

## Stockton Trustees Name Peter Straub as New Dean of School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Board Gets Construction Update; Community Honors Late Gay Rights Advocate Laurel Hester, Developer Bart Blatstein for Their Contributions

***For Immediate Release; with photos on [flickr](#)***

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**Galloway, NJ** - Stockton University's Board of Trustees today named Peter Straub as dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NAMS).

"The Stockton community is delighted that Dr. Straub was chosen as the best candidate to head NAMS after a nationwide search," said President Harvey Kesselman. "Peter is an extraordinary scholar and administrator, and the perfect choice to lead our expansion of the Unified Science Center, which will add to the opportunities for world-class faculty and student research."

Straub is a Stockton alumnus who received his B.S. in Marine Science in 1980. He holds an M.S. in Marine Studies from the University of Delaware, where he also earned his Ph.D. in Marine Studies. Straub did post-doctoral work on Molecular Biology at Washington University in St. Louis.

"I am honored to be selected from what was a very talented pool of candidates," said Straub. "The School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics faces many challenges and opportunities moving forward. I am grateful to have earned the confidence of the university to undertake this new role."

Straub has been serving as the interim dean of NAMS since July 2015. He has over 20 years of teaching experience in higher education, having attained the rank of tenured professor of Biology. He has served as the coordinator of the Biology program, and has participated in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation process.

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Straub has been the grants administrator for a large number of projects funded by local and federal agencies, including the Barnegat Bay Partnership/EPA, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He serves as the diving safety officer for Stockton and has served as the radiation safety officer for NAMS.

An update on construction plans in Atlantic City and on the Galloway campus was provided by Donald Hudson, associate vice president for Facilities and Construction.

Stockton is moving ahead with plans for a residential and academic campus in Atlantic City as part of the AC Gateway project on the site of the former Atlantic City High School.

The public-private development by the non-profit Atlantic City Development Corp. (AC Devco) would include a 56,000-square-foot academic building with on-site parking and housing for over 500 students.

Hudson said the project is in the schematic design phase, which is being performed by AC Devco and its design professionals. AC Devco expects to move into design development in mid-March and begin construction site work in May, Hudson said. The project is expected to be completed by the summer of 2018 and open that fall.

Various representatives of the university, including faculty, staff, cabinet members and members of the Board of Trustees, have toured AC Devco's projects on the Rutgers University campus in New Brunswick.

The N.J. Economic Development Authority has approved almost \$70 million in tax credits that would support the new campus. The Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) has approved \$17 million, while the Atlantic County Improvement Authority has voted to help finance the campus with \$50.4 million in bonds.

Stockton would contribute \$18 million toward the development. The university also has applied for funding from the state Building Our Future Bond Act and the Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund Act to support the Atlantic City campus and the expansion of the Unified Science Center, construction of the new classroom building and other improvements on the Galloway campus.

Hudson said the architectural firm Perkins Eastman has completed plan modifications for the Unified Science Center 2 (USC2), the new classroom building and new Academic Quad connecting the two, after previous bids came in high. New bids for construction are projected to be advertised in late March and opened in early May, with construction to start by June 1.

The 56,700-square-foot USC2 building, a three-story structure, will include science labs, classrooms, a greenhouse, a vivarium, a gross anatomy lab and faculty offices. The 36,000-square-foot classroom building will house a sustainability lab, health science simulation space, exercise science space and offices.

The project is on schedule for completion in the mid-fall 2017, with the first classes to be held in the spring 2018 semester, Hudson said.

Trustee Raymond Ciccone, a 1979 Stockton graduate, made a special presentation in honor of the late Laurel Hester, a Stockton alumna whose life was the subject of a 2007 Academy

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Award-winning documentary, “Freeheld: The Laurel Hester Story,” and the 2015 feature film, “Freeheld,” starring Julianne Moore as Hester.

Hester was a gay police officer from Ocean County, N.J. who fought to have her pension benefits transferred to her partner after she was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

While at Stockton, Hester started the Gay People’s Union, along with fellow student Kevin Cathcart, now executive director of Lambda Legal, which helped win three historic gay rights cases before the Supreme Court.

Ciccione, a friend of Hester’s, cited her courage in coming out in the 1970s, and said: “She changed me forever - she taught me to accept different people.” Ciccione was a student senator and a member of the Student Senate’s Student Activities Committee which approved funding to establish the Gay People’s Union. The group was the precursor of today’s Pride Alliance.

He presented the group’s framed original charter to Lauren Block, Pride Alliance president, and Rebecca Garner, vice president. The document will be displayed in the Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Center on campus.

Marissa Hacker, a Stockton student who won a \$36,000 national award for her work in support of young people with special needs, was recognized by the board. Her group, Fantastic Friends, has chapters at her former high school in Camden County and at Stockton. Her twin brother, Matthew, who was her inspiration for starting the group, also took a bow.

Bart Blatstein, the prominent developer known for the redevelopment of the Playground in Atlantic City, and other highly successful residential and commercial projects in Philadelphia, was recognized for his role in the university’s sale of the Showboat to Showboat Renaissance, LLC.

The resolution notes that Blatstein approached the negotiations for the purchase of the Showboat property with integrity; and has consistently demonstrated an appreciation for higher education; and has agreed to further his relationship with Stockton to benefit the university, Atlantic City and the region.

“It’s going to happen in Atlantic City,” he said. “I look forward to working with Stockton as a partner.”

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