

SERIES: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato
TITLE: Up-Close: Jack Noonan and Robert Altenkirch
SHOW #: 1719
TIME: 26:46

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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

This week, you'll meet two prominent New Jersey college presidents who are at different points in their very distinguished careers. Now a little bit later on in the program, we'll talk with New Jersey Institute of Technology's new president, Dr. Robert Altenkirch. But first, meet Dr. Jack Noonan, the outgoing president of Bloomfield College.

Good to see you, Dr. Noonan.

Dr. JACK NOONAN (President, Bloomfield College): Good to see you, Steve.

ADUBATO: Now, come on, 16 years on the job, right, you have a distinguished career. Why you leaving?

Dr. NOONAN: Slow learner.

ADUBATO: No, seriously, what's up here? Wha--what--what's in the game plan after this?

Dr. NOONAN: Well, the game plan is to write a book. I've always wanted to write a book about the kind of college Bloomfield is. You know, you've got your Broadway, you've got your off-Broadway and you've got your off-off-Broadway. Well, Bloomfield is an off-off-Broadway kind of institution where some immensely creative things are being done, most of which aren't heralded nationally. And I want to write a book that points to that 200 or 300 institutions like that and gets us the kind of acclaim that we deserve.

ADUBATO: Now Bloomfield is an independent.

Dr. NOONAN: Independent.

ADUBATO: What does that really mean?

Dr. NOONAN: That means that we have a--a board of trustees that has no formal relationship with the government or with the--with the Legislature. We are founded by the Presbyterian Church, like a lot of other first-rate liberal arts colleges were, and it means that we can operate pretty quickly and unbureaucratically to respond to needs

fast.

ADUBATO: Where does the money come from?

Dr. NOONAN: The money comes from several sources. It comes from donors, individual donors. It comes from foundations. It comes from corporations. And in New Jersey, as you know, we get quite a lot of support from the state of New Jersey. New Jersey has the most high-minded public policy in the country for enabling students in New Jersey to choose whether to go to an independent college or a state college.

ADUBATO: With all these cuts, though--Jack, with all these serious cuts that--as we do the program in the spring of 2003, a lot of huge cuts are on the table in terms of state funding to higher education. Now your institution that you'll be leaving soon severely impacted or not?

Dr. NOONAN: Severely impacted.

ADUBATO: How so? Be more specific so we can understand the impact.

Dr. NOONAN: Last year, at the--at the tail end of the year, the governor withdrew a half a million dollar--half a million dollars in funding that we had been promised. And then next year we will get another half a million dollars less than we would like to have.

ADUBATO: What does it mean?

Dr. NOONAN: It means--that half million will mean continuing to have frozen a handful of faculty and staff positions until we can raise the money from private sources or I should say until my successor...

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. NOONAN: ...can raise the money from private sources.

ADUBATO: We should let folks know that your successor w--successor is...

Dr. NOONAN: Richard A. LaVoe.

ADUBATO: ...Rich LaVoe.

Dr. NOONAN: Rich LaVoe, a long-serving board member at Rutgers University--former board chair of Rutgers, practicing attorney, opera buff, terrific person.

ADUBATO: Tough job ahead for him.

Dr. NOONAN: Tough job.

ADUBATO: Now these cuts, when you--when you--you know, sometimes people hear--they read in the front page of a news story--or maybe not on the front page but they see, you know, 'Budget Cuts in Higher Ed' and I'm really trying to get at the impact. If you say you're going to freeze staff, freeze faculty, what does it really mean in terms of the quality of education and the quality of teaching, the quality of research? What does it really mean?

Dr. NOONAN: A typical class size at a college like Bloomfield is about 15 students. The consequence of these budget cuts is that that class size will probably go up to 16 students or possibly even 17 students. Now the reason that's a significant...

ADUBATO: It actually doesn't sound like a big deal to the layperson.

Dr. NOONAN: Well...

ADUBATO: What does it really mean, though?

Dr. NOONAN: Well, it--it may not sound like a big deal for the--the average layperson but when you consider the students that Bloomfield College historically has served, we have recruited since 1868 students in New Jersey's most demanding neighborhoods and--and for them this institution represents a huge step up in their--in their horizons. And...

ADUBATO: Excuse me, Jack, go back. You say, 'most demanding.' Aren't you--what you're really saying is, for a lot of these young people, and others, they are the first in their families to go to college.

Dr. NOONAN: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: I mean, that--talk about demanding.

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah.

ADUBATO: These--these--these kind--folks come from very challenged situations.

