

Hizzoner, the alum

Rochester's new mayor is an RIT graduate

There may be scaffolding outside his office windows, but Bob Duffy '93 (multidisciplinary studies), mayor of Rochester, has a beautiful view of the city.

"There's a sea change in Rochester," he says. "There's no doubt in my mind."

Duffy wears optimism easily – and with some justification. The former Rochester police chief won 72 percent of the vote in the November 2005 election, receiving support from a broad spectrum of constituents. Since taking office Jan. 1, he's made progress on many of his goals. Accomplishments include forming a bipartisan City Hall leadership team, establishing additional walking beats for police officers, creating a summer youth employment program, establishing an advisory group to help improve high school graduation rates, and launching a neighborhood clean-up project.

There have been economic achievements as well. In March, after Duffy made several visits to Albany, the city was granted an additional \$17.6 million in state aid, a 33 percent increase. At his State of the City address in April, Duffy announced that Nukote International Inc. would move its corporate headquarters to Rochester, creating 100-150 new jobs. The company produces supplies for printers and copiers.

So far, so good. Although he knows the future will hold challenges, the new mayor has high hopes for his hometown. "We must maximize what's good and great," he says, "and address what's holding us back."

"We're going in a great direction," says Duffy, "and we're going fast."

One of those watching the new mayor's progress is John Klofas, RIT professor of criminal justice and a nationally known expert in the field of violence prevention. Klofas and Duffy have worked together on several initiatives over the past decade.

"I regard Bob as a new generation public servant," says Klofas. "He collects data from many sources, listens to opinions from a wide range of perspectives, assesses information very carefully and then makes his decision. He's very demanding, very hard working. I believe he has a real interest in getting things right."

Duffy grew up in Rochester's Maplewood area, the youngest of three sons of a Taylor Instruments administrator and a school teacher. He played basketball for Aquinas Institute and planned to become a coach and a teacher.

After three years at a New Hampshire

Former police chief Bob Duffy '93 addresses staff at a City Hall briefing.

college, Duffy had a change of heart. He took the civil service exam for police officer. A “ride-along” with a senior officer convinced him he was on the right track.



Duffy with Santo Valenti '55 at an alumni reception in April.

“I was hooked,” he says. “I realized being a police officer was an opportunity to do good every day.”

He joined the Rochester Police Department in 1976 and never regretted the decision. He advanced in his career and had reached the level of sergeant by 1989, when he began studies at RIT.

“I saw an ad about the flex program,” he says. Offered through the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies in the College of Applied Science and Technology, the program allows students to design a course of study that suits their individual needs.

“What RIT offered me was the chance

to earn my degree with different concentrations that were important to me,” says Duffy, “and to arrange my schedule around family and work. That flexibility was so important.”

He credits his wife, Barbara, with helping him balance his many responsibilities – as a police officer, student, husband and father. At RIT, Duffy focused on criminal justice, communications and business management. He took classes nights, weekends, and via distance learning.

“I bought my first computer – a Mac – at the RIT bookstore,” he says. “Going to school part-time, it took almost four years. I was so proud to get that degree.”

He says the RIT studies “really helped me to grow in my job.”

By the time he graduated in 1993, he had reached the rank of deputy chief. He continued his education and in 1998 received a master’s degree in public administration from Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Mayor Bill Johnson named Duffy chief of police in 1998; he stepped down to run for mayor in 2005.

That was not an easy decision.

“I never wanted to go into politics,” Duffy maintains. “I have always been a non-partisan person.”

But ultimately, he was persuaded that if he could become mayor, he would have greater opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives. He says the job is not about politics. It’s about people.

“The most important thing to me is people and how we serve people.”

Public service is tremendously rewarding, Duffy says. He has never regretted his career choice. He encourages students to consider going into the field. But no matter what profession people pursue, they should look for ways to help their community.

“Many people stand on the sidelines and criticize,” Duffy says. “Not enough are willing to roll up their sleeves and help.”

The mayor speaks on this subject with evident personal conviction.

“Success isn’t just about money,” says Duffy. “The greatest measure of a life well lived is to look back and see what you were able to contribute.”

“Before we leave this earth, you want to look back and feel you were part of something great.”

RIT students learn from former mayor’s experience



Bill Johnson Jr. teaches Introduction to Public Policy in the College of Liberal Arts.

Former Rochester Mayor Bill Johnson Jr. has a new perspective these days. Instead of leading a city, he’s heading a classroom.

Johnson joined RIT in January as a distinguished professor of public policy in the College of Liberal Arts, after serving three terms and 12 years in office. He began teaching in the spring quarter.

“Being around young people is a rejuvenating process,” Johnson says. “Just this early immersion has been stimulating for me.”

A civic leader with national stature in areas relating to urban issues, regionalism and education, Johnson uses real life policy issues of education, health care, public safety and criminal justice to make textbook concepts real for his students. He strives to heighten their awareness of the impact of public policy on their lives.

In the fall, Johnson will assume a joint professorship, having one foot in the public policy department and the other in the new urban studies program, which is slated

for approval. Johnson will look at issues of policy that impact urban areas.

In addition, Johnson is seeking funding to support a project that will create a training institute for leadership of communities in transition. This will involve the analysis of successful programs he implemented in Rochester and the potential for their replication in other communities.

“I’ve always been susceptible to new ideas and approaches, and out of that have come numerous projects that have worked in Rochester,” he says.

Prior to his election as mayor in 1993, Johnson was president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Rochester for 21 years. In 1996-97, he held the Frederick H. Minett Professorship at RIT and taught a course on urban issues.

Johnson earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science from Howard University, and taught for four years at Mott Community College in Flint, Mich.