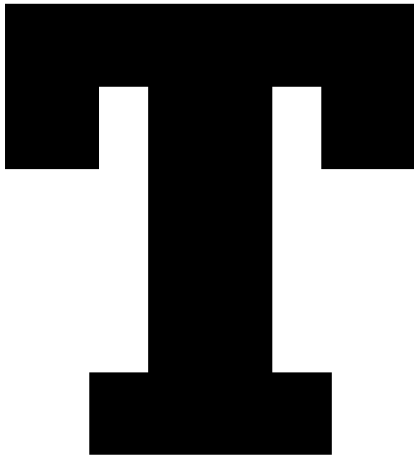




# OF CENTRAL HIGH AND NJIT

## A NEW RELATIONSHIP



his past June, NJIT became the owner of what is now known as the NJIT Central King Building – the former Central High School of Newark. The acquisition concluded a sale and purchase agreement with Newark Public Schools initiated in May 2008. Work to meet immediate NJIT needs is in progress as a host of creative ideas are proposed for a comprehensive renovation and usage plan.

The first use of the building by NJIT students is set for second-floor classrooms this spring, when they will enter through doors on Summit Street that have been freshly painted in the university's signature red. Projects such as the installation of sprinkler and fire alarm systems, plus elevator upgrades, have been under way since last summer. Later improvements are to include smart-classroom technology, new telecom and computer networks, and upgrades for lighting and temperature control.

Although ownership of the Central High building has passed to NJIT, President Robert A. Altenkirch says that there are links between Newark's "hometown university" and the city's high school students that will remain strong. "We are continuing many of the relationships and initiatives that existed when we were neighbors, commitments that are part of our engagement with the Newark community at large. Acquisition of this historic building connects NJIT even more firmly to the life of the city that has been home to our university for more than a century."

### WONDERFUL POTENTIAL

The Central King Building gives NJIT a substantial amount of much-needed space for classrooms and other uses, along with an elegant 930-seat auditorium, gym and swimming pool.

"This is a building full of wonderful potential," says Anthony Schuman, associate professor in the College of Architecture and Design and a member of the committee assembled by Altenkirch to develop a comprehensive vision for the facility's future. *[continued]*

*LEFT: Freshly painted NJIT red, the Central King Building entrance faces Summit Street, which will become a pedestrian mall closed to vehicles.*

*ABOVE: Central High School in 1964, facing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard*

PHOTO: JOHN MICALE



## CONTINUED REVITALIZATION OF THE CENTRAL KING BUILDING WILL REQUIRE IMPLEMENTING CHANGES THAT ARE FEASIBLE AS WELL AS CREATIVE.

Schuman also emphasizes that the building should be recognized as an important link between the community and the university. Built in 1911, the structure continues to resonate as an important city institution on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the former High Street, which is still fronted by major religious, civic and educational institutions in the 21st century.

### COLLEGIATE GOTHIC

Four and a half stories tall, the structure's original design was developed by Ernest F. Guilbert of the Newark architectural firm Guilbert and Betelle. The imposing staircases that led to the main entrance on High Street were replaced in 1974 by an addition to house a new gym and pool.



Darius Sollohub, director of New Jersey School of Architecture, is also serving on the president's planning committee. He identifies the building's exterior architectural style as Collegiate Gothic. "The form is a classic educational building that is best described as a square donut with an auditorium in the middle. Princeton and Yale have prime examples of this same architecture on their campuses." Sollohub points out characteristic exterior ornamentation that includes crenellated towers, arched entrances, and elaborate terra cotta ornamental work around windows. The style has many pluses. "The scale of the rooms is generous, and ample daylight flows in through large windows everywhere," Sollohub says.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Continued revitalization of the Central King Building will require implementing changes that are feasible as well as creative. For example, there is the challenge of renovating the gym and pool while presenting a facade that is a more welcoming presence on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

"This structure is a very strong historical and physical connection between Newark and our campus, so it's a significant consideration," says Schuman. "Of all the buildings that had impressive entrances on High Street, none was grander than Central High School with its terrace and dual cascading stairways leading to the street."

Central High needed the gym and pool, but the way these facilities were integrated with the original structure fundamentally changed the building's relationship with a once grand street. Schuman asks whether it's even architecturally and economically realistic to open a new entrance on that side of the building.

