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# An Era of SHARED GOALS

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Joel Seligman sees  
'glorious potential' for Rochester  
as he leaves the presidency.

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*By Kathleen McGarvey*

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**W**hen Joel Seligman came to Rochester to interview for the president's position in 2004, he had never visited before. "I had to learn the institution," he says.

A recognized legal scholar and historian of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Seligman quickly steeped himself in all things related to Rochester, both the University and the city. The Los Angeles native who graduated from UCLA before earning a law degree at Harvard became an ardent student of the University, drawing on the institution's history as he looked to its future.

"It involves a lot of people, a lot of programs, and all in a certain sense were different from what I'd experienced as a law school dean" at Washington University in St. Louis. "The University has its own culture, and that culture is based on history and personalities. It takes a while to master that."

Other presidents have led longer. Martin Brewer Anderson, Rochester's first president, held his post for a magisterial 35 years, as did Rush Rhees, beginning in 1900. But Seligman's years were momentous ones for the University.

"I credit Joel Seligman with ushering the University into the 21st century," says Paul Burgett '68E, '72E (PhD), vice president, senior advisor to the president, and University dean. He has known five of Rochester's presidents, serving in various capacities under four of them. "He came with a huge challenge, not the least of which was to enter an era of growth in the faculty and in the student body while maintaining, and even enhancing, quality."

The goals of his presidency were not simply his own, Seligman says. "They were the University's goals." A white paper created for the presidential search laid out the five most urgent tasks for the new leader: fundraising, communications, diversity, community, and the selection of senior leaders.

"I articulated them in terms of the umbrella of strategic planning. And I tried to involve the entire University simultaneously in a plan and focus on how we could move not just parts of the University, but the whole University, forward."

The phrase "One University" was a watchword of *Continued on page 34*



**PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITIES:** Seligman led the University for more than 12 years, working to raise the institution's visibility, strengthen its resources, and foster its bonds with the city of Rochester and the wider region.







# Campus Transformed

As president, CEO, and G. Robert Witmer, Jr. University Professor, Joel Seligman has overseen a campus expansion that since 2005 has included more than two dozen new facilities and other major infrastructure projects. With support from the University's *Meliora Challenge* campaign, the projects have included Golisano Children's Hospital, the largest capital project in University history; Raymond F. LeChase Hall, a new home for the Warner School of Education; Ronald Rettner Hall for Media Arts and Innovation, an Arts,

Sciences & Engineering building designed to advance practical skills and an understanding of digital technology; the Saunders Research Building, a hub for clinical and translational research; the Brian F. Prince Athletic Complex, providing renovated and expanded outdoor athletic facilities; Wegmans Hall, which houses the new Goergen Institute for Data Science; and a renovation and expansion of Eastman Theatre. Shown here in yellow are new buildings and some major facilities projects undertaken since 2005.

## College Town

Opened in 2014

Located on 14 acres of land owned by the University, College Town is a mixed-use development that includes a bookstore, hotel and conference center, retail stores, and restaurants.

## Frederick Douglass Building

Renovated in 2015-16

The building has been renovated as a student center that includes new dining facilities, student gathering spaces, the Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center, and a new Language Center.

## University Health Service

Opened in 2008

The building is the main clinical site for undergraduates and graduate students.

## Wilmot Cancer Center

Opened in 2008

The James P. Wilmot Cancer Center, which added three floors in 2012, serves as the hub of the 11-location Wilmot Cancer Institute.

## Rush Rhees Library

Gleason Library, 2007

Messinger Graduate Study Rooms, 2009-10

Lam Square, 2016

The spaces inside Rush Rhees Library feature individual and group study areas as well as a new collaborative, multimedia work space.

## Golisano Children's Hospital

Opened in 2015

With eight floors and approximately 245,000 square feet of space, the hospital features all-private rooms and specialized technology. A second phase added six operating rooms and a new pediatric intensive care unit.

## Wilson Commons/ Danforth Dining

Renovated in 2010 and 2011

New eateries were added to renovated dining facilities in Wilson Commons and Danforth was revamped as a residential restaurant.

## O'Brien Hall/ Jackson Court

Opened in 2013

Housing 150 students, O'Brien Hall completes the complex of buildings that make up Jackson Court.

