.”11

Just as Kunsela retired in 1982 before seeing the new campus completed, Cayan’s departure would come more than a year before the planned admission of SUNYIT’s first class of freshmen in fall 2003. And with their arrival, the institution still fondly called “Upper Division” by its early alumni would become the Mohawk Valley’s public four-year college.
With Cayan’s departure in 2002 and the arrival of the first class of freshmen in fall 2003, a new era had begun. As President Emeritus, he returned to campus for the formal dedication of the Cayan Library in May, and was welcomed by his successor, Mason H. Somerville.

A career academic with degrees in mechanical engineering, Somerville came to SUNYIT from the post of dean of the College of Engineering and Technology at Northern Arizona University. The new president faced significant challenges in the period of transition from upper-division to four-year institution, and he articulated an ambitious vision: SUNYIT’s enrollment would grow significantly, he said, and there would be an increased emphasis on faculty research and industry partnerships. During his presidency, an internal (and, at times, public) debate ensued as the college tried to determine what emphasis its historical mission – to serve transfer students – would receive, compared to its new commitment – to attract freshmen. Eventually, differences over that issue and others between the president, senior administrators and the faculty led to the resignation of six officials from top posts, a faculty “no confidence” vote, and Somerville’s resignation in May 2004. SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King appointed Peter A. Spina, former president of Monroe Community College, to serve as interim president. In November 2004, King extended Spina’s appointment “through the 2005-06 academic year at the very least.” In summer 2006, Chancellor John R. Ryan, King’s successor, notified the campus that the search for a new president would begin soon.

Campus development continued. New academic programs were launched, including Master of Business Administration in Technology Management in 2002, and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering – in cooperation with Binghamton University – in 2003. Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito and State
Senator Raymond Meier announced they had secured $13.6 million in the 2005-06 state budget for a student services building; planning began for the 47,000-square-foot center intended to house a new dining facility, an expanded bookstore/convenience store, small meeting rooms, and offices. The following year, Destito and Meier backed a proposal for $20 million to fund a field house, and the project was included in the 2006-07 state budget.

Since its formal dedication in 2003, several of the Cayan Library's rooms had been named for benefactors who had endowed scholarship funds to honor community leaders and others who had played significant parts in the history of the college. Among those honored were Albert B. “Al” Mario, Brij Mullick, Utica industrialist Edward V. Mele, Dr. Theodore C. and Mrs. Melva S. Max, and the members of the SUNYIT Foundation. Other named rooms such as the Professor Emeritus Albert B. Mario and Rita A. Mario Café and Reading Room recognized the support of individuals and organizations: Polly C. and Jim G. Brock, Sr.; Peter A. Donato, Jr. and the “For Pete’s Sake” Association, Inc.; the Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc. and the Credit Bureau of Utica; Robbin Mele; and the SUNYIT Alumni Association. And, in June 2005, the former Oneida County Executive whose early push helped establish the college returned to the area to attend a ceremony naming a second-floor study room in his honor. Those attending the event acknowledged the college's many early supporters, but paid special tribute to the subject of the ceremony. “Had it not been for the work of Charles Lanigan this college could never have been built,” said Richard Frye, a Utica attorney, member of Lanigan’s county staff, and a member of the first Upper Division College Council. “[He] planted the original seed which eventually grew into SUNYIT.” Returning to the campus that his earlier work had made possible, Lanigan said the credit was not his alone. “I was just one person among a great many who worked for this.”

Among the many: Mary Jane (Peters) Przestrzelski, whose
first job turned into a career that paralleled the college’s history.

I have certainly seen the changes. I’ve enjoyed each phase…it certainly has been interesting to watch it grow. The college will go on and on, but times change. It’s fun to think back, but the only way to look is forward. A lot of good people have come and gone along the way. Like family . . . 6
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Alumni, one Task Force member said later, were especially vocal on the issue; their overwhelming input was “anything but brown.”

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From the Mills to Marcy

The early history of the State University of New York Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome

Officially, the history of the State University of New York Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome began on June 14, 1966, when the State University of New York Board of Trustees established the Upper Division College at Herkimer-Rome-Utica. The origins of the institution are both older and younger than the founding date, and the story of SUNYIT's early years is a complicated one. *From the Mills to Marcy* draws on campus archival material, historical newspaper articles, and interviews with some of those who contributed in important ways to the institution's development. It is the first published history of the Mohawk Valley's public, four-year college.

John Swann has been director of public relations and communications at SUNYIT since 2000. For nearly 20 years, he worked in television and radio news management and as an anchor, reporter, and talk-show host; his work was recognized by the Associated Press and the New York State Broadcasters Association. A Missouri native, he earned a master's degree in information design and technology from SUNYIT and a bachelor's degree in mass communication from Truman State University.

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