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah.

ADUBATO: So this 15 to 17 to 18 class size has a big impact.

Dr. NOONAN: It has a--it has a big impact, yeah. Not only are they often the first of their families to go to college, they're often the first in their families to finish high school. A typical Bloomfield undergraduate has English as a second language, is in close contact with grandparents and aunts and uncles in foreign countries. And increasingly is from a family that makes under \$30,000 a year. Now the reason that's interesting to me is that when we look at the three million students, eight--the 18-year-old population in this country is going to grow by about three million in the next few years, 80 percent

of those students are going to be like Bloomfield College students, not like Rutgers students, not like Montclair students, but like Bloomfield College students. They're going to be first generation from immigrant families where English is the second or third language spoken at home. So it's--it's a very significant little institution.

ADUBATO: Jack, you know, we've had many conversations over the years about the changing face of higher education and in one of the issues as we've talked that you're in a unique position to--to share your thoughts on is the University of Michigan case. All right? I'm not going to go into all the details of the case, but it is a huge test case for the question or about the question of "diversity" or affirmative action in higher ed. Correct?

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah. Yeah. Correct.

ADUBATO: What's at stake?

Dr. NOONAN: Well, what's at stake is whether colleges can continue to use race as a plus factor in deciding which students to admit to their institutions. And there are two cases in Michigan.

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. NOONAN: One's the law school and one's the undergraduate institution. And ever since the Bakke decision of...

ADUBATO: Bakke decision was a l...

Dr. NOONAN: ...1978.

ADUBATO: Ba--that out in California?

Dr. NOONAN: California.

ADUBATO: Right. Medical school case?

Dr. NOONAN: Me--medical school a--case.

ADUBATO: Right. Bakke was the name of the person who brought suit against the...

Dr. NOONAN: Right. Right. Right.

ADUBATO: ...state of California.

Dr. NOONAN: A white guy who felt he was--had--had lost his slot. And what the--what the courts decided in a very--in a very narrow race is that were a--a--a bona fide history of discrimination exists, it is appropriate to use race as a--as a--as a plus factor in weighing--in weighing candidates.

ADUBATO: But the University of Michigan case where these two cases potentially could overturn or change the dynamic.

Dr. NOONAN: That's right. That's right.

ADUBATO: Now in a place like Bloomfield College which is incredibly diverse.

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah, would have no impact on Bloomfield.

ADUBATO: Why no impact?

Dr. NOONAN: Because we have a--a diverse student body not by having to compose it the way the University of Michigan does, but we have one by recruiting from the same neighborhoods we've recruited for 100--from for 140 years and the ethnicities of those neighborhoods have changed.

ADUBATO: So let me ask you, do you believe that race should be a factor in the admissions process to any institution of higher learning?

Dr. NOONAN: Well, the only--the only--the answer is yes. The only institutions that it really applies to are institutions that are highly competitive...

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. NOONAN: ...and have vastly more students trying to get into them than--than they have spaces for them. But, yes, I think it is appropriate to use race as a plus factor in the same way it's appropriate to use what they call legacy admissions. I mean, if you want to go to Harvard and your father went to Harvard, your...

ADUBATO: Mine didn't and I just want to clarify that, Jack.

Dr. NOONAN: OK. Right.

ADUBATO: We heard there was a Harvard, but we didn't know who actually went. Go ahead. I'm sorry. You were saying? But I digress. There's a legacy issue there so if your dad went to Harvard or Yale, you were in a better position...

Dr. NOONAN: That's right.

ADUBATO: ...to be admitted even though there was nothing in writing that said that.

Dr. NOONAN: That's right.

ADUBATO: But--but--but for a whole range of kids--and I don't want this, obviously, to become a whole discussion about the complexity of

affirmative action, but for a whole range of, let's say, white kids from ethnic families who historically have not had anyone--forget about going to Harvard and Yale, but lucky if anyone went to college. Could you understand that frustration on the part of that kid and...

Dr. NOONAN: Sure.

ADUBATO: ...his or her family?

Dr. NOONAN: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: `Hey, wait a minute, you know, my SAT scores are comparable. Why not me?'

Dr. NOONAN: Right. Now if I actu--I...

ADUBATO: How do we achieve diversity, the diversity that everyone argues is so good for us because it allows young people and others to go out into the world and understand the diversity of the world, but still be fair to everyone? How do we do that?