## Genesee Hall

Opened in 2017

The residence hall houses first-year students as well as athletic facilities, including the Boehning Varsity House.

## Prince Athletic Complex

Renovations 2012-16

Revamped facilities include new lights, turf, a new press box, and other renovations.

## Riverview Apartments

Opened in 2008

Owned by a private developer, the 120-unit complex serves exclusively as a residence hall for about 400 University undergraduates.



### Imaging Sciences Building

Opened in 2017

The Medical Center building provides imaging services for outpatients and serves as the home to the William and Mildred Levine Autism Clinic.

### Ford Education Wing

Completed in 2006

The expansion included classrooms, other spaces, and computer technology for the School of Nursing.

### Saunders Research Building

Opened in 2011

The building is home to the Clinical and Translational Science Institute as well as other research and patient care programs.

### Chilled Water Plant

Completed in 2008

### Goergen Hall

Opened in 2007

The building is home to programs in optics and biomedical engineering.

### Hajim Science and Engineering Quadrangle

Opened in 2016

The four-acre space includes walkways, trees, and seating areas.

### Wegmans Hall

Opened in 2017

The building is home to the Goergen Institute for Data Science.

### Renovations to Historic Spaces

Ongoing

With support from the Rettner Campus Improvement Fund, historically important spaces are being renovated. In 2014-15, the lobbies of Morey and Bausch & Lomb were completed.

### LeChase Hall

Opened in 2013

The building is the first permanent home for the Warner School of Education.

### Rettner Hall

Opened in 2013

The building is home for programs in digital media and engineering.

### Fraternity Quadrangle

Renovations in 2012 and 2013

Renovations added residential advisor suites and addressed deferred maintenance issues.

### Brooks Landing

Opened in 2008-09;

Residence Building, 2014

A commercial hotel and retail complex that includes space leased by the University, the development also has a student residence that opened in 2014.

### Bloch Alumni and Advancement Center

Completed in 2007

The building serves as the University's headquarters for services for alumni, parents, and friends.

### Eastman School

Renovation of Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre, 2009

Addition of Eastman's East Wing, 2010

Renovations to Kilbourn Hall, 2016

The renovation and expansion projects included work to improve acoustics and update amenities, as well as add rehearsal, performance, and technological resources.

Renovation to Messinger Hall, 2017-18

The project includes renovations and updates to the home of the Eastman Community Music School.

### Memorial Art Gallery

Centennial Sculpture Park

Opened in 2013

With installations by four internationally recognized sculptors, the park also features sculptures from the museum's collections, walkways, gathering places, and venues for public performances.





*Continued from page 30* Seligman's presidency. The University was historically decentralized, with schools and other organizations—such as the Memorial Art Gallery and Strong Memorial Hospital—operating rather independently. Seligman argued, as early as in his inaugural address, that it was time to pull together: “We are one University, powerfully bound by values that are responsible for this and other universities being among the most significant social institutions in the world today.”

And from the very beginning, Seligman insisted that an essential part of being an important social institution is taking an active role in the community. “I want to be the best possible neighbor to a great city and a great community,” he announced on his first day as president.

One of his first official visits was to the 19th Ward neighborhood, across the Genesee River from the River Campus. He walked over a pedestrian bridge that had been constructed in 1991 between the campus and the neighborhood but had done little to bring people together. Seligman worked with New York's governor, George Pataki, to clear obstacles to a plan to help revitalize the area, and the University partnered with the city and neighborhood groups to create the Brooks Landing development that now features hotel and retail spaces, and student residences.

The visit set a pattern for Seligman, who saw a role for the University in the Rochester region's economic development, education, health, and arts and culture.

Richard Feldman, who succeeded Seligman as president this winter, says building stronger connections between the University and the community “was one of Joel's signal accomplishments as president.”

**‘WE ARE ONE’: An ardent student of University history, Seligman frequently exhorted Rochester's component parts to remember the common values and priorities that hold them together as a single institution.**

“He made clear that the University has a responsibility to help ensure that our community thrives,” says Feldman, noting that such connections will remain a priority as the University looks to the future.

The urgency of community ties deepened when the University became the area's largest employer, a distinction reached in 2005, when the *Rochester Business Journal* announced that the University had surpassed Eastman Kodak as the largest private-sector employer. “That changed the nature of the conversation,” Seligman says. The enormous local impact of the institution brought “greater moral obligation to partner with the community.”

