President’s Page

Celebrating Tom Jackson and Dennis O’Brien

By Joel Seligman

In May, we will celebrate the naming of our new residence hall on Wilson Boulevard as O’Brien Hall, after our eighth president, Dennis O’Brien, and Jackson Court, including O’Brien Hall, Anderson and Wilder residence halls, and the Sage Art Center, after our ninth president, Tom Jackson.

This is a particularly fitting tribute to two pivotal presidents in the history of our University.

O’Brien Hall appropriately faces the Genesee River toward the greater Rochester community.

Dennis O’Brien was a leader in reaching out to our community. The construction of the pedestrian bridge across the Genesee is a physical embodiment of his determination to break down the belief that a great university in the 20th century could be wholly separate and apart from its surrounding community.

Dennis stressed the challenge of undergraduate education, urging: “Let our signature be liberal education in a professional world,” and added the Take Five Scholars Program, among his many accomplishments.

Tom Jackson played a decisive role in further reenergizing undergraduate education at Rochester.

Under his leadership, Arts, Sciences & Engineering designed and implemented first the Renaissance Plan and later the Rochester Curriculum, with its nationally recognized cluster system. Tom was a University leader, and during his tenure the Medical Center developed and implemented its highly effective 1996 strategic plan.

Great institutions build on their pasts. Both Dennis and Tom led our University during a time of economic challenge.

We are always mindful of the transformational role that he and George Eastman played in building the modern University of Rochester.

I hope that many years from now Dennis and Tom similarly will be remembered.

Their leadership also was pivotal in helping fashion our University into one that is now a national leader in undergraduate education, among the nation’s leaders in sponsored research, home to a health care system that leads our region, and a place in our community as the leading employer and a good neighbor.

To reverse the Shakespearian adage, “may the good that men [and women] do, live after them…”

Thank you, Dennis. Thank you, Tom.

Both Dennis O’Brien and Tom Jackson led our University during a time of economic challenge. Both were pivotal, as Tom put it, in “reasserting the greatness of the University of Rochester.”