Alternatively, an appropriate redesign of the current main entrance from Summit Street is more doable. NJIT acquired Summit Street with the Central High building, and it is now closed to public vehicular traffic for its entire length. Transformation of the street into a pedestrian mall will continue as part of the university's master plan for campus beautification and improvement. ■

*Author: Sheryl Weinstein is public relations director at NJIT.*



LEFT: Renovations currently in progress will create much needed space for classrooms and other uses in NJIT's new Central King Building. ABOVE: For future use – a 930 seat auditorium.

# THREE STORIES OF CENTRAL HIGH AND NJIT ALUMNI

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heir days as students at Central High School are separated by decades, and each has worked to realize different career aspirations. But in addition to having graduated

from Central High, Matthew E. Perry, Jr. and Donia Piersaint and Cherokee Jest-Allen share the bond of being NJIT alumni.

## INSPIRED TO ACHIEVE



Matthew Perry

Perry, who received his Central High diploma in 1964, at first went on to NJIT's certificate program in plastics engineering and a position at AT&T's Western Electric plant in Kearny, New Jersey, which produced equipment

for the former Bell Telephone System. The impetus to achieve was strong, he says, fostered by his parents at home, teachers he had at Central High, and later the faculty at Newark College of Engineering.

Subsequently working for AT&T at the corporate level in information technology, Perry had managerial positions of increasing responsibility in areas that included telecommunications, systems engineering and data systems, manufacturing, marketing and finance. For some six years prior to retiring in 1998, he was at the forefront of the revolution in communications technology, as a manager for the company's long-distance wireless operations. In the course of his AT&T career, he also returned to NCE to complete a BS in industrial engineering, 1976, and an MS in industrial administration, 1978.

"NCE was very welcoming and very supportive, and I felt that I had to give back, especially with respect to helping African American students have the same opportunities that I had," Perry says. That's

why, before moving to North Carolina in retirement, he was a dedicated member of the Advisory Board of NJIT's Educational Opportunity Program for more than 20 years, serving terms as president and vice president. He was also a member of AT&T's Campus Executive Team for NJIT, a partnership that helped to support the university's long- and short-term objectives as well as outreach initiatives focused on motivating young people at all levels to stay on the right educational path.

## SUPPORT TO SUCCEED



Donia Piersaint

Piersaint, who came to Newark and Central High from Haiti, received her high school diploma in 1996. Hearing Carlomagno Ontaneda, EOP assistant director of recruitment and admissions, speak

about educational opportunities at NJIT was truly inspirational, she says. "Carlo then worked with me to apply successfully to NJIT as if he were my high school guidance counselor. He gave me help that I will always appreciate."

Yet Piersaint also says that college work was at first very daunting – so much so that she needed to take time off after two semesters to "regroup" as she puts it. Having taken a year off, Piersaint returned to campus more determined than ever to succeed. She completed a BS in biomedical engineering in 2003. More academic achievements followed – a 2004 MS in industrial engineering and a 2005 MS in occupational safety and health.

Piersaint completed her first master's as a full-time student and pursued her second graduate degree while employed at Schering-Plough, initially in environmental safety and health. She then transitioned to supply-chain management. In

2006, after working briefly in a similar capacity for Pfizer, she took the step of starting her own consulting practice.

Today, based in Brooklyn, New York, Donia + Associates LLC is building success with a broad range of business-management services for clients that include city and state agencies. Piersaint and her colleagues offer expertise in areas such as strategic planning, work-flow and staffing analyses, workforce development, customer service and training.

## MORE THAN A NUMBER



Cherokee Jest-Allen

Jest-Allen is an even more recent alumna of Central High and NJIT. Her high school diploma is dated 2004, and her NJIT bachelor's from the School of Management was awarded in 2009. She added an MS in

information systems to her academic accomplishments at NJIT in 2010.

Jest-Allen says that she wanted to study at NJIT ever since the seventh grade, motivated by the encouragement of an uncle who had attended the university. Participating in the summer Project Grad program while in high school and the Educational Opportunity Program at NJIT were important avenues to her academic success.

After completing her master's, Jest-Allen accepted a part-time position with NJIT's Office of Career Development Services, as coordinator for the community work-study and public service programs. She looks forward with enthusiasm to embarking on a career in information technology and speaks highly of the university that has prepared her with the necessary knowledge and skills. "I've had a great experience. The people here do help you along the way. You really are much more than a number at NJIT."