Says Burgett: “We saw during the 12-and-a-half years of Joel Seligman's presidency the opening of the doors and the windows of the University, letting in the fresh air of the community, so that almost everybody in Rochester knows who Joel Seligman is.”

Universities, Seligman told the audience in a 2007 speech, “are catalysts for the economic progress that is the key to success in an increasingly knowledge-based society.”

He took the role seriously. With Danny Wegman, who's now chair of the Board of Trustees, he cochaired the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Council, helping to guide the state's thinking about funds for the upstate region. One priority of the council has been the Downtown Innovation Zone, a high-tech company incubator. The University-affiliated NextCorps is one of several public and private partners in the effort. With University colleagues, he pursued the development of College Town in the Mt. Hope neighborhood beside the River Campus and the Medical Center. A 500,000-square-foot, mixed-use development, the project was a partnership between the University, the City of Rochester, and a private developer.

“It was always about partnering,” says Seligman, “whether it was with private institutions or government, with Democrats or Republicans, with churches or mosques, or temples. It’s always partnering that builds communities.”

The partnerships that have evolved around the city’s East High School are perhaps the best examples of the community relationship that Seligman envisioned for the University (see “All in at East,” *Rochester Review*, November–December 2018). The New York State Education Department approved a plan for the University to serve as the Educational Partnership Organization for East, beginning in July 2015. The school—more than a century old and with an estimated 20,000 living alumni—was on the verge of being closed by the state for inadequate performance.

The effort involves Rochester educators, families, students, and the community, as well as faculty and students from the Warner School of Education and other areas of the University.

The school’s turnaround is a work in progress, but those involved hope that what happens at East can help provide a model for urban education nationally. And they take the long view.

“I am deeply grateful to those in the Rochester community who have supported the University’s unprecedented endeavor to turn around East,” Seligman wrote in the September–October 2014 issue of *Rochester Review*, situating the effort in the context of University history as he borrowed from Martin Brewer Anderson’s inauguration: “But to quote a familiar line, if this experiment is to succeed, ‘Our work is but begun.’”

The words were Anderson’s, but the sentiment was an apt one for Seligman. As the 10th president, he spoke often of efforts to orient the University toward its future, developing plans to capitalize on Rochester’s prominence in fields such as data science, neuroscience, and high-energy-density physics.

Ninth president Thomas Jackson and his provost, Charles Phelps, had laid the groundwork for the University’s focused growth, along with the development of a new curriculum and a strategic plan for the Medical Center. They worked in concert with Board of Trustees chairs Robert Goergen ’60 and G. Robert Witmer Jr. ’59, who oversaw the search for Jackson’s successor. Once hired, Seligman—soon joined by board chair Ed Hajim ’58—devoted his energy to propelling the University toward healthy, sustainable growth.

**D**uring his presidency, the University experienced a decade of growth. Seligman, who also held the title of G. Robert Witmer, Jr. University Professor, oversaw a 40 percent increase in the size of the student body, a dramatically expanded UR Medicine care network, the creation of more than 400 endowed scholarships and fellowships, and the establishment of more than 100 endowed professorships.

The growth was fueled by *The Meliora Challenge* comprehensive campaign, the largest in Rochester’s history. Publicly announced in 2011, it concluded in 2016. Supporters had raised more than \$1.37 billion.

The effort hearkened back to the fundraising campaign of 1924—“Ten Millions in Ten Days,” with 10,000 local subscribers and substantial added support from George

## 2005–2018: The Seligman Years

Here’s a look at the tenure of Joel Seligman, who served as Rochester’s 10th president from July 2005 to February 2018.

### 2005

**Spring:** *Rochester Business Journal* for the first time ranks the University as Rochester’s largest employer.

**July 1:** Seligman takes office as president and announces plans for the University’s largest capital campaign.



**October 23:** Seligman is inaugurated as 10th president.

### 2006

More than 1,100 students enroll in the College Class of 2010, the largest class in more than five years.

### 2007

Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics opens.

### 2008

**Summer:** James P. Wilmot Cancer Center dedicates a new building.

**October:** Global financial crisis. Seligman announces that the University will cautiously proceed with major capital projects while reviewing budgets.