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah. Well, that's something which we're in the middle of. It's a lot easier to say than it is to do. I believe that the appropriate thing to do is to weight these characteristic in a--in a constellation of other characteristics and what isn't appropriate is to--is--is just to look at race alone. That makes no sense. It also makes no sense just to look at the SAT score alone...

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. NOONAN: ...or just at the high school grade-point average alone or the location of the school you went to, but all of those things take a--or whether y--whether you're an athlete.

ADUBATO: Right.

Dr. NOONAN: I mean, the countryside is littered with institutions that give undue advantage to athletes because they want to continue to have competitive terms.

ADUBATO: That's wrong, Jack.

Dr. NOONAN: Yeah.

ADUBATO: OK.

Dr. NOONAN: Well...

ADUBATO: That's not the case with a lot of independent schools. And by the way, Princeton is an independent school, correct?

Dr. NOONAN: That's right.

ADUBATO: But it's not an independent school that's struggling financially in the way some others are. Fair to say?

Dr. NOONAN: Fair to say.

ADUBATO: The plight or the challenge for the independent sector of university and colleges today is?

Dr. NOONAN: I think the most--I think what's at stake is--is the future of--of liberal education.

ADUBATO: When you say `liberal,' you don't mean from an ideological point.

Dr. NOONAN: No, I don't mean from an ideological per--perspective. I mean, that idea that believes that what we ought to do in college is to expose students to the best ideas that have ever been thought or written about, and that's essentially the primary mission of an undergraduate education. And--and the--the nature of the world of work is changing so rapidly that unless you have the kinds of skills and attitudes and values that come from having studied the best ideas that have ever been thought or written about, you're going to be--you're going to have a very hard time competing in the--in the intensely competitive environment that--that characterizes this world and the increasingly global nature of the--of our society.

I mean, at--at Bloomfield the thing that I am proudest of is that we have in that institution students born in 60 different countries. We have only 2,000 students.

ADUBATO: Sixty different countries.

Dr. NOONAN: Sixty different countries. And every single classroom at that institution is one where perspectives from all over the world are brought to bear on some of the most fundamental problems that--that vex human beings. That's an intrinsically stimulating environment, Steve, and I want to say it's a more stimulating environment than an environment where the--where the--where the students come from identical backgrounds.

ADUBATO: A more homogeneous situation.

Dr. NOONAN: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: But finally before I let you out of here--and I know you're going to hang around to hear your colleague, Robert Altenkirch, talk about his institution--but let me ask you this: As you leave after these 16 years with everything you know and sense, do we put the value--do we respect and appreciate higher education, particularly in the independent sector, to the degree that we do? And if not, what's it going to take to get there?

Dr. NOONAN: I think we appreciate--I--I think two things are at stake. One is that we--we--we think of higher education as principally--if we think of it principally as a way to get people into the job force, then I think we diminish at least half the power of higher education. What's at stake is to think of an undergraduate education as--as preparing people intellectually for the world they live in as well as preparing them with a set of skills that they need to be successful. It's about--it's about earning a living and it's about living.

ADUBATO: Well, Jack, you've been doing that for a long time as a leader of Bloomfield College after 16 years. We wish you all the best in writing your book. And we offer you an open--you have an open invitation to come back and talk about it when it's published.

Dr. NOONAN: I'd like that.

ADUBATO: Thank you. Wish you all the best.

Dr. NOONAN: Thank you, Steve.

ADUBATO: Stay right there.

Up next, New Jersey Institute of Technology's president, Dr. Robert Altenkirch. Stay with us.

Good job, Jack.

Dr. NOONAN: Thank you.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org, and visit us on the World Wide Web at www.caucusnj.org.

ADUBATO: Joining us now is Dr. Robert Altenkirch, the seventh president of New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Good to see you, Doctor.

Dr. ROBERT A. ALTENKIRCH (PhD; President, New Jersey Institute of Technology): Nice to be here.

ADUBATO: Now you've been in this position since the spring of 2002.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: No, since July.

ADUBATO: July. OK. And let me ask you this: You come from Mississippi State...

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Correct.

ADUBATO: ...All right?--and your background--what were you doing there?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: I was a vice president for research.

ADUBATO: And you come to NJIT. Are Mississippi State and NJIT very similar?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: No, they're not similar.

ADUBATO: OK. Describe that transition.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, I was a dean of engineering at Mississippi State for seven years, and then I was a dean of engineering and architecture at Washington State for three years. I went back to Mississippi State as a vice president for research overseeing mostly the growth of the research program in technological fields--engineering, science, some in agriculture. So the kind of character of what I was doing there translated very well to the nature of NJIT. Now granted, the land grant nature, the location is not the same, but the--but the overall thrust of where that university was trying to go is very similar to NJIT.

