

Everybody's Friend

By Joel Seligman

In October the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to name our Intercultural Center in honor of Paul Burgett, recognizing his first 50 amazing years as part of our University family. Formally Paul is vice president, senior advisor to the president, and University dean.

Anyone who knows Paul knows he is much more than that. He is a personification of all that is good about our University—his passion, his sense of fairness, his sensitivity to others, and his commitment to making our University ever better are an invaluable inspiration.

He is a treasure—someone with a gift of near perfect institutional memory, an ability to light up a room when he enters with his radiant warmth, his basso profundo voice, his ingratiating charm, his storyteller's wit. As I wrote to him when I autographed a copy of the new University history for Paul, "You are UR." Fittingly, Paul wrote the afterword to the history.

Paul arrived at the Eastman School of Music as a freshman in 1964. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees in music education at Eastman, writing a doctoral dissertation that addressed the aesthetics of the music of black Americans.

"Dean Burgett," as he is known by generations of students, enthralled students and alumni with his rendition of the "Fiery Furnace," Paul's homily of how the University transforms its students. Paul has worn many hats in the last half century. He served as the Eastman School's dean of students from 1981 to 1988 and vice president and University dean of students from 1988 to 2001. Since 2001, he has been a key part of the President's Office, first as vice president and general secretary, more recently as my closest advisor on a plethora of key issues.

His impact on our University is both programmatic and personal. Paul helped plan the Eastman Student Living Center, worked to improve programs at the Interfaith Chapel, Wilson Commons, University Health Service, Counseling and Mental Health Services, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the International Student Office, Residential Life, and Athletics and Recreation. More recently he has been pivotal in helping launch the new First Niagara Rochester Fringe Festival.



FAMILIAR FACE: Dean Paul Burgett has embodied the University for generations of students.

But always throughout his career, Paul's was the office that welcomed all who needed a friend. He is located just a few feet away from my office, and often has students waiting to see him in the lobby between us. Some are beaming with good news to share. Some are sad eyed. But always they brighten when Paul opens his door and welcomes them.

Paul is everybody's friend.

We sometimes kid each other that we live in different time zones. On Sundays, I often am finishing hours of work when Paul arrives. I regularly wander down to his office and kibitz. Our discussions range from who was the greatest popular jazz singer, to Shakespeare, travel, and the news of the day. Paul is my friend, too.

Paul's contributions to the Greater Rochester community have been legion. He has served as chair of the board of trustees of the Strong Museum; as chair of Rochester's Zoning Board of Appeals; and on the boards of directors of the Genesee Country Village and Museum, the Hillside Family of Agencies, the Arts and Cultural Council of Rochester, the YMCA, the United Way, the Urban League, and the Hochstein School of Music and Dance. He also served on the international advisory board of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago, the Mt. Hope Family Center's

advisory board, and the Rochester Rotary Club's board. He is a true ambassador to the Greater Rochester community.

Paul loves the fact that the Intercultural Center will be named after him. The center promotes cultural awareness and engagement, fosters understanding about the differences among cultures, and provides opportunities for cross-cultural programming among faculty, staff, and students. Students are encouraged to learn how to work and learn with those from other cultures, regardless of socioeconomic status, political belief, racial and ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religious affiliation. These are not only University values—these are Paul's values.

Together with his spouse, Catherine Valentine, professor emerita of sociology at Nazareth College, Paul has seen much of the world and brings a global understanding to his leadership at the University.

I know I speak for all members of the University of Rochester family throughout the world in expressing our deep gratitude to Paul for his first 50 years of dedicated and exemplary service.

But I serve notice: the title of the new University history is *Our Work Is But Begun*.

I feel that way about Paul and our University, too. **R**