**October:** Chair of the Board of Trustees Ed Hajim ’58 makes largest single gift commitment in University history. The School of Engineering & Applied Sciences is named in honor of Hajim in 2009.

**October:** Brooks Landing, a commercial development across the Genesee River from the River Campus, opens.

### 2009

Ernest J. Del Monte Institute for Neuroscience is launched at the Medical Center.

### 2010

The Eastman School of Music opens a major expansion of its performance and rehearsal spaces—including a renovation of the historic and newly named Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre—completing George Eastman’s original vision for the school.

### 2011

The Clinical and Translational Science Building opens, one of the first facilities in the country built to house clinical and translational science at an academic medical center. The effort reflects a renewed emphasis on clinical research at Rochester.

### 2011

Nearly 14,000 students apply to be members of the College’s Class of 2015. The 1,162 first-year students represent the most selective class up to this point in University history.

**May:** The University debuts a new mission statement: Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—And Make the World Ever Better.

**July:** Seligman and University Trustee Danny Wegman cochair the new Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, created by Governor Andrew Cuomo and designed to create jobs and stimulate the local economy.

**October:** The University launches a \$1.2 billion comprehensive campaign, *The Meliora Challenge*, during Meliora Weekend. “Together we will make history,” says Seligman.

### 2012



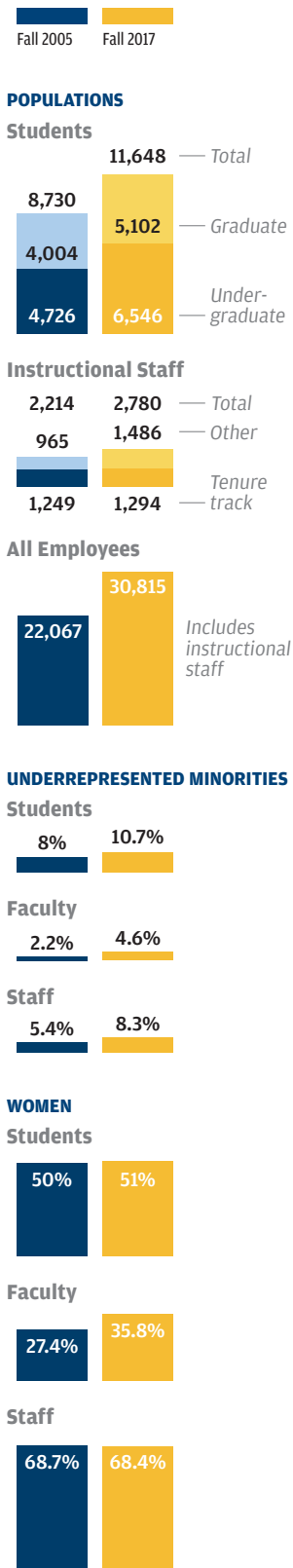
The Health Sciences Center for Computational Innovation becomes home to IBM’s new Blue Gene/Q computer, which performs 209 trillion calculations per second. It makes Rochester one of the five most powerful university-based supercomputing sites in the nation.

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## Then and Now

The years of Joel Seligman's presidency, which began in 2005 and ended in February, brought growth in a number of key areas for the University.



Eastman—that gave the University its footing for the 20th century.

Resources, Seligman once said, “are the lifeblood” of higher education, “making it possible to attract and retain great faculty, create scholarships for students, build new programs, and extend existing programs.”

His focus as president was in some fundamental ways an external one: seeking to raise the University's visibility nationally and internationally, working to attract financial support and funding, pursuing opportunities to advance in tandem the institution and the Rochester region.

But he also found that the presidency brings other, equally vital obligations that are more personal. Some are still quite public and ceremonial: “I've probably attended more funerals, more weddings, more celebrations over the last 12 years than virtually anyone in Rochester, with the possible exception of the mayor,” he says. Handling crises and tragedies are part of the job for anyone leading a university. And some duties are quiet ones, relying on direct human connection: hospital visits and condolence calls, for example. “It's a human institution,” he says.

Seligman always saw new possibilities on the horizon for Rochester, and the campaign's

successful conclusion did not dim his ambitions as president. But in January he announced his resignation, effective February 28, as he—and all members of the University community—awaited the results of an independent investigation into the University's response to sexual harassment

claims in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (see “Setting a High Bar,” *Rochester Review*, January–February 2018).