ADUBATO: For those who don't understand or know much about the New Jersey--about New Jersey Institute of Technology, what is it?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, it's a technologically focused institution with strengths in architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, beginning to move now into applications in biology and medicine, which is sort of a next wave of technological advances.

ADUBATO: You're based in Newark, New Jersey.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Right.

ADUBATO: OK. Now what's interesting here is that recently we had an interview with Dr. Stuart Cook, your colleague at the University of Medicine and Dentistry. Much of that discussion centered on the proposed restructuring. I'm not sure what word we're using this week. I know merger is not the word being used, but I know there's something afoot in the Statehouse, a commission that's looking at the question as to whether the University of Medicine and Dentistry, Rutgers University and your institution, NJIT, should be somehow connected in a more formal institutionalized sense. Your thoughts?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, I think you're right. The term merger is not really an appropriate term. What is being proposed, which grows out of the Commission on Health Science, Education and Training that Roy Vagelos chaired, is to take the assets of the three research universities, those assets being located in Newark, New Brunswick and Camden, and to reconfigure them so that rather than having three institutions, two of which are spread out geographically, you wind up

with three institutions each of which has a geographic base. And the concept is that by bringing that geographic base together; for example, in Newark, the component of Rutgers, Rutgers-Newark, UMD-NJIT, you generate a 20,000, 22,000 student university which brings the medicine, biology, engineering, computer science closer together to facilitate advances in the transfer of technology from the physical sciences to the medical sciences. For example, advances in imaging that have recently occurred really grow out of mathematics and computer science, not out of medicine; medicine is the application.

ADUBATO: But, Doctor, what do you say those who say, 'Let me get this straight. You come from Mississippi State up to NJIT to lead that institution after Saul Fenster led it for many, many years, former president, and now you're supportive of the idea of somehow reconfiguring where NJIT is, so you're not--you're not your own institution anymore'? Someone might say, 'Well, why are you doing that? You'd like to be the president. There's a good change you'd like to be the president.'

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, I think it's a reasonable proposal to--to look at and to investigate and understand what the positive aspects of it would be.

ADUBATO: As well as the potential downside.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: As well as the potential downside. It's not something that I think should be dismissed out of hand. It should be considered further. And the reasons that we think it should be considered further are this intersection of the physical sciences and the medical and biological sciences that would occur more easily if those disciplines were, in fact, under one administrative roof.

ADUBATO: But it doesn't cause a problem for you on a personal-slash-professional level that you are now the president of an institution? And I don't know of any other presidents who are currently in place at Rutgers, NJIT and UMDNJ would be in a position. But the point is there's a decent chance you would be. Does that matter to you?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, I think the question is: What is the right thing to do for higher education in the state, for research universities in the state, for interacting with the industry? And what is the--the growth of NJIT? What is NJIT's future direction? And so I think it's worthwhile to take a look at this as a possibility.

ADUBATO: OK. The other reality is that you come to the state at a time--while there has always been a difficult time funding higher education, this is an incredibly difficult time. Fair to say?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Yes.

ADUBATO: The proposed cuts coming out of the Statehouse as we speak...

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Right.

ADUBATO: ...are very severe for higher ed. How would New Jersey Institute of Technology be impacted?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, first, I think that this is not a phenomenon that's isolated in New Jersey. I mean, this is occurring all around the country. This is a national economic phenomenon. I can tell you that the states have--other states I've worked in have fared no better over the years. So, although it's difficult, I think we have to realize it's not unusual, it's not isolated.

Now what will the cuts mean to us? Well, one aspect of it is that the funding for the Commission on Science and Technology is an important element of our activity, and we have a...

ADUBATO: Explain to folks who don't know what that is why it's important.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: A state-funded program--I think it's about \$14 million a year--that supports research centers at the various research universities. And we have on the order of three or four of those centers, which are major research efforts in--you know, in our area of expertise. The elimination of that funding would basically shut those operations down. And later on to restart them, if we generate additional funding, would be difficult. So we--we really would look for a transition mode, and moving maybe the Commission on Science and Technology from where it is today down the road. But I think the--the cuts will--going to zero will be rather severe.

Another element is student aid. For example, the outstanding Student Recruitment Program. Those are very good students, and we want to keep them in the state. And so those two cuts will have an impact on the student body, also on our research program.

