



Albert Simone

Albert Simone has spurred unprecedented growth at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Simone has boosted student enrollment, academic programs, community outreach and capital improvements at the 174-year-old university. Under his lead, RIT's annual budget nearly has doubled from \$228 million to \$470 million.

"And that does not include over the last five years \$50 million a year capital improvements," says the economist, professor and administrator, who brought a proven track record to RIT when he became its eighth president in 1992.

The first step Simone took when he became president was to draw up a comprehensive, 10-year strategic plan. The process took two years.

Improving student housing was a top priority. In the late 1990s, a three-year, \$65 million residence hall restoration project was launched. Then, another \$50 million went for new student apartments.

"Building a greater sense of community was another priority," Simone says.

Construction of the \$25 million Gordon Field House is under way and will have room for 8,500 people to gather. The university also added more common areas for students and staff.

"We built plazas and added benches and landscaping to make the external environment more welcoming," Simone says.

RIT has 2,800 faculty and staff members. Enrollment has increased from fewer than 10,000 students just over a decade ago to 15,300 today, he says.

On the human resource side, Simone has increased diversity and pluralism.

"We're now a more ethnically and racially diverse student body, faculty and staff," he says. "And I think that enhances the quality of education."

RIT students come from all 50 states and more than 90 foreign countries.

Under Simone's watch, RIT has added dozens of new academic programs in every college, including those in emerging fields.

Simone believes higher education must partner with the community to survive and thrive. That is one reason he hosts weekly breakfasts at his home—more than 280 breakfasts so far.

"I like to think of Liberty Hill breakfasts as an intellectual gathering place for the community," Simone says.

Typically, some 50 leaders gather over quiche and croissants to discuss important topics that affect the Rochester community.

Recently, he hosted the special assistant to U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, a manager of an upscale hospital system in Naples, Fla., and the manager of Kodak Park.

Simone grew up in Boston and worked with his father, who had a small trucking company. He was the first member of his family to attend college.

He received a degree in economics from Tufts University. His aspirations were to become a corporate CEO.

After a brief stint at U.S. Steel Corp., Simone enrolled in Massachusetts Institute of Technology. By 23, he had earned a doctorate in economics.

Simone began teaching to finance his education and loved it so much that he never left the field. He taught at Tufts, MIT, Northeastern University, Boston College and the University of Cincinnati, where from 1972 to 1983 he was dean of the College of Business Administration.

Then the father of four moved his family to Hawaii, where Simone left his first major legacy of growth.

While there nearly a decade, Simone became president of the University of Hawaii system and chancellor of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He directed 10 campuses with 86,000 students and a \$600 million annual budget.

As at RIT, he built a strategic plan, which resulted in some 40 new degree certificates and programs.

In Hawaii he also forged international relationships. He was the first American university president to officially visit North Korea, Vietnam and Vladivostok when these regions were closed to the United States.

In addition to his job responsibilities, Simone has served a number of organizations, including a current stint as a director of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He was appointed by the Federal Reserve System board of governors and Chairman Alan Greenspan.

"I love what I do. I always have," Simone says. "I see myself as an academic who is doing education administration." □