Ultimately, the independent investigation found that Rochester had handled the

complaints according to its policies, but also acknowledged that the institution should improve its policies for the future, an effort that's now under way.

Board Chair Wegman responded to the president's announcement with praise for the decision, saying that it “allows us to truly ‘turn the page’ and move forward with respect, resolve, and unity.”

Seligman says, “I became convinced that my stepping down, as saddening as it is for me, was more likely to lead to a chance for revitalization of the University than continuing. This was not an easy decision. It was not made under pressure from others. It was made with recognition that sometimes the best kind of leadership involves knowing when it's time to hand the baton to the next leaders.”

**OPENING DAY:** Confetti flies as (from left) Pediatrician-in-Chief Nina Schor, Medical Center CEO Mark Taubman, Board of Trustees Chair Ed Hajim '58, Seligman, and namesake B. Thomas Golisano celebrate the opening of the Golisano Children's Hospital in 2015.





Being president is all about a kind of equipoise, he says: “You’re ultimately asking yourself, what’s in the best interest of the University? But what you’re really saying is, what’s in the best interest of the people of the University—the faculty, the students, the staff, the professional clinicians in the health care system, the creative artists? And you’re not just asking how you balance the books. You’re asking how the resources—whether it’s money or time—can be most widely allocated, to achieve the things that are most important to the people of the University.”

**S**eligman says he never contemplated his legacy as such. “I focused on two things,” he says. “Just giving it my heart and soul every day. And, was the University stronger at the end of my time than when I arrived?”

He has thoughts about what lies ahead. “We have a glorious potential. It’s a great university, with absolutely terrific people, and it still has a hunger for progress.”

A new president won’t “be bound by the plan I was developing with so many others. He or she should look at matters with a fresh set of eyes. The context is always changing,” he says.

But in his farewell address in February, he urged ongoing commitment to data science, neuroscience, the humanities and performing arts, the community, and health care. And he called, once again, for the University’s many parts to see themselves as one.

“Progress for any institution is based on a kind of magic,” he said, “when we unite behind common goals.” **R**

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## 2013

Seligman chairs Rochester’s United Way Campaign.

**May:** Raymond F. LeChase Hall, the first-ever building for the Warner School of Education, is dedicated.

**Fall:** Seligman releases a strategic plan for 2013-2018: “Aiming Higher.”



**October:** Ronald Rettner Hall for Media Arts and Innovation formally opens.

**November:** *The Meliora Challenge* passes the \$1 billion mark.

## 2014

The campaign reaches its goal of establishing 80 endowed professorships and sets a new aim: 100 such professorships by 2016.

## 2015



**Summer:** College Town, a mixed-use development built on University property on Mt. Hope Avenue, opens. The shops, housing, offices, and restaurants are intended to strengthen the surrounding community.

**Summer:** The new Golisano Children’s Hospital, the largest capital project in University history, opens to patients. The eight-story facility is shaped by a new approach to pediatric care that focuses on families as part of the care team.

**September:** Classes begin at East High School, with the University serving as the Educational Partnership Organization for the struggling city school.

## 2016

**Spring:** Seligman is appointed to the G. Robert Witmer, Jr. University Professorship, a position that recognizes the leadership role of the University president.

**June:** The University celebrates the completion of *The Meliora Challenge*, exceeding its goals with a total of \$1.37 billion raised.

**Summer:** According to a Center for Governmental Research report, the University is the largest private employer in upstate New York and the sixth largest in the state overall.

**Summer:** Seligman is elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**Fall:** Seligman charges the University-wide Presidential Commission on Race and Diversity with assessing the state of the campus climate and offering recommendations for improvement, in response to calls for action by student minority leadership groups.



## 2017

**Spring:** A reimagined Frederick Douglass Building opens as part of a new student-oriented campus hub.

**Spring:** More than 18,000 students apply for the College for 2017-18.



**April:** Wegmans Hall opens, home to the Goergen Institute for Data Science.



**Fall:** The entering College class has an average two-score SAT above 1,400, putting Rochester students in the 97th percentile for the SAT—a rise from the 86th percentile in 2005.