The 10-percent reduction, we understand, the economy. Will it be easy to handle? No. Is it likely to change substantially? Not unless the economy comes around.

ADUBATO: So let's talk about the fact that tuition will probably be going up.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: In all likelihood tuition will go up; right.

ADUBATO: What would that mean to your student body? I mean, who are your students? Where do they come from and what could this--this increase, a potential significant increase in tuition mean to your students?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, on the undergraduate level, which is what the tuition issue is really going to affect the most, the students come from New Jersey.

ADUBATO: Largely they come from New Jersey?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: They--they come from New Jersey. They come, you know, a lot from around the Newark area. They tend to be first-generation collegegoers. They tend to come from families that can be economically disadvantaged. And so it's a struggle for them. It's a very diverse student body. We have a lot of students in the EOP program, the Educational Opportunity Program, funded by the state; excellent program. So it--it will be a struggle. But, you know, in conversations with the students I think they understand the situation and they're--they're preparing for it.

ADUBATO: Let's talk a little bit more about how NJIT is positioned regionally and nationally, OK, schools specializing in a whole range of technologically related fields. Who are the "best," who are the "top" three or four institutions nationally in this area?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Oh, I would say Georgia Tech. I'll--I'll try to stick on the public side.

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Georgia Tech is probably at the top. It's a--it's a relatively large institution for technically oriented institutions, which don't tend to be very big. Very large research program--\$100 million to \$200 million a year--so that's definitely at the top.

Other institutions we might take a look at--well, on the private side, actually, would be obviously MIT, Caltech. You know, those are the kind of premier institutions.

ADUBATO: So when you're competing--Doctor, when you're competing for grants, large research grants, are you co--are you competing with those institutions?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: How do you fare?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Oh, I think we fare rather well. Our research expenditures are about \$60 million a year. And if you scale that \$60 million to a scale of, say, Georgia Tech, it would--it's comparable. Georgia Tech is a larger institution, so just by scaling it up to their size we're doing fairly well.

ADUBATO: And we have just a...

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: And our rate of growth over the past 10 years has

been one of the higher growth rates in the country.

ADUBATO: Now the question of reconfiguration, however, will have a great impact on the next question I'm about to ask you, and that--actually, I'm going to give you a chance to think about during the break. If I were to ask you your vision for NJIT over the next five years, now the question comes down to is it NJIT as it currently exists or is it NJIT as part of a reconfigured situation is the question. But I'm going to let you think about that.

And we're going to listen to what Dr. Altenkirch has to say right after this break. Stay with us. We'll be right back.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org, and visit us on the World Wide Web at www.caucusnj.org.

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Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health-care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas Company, proud to support education in our communities; and by Verizon Communications.

Promotional support provided by njbiz, all business, all New Jersey; and Cn8, the Comcast Network.

ADUBATO: Doctor, let me ask your--your strategic vision for NJIT. In the next five years, what does it look like?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, we need to grow the research program. The more activity you have in research the more chance you have to generate invention, intellectual property, the more chance then you have to move that into the private sector, which impacts the economy. NJIT needs to be, should be, is and will grow further as an economical development tool for...

ADUBATO: 'Economical development tool.' Translate that.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Well, we have, for example, 160,000 square feet of incubator space which nurtures young companies. Those companies are, by and large, technologically focused. They have inventions. They have patents. They either come from NJIT, the research work that we do, and then faculty start up those companies, or they come from the surrounding activity in the area, move into the incubator and work with us on developing their companies further. That's an economic development tool, because most of those companies that are successful will stay in the area in which they're incubating.

ADUBATO: So NJIT plays a critical role doing something that the

company can't do for itself?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: It's difficult, because...

ADUBATO: They don't have the expertise?

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: In some sense, they don't have the expertise. They don't have the ability to develop business plans. They have good ideas. They need low rent. They need shared facilities. They don't need the same sort of trappings that a very successful business needs. They need to focus on growing the business, making it successful, and then they can move out into the competitive sector.

ADUBATO: And NJ--NJIT is playing a critical role in that regard.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Yes.

ADUBATO: Oh. Doctor, I'm not sure how this reconfiguration, if you will, is going to play out, but the bottom line is NJIT will continue to play an important role...

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: We will.

ADUBATO: ...and you'll be an incredibly--incredibly important position as the seventh president of that institution. And you have an open invitation.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: OK.

ADUBATO: Great job. Thank you very much.

Dr. ALTENKIRCH: Thank you.

ADUBATO: Excellent.