



# A HOMECOMING FOR NJIT

COMMENCEMENT AT “THE ROCK” ADDS TO NJIT’S MANY CONNECTIONS WITH NEWARK

**C**ommencement 2008 – ceremony, excitement, high expectations. For the 2,138 graduates awarded bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees on May 17, the day celebrated personal achievement and the transition to a new phase in life. For NJIT, it was a special homecoming that marked the return of commencement from Continental Airlines Arena to Newark, to the new Prudential Center in the revitalized downtown heart of the city.

“We are the first institution to hold a commencement at ‘The Rock,’ which is very appropriate given that we are Newark’s

hometown university and have had an association with our host city dating back to 1881,” said NJIT President Robert A. Altenkirch.

Keynote speaker Thom Mayne, a Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate, was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters. Mayne, founder of the acclaimed architectural practice Morphosis, advised the graduating students, “You’ll find that as you transition from the nurturing, intuitive world of academe into the outside world, it may not be easy to maintain your integrity. Aim to keep your creativity alive and remember, no one else will ever be you.”

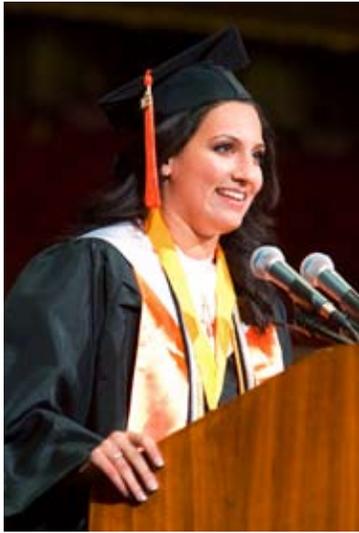
“AIM TO KEEP YOUR CREATIVITY ALIVE AND REMEMBER, NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER BE YOU.”

*Thom Mayne, keynote speaker*



ABOVE: The Class of 2008 gathers at “The Rock” – the Prudential Center in downtown Newark.

PHOTO: JAMIES ROBERTSON



SINCE ITS FOUNDING AS NEWARK TECHNICAL SCHOOL, NJIT HAS BEEN A VITAL PARTNER WITH THE CITY IN EDUCATION, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CIVIC BETTERMENT.

Dr. Norman Li, president of NL Chemical Technology, Inc., received an honorary doctorate in recognition of his distinguished contributions to chemical engineering. Long-time Newark resident Elizabeth Del Tufo was awarded an honorary degree for community commitments that include helping to create the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee.

Commencement 2008 underscores a bond between NJIT and the City of Newark that

anticipating availability of the building for use by NJIT no later than 2012. Upon completion of renovation, the building will serve as a center for education in the STEM disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Based at the center will be NJIT’s initiatives to improve STEM education through K-12 outreach programs. These programs are solid, positive links to the Newark school system and other school districts in New Jersey.



PHOTOS: KAI CHAN

TOP: Diva Ranade, senior class president and BS in biomedical engineering, was the 2008 student speaker.

ABOVE: Commencement 2008 inside the Prudential Center

continues to grow stronger and more diverse. Since its founding as Newark Technical School, NJIT has been a vital partner with the city in education, economic growth and civic betterment. Today, as part of Newark’s University Heights district, NJIT is an institution with international stature in science and technology. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the NJIT Enterprise Development Center, which incubates technology-based start-up businesses with the potential for contributing to economic prosperity in the Newark region and throughout New Jersey.

Continuing physical transformation of the NJIT campus includes an agreement to purchase adjacent Central High School, an-

On broader fronts, NJIT is bringing Division I college sports to Newark and contributing to the revitalization of areas beyond its campus. In addition to being the venue for commencement, the Prudential Center will be where NJIT’s men’s and women’s basketball teams play many of their home games, complementing the same use of Bears and Eagles Riverfront Stadium for Highlanders baseball. Home ice for the New Jersey Devils hockey team, The Rock is the first major sports facility to be built in the New York Metropolitan area in more than 25 years. An architecturally dramatic setting for concerts as well as sports, The Rock is the cornerstone of Newark’s Downtown Core Redevelopment Project.



Under the heading of neighborhood redevelopment, this past April the Newark Municipal Council passed a resolution designating NJIT as the “sole and exclusive redeveloper” of properties specified in the Gateway Plan — which covers an area of some 18 acres north of campus extending along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to Orange Street. NJIT has responsibility for ensuring implementation in the best interests of all stakeholders.

The Gateway project is a key effort to improve amenities available to the university and the surrounding community. The project envisions enhanced housing, new commercial space with shops and restaurants, and could result in the establishment of a “Greek Village” for fraternities and sororities on campus property adjacent to Lock and Warren Streets.

While NJIT’s presence in education and research has become global over the decades, the university is deeply mindful of its historic roots in Newark. It is an engagement that in 2008 continues to expand with new commitments to the city’s social and economic well-being.



*An artist’s concept of the Gateway redevelopment  
(courtesy of Elkus-Manfredi Architects)*

*Author: Christina Crovetto is assistant editor of NJIT Magazine.*