An Interview with

JAMES HALL

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

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GILBERT COHEN: This is Saturday, January 12, 1991. This is Gil Cohen. I’m speaking with Professor James Hall in his home in Roseland, New Jersey. And, we were discussing old times. One of the areas I’d like to get into. First, I’d sort of like to get into the background to the development of the campus as much as possible. I guess my first question, has been to most people anyway, is how would you describe the old Rector Street campus to some future historian? Would it look like? What was it like to be there?

JAMES HALL: Well, when I first came here it was a strange, scattered sort of a college, with the main part at 40 Rector Street and other divisions or departments of Rutgers in Newark were scattered in various downtown buildings. The School of Pharmacy was up in north Newark. There was no idea of a campus. I remember being in the biology lab looking out the back window and noticing an old plot of land growing vegetables in a graveyard behind the college, that belonged to the Anglican Church.

There were very few student facilities. But there was a camaraderie. I would say there was a spirit among the faculty and the students, they sort of cooperated with one another; there was what you might call an esprit de corps. The students didn’t have anything much in regard to student activities or student facilities. But they did believe, and I think they did get a superior education. There was a concern for the students and for the kind of education that they got. I think even more so maybe than today.

COHEN: Do you feel that there’s something today as far as—let’s say in the seventies as an example—as far as relationship with students was concerned. What change came about during that period would you say?

HALL: Students became more diverse certainly with regard to ethnic backgrounds and that sort of thing. I don’t know so much in the seventies, but what I sense is that, at least today, I think that there is less concern for undergraduate students than in the past. For instance, as an example, if there were certain key undergraduate courses that every zoology major or biology major needed to have—say for instance, everybody would make sure that those courses were taught with the usual professors. [If that professor] was ill or was on sabbatical or for some reason or other couldn’t teach the course—then they made certain that somebody else of comparable training would be brought in to teach that course. Now, the impression that I have is “Oh, oh well, he didn’t want to teach that course for this year—well, we’ll just cancel it for a year or so.”

COHEN: Why did this change come about, this change in less emphasis or less concern about undergraduate teaching during—you’re talking about the seventies I take it?

HALL: Well, seventies and eighties.
COHEN: Seventies and eighties, okay. Why did that happen, in your opinion?

HALL: I don’t know, but I think it is because of an increasing pressure on faculty to be involved in research which is financially [unintelligible]. That is, in the early days, yes, the things that were involved with the retention of faculty and promotion and so on—we have the same categories now as we had then. You know, teaching effectiveness, research accomplishment, and general usefulness, and so on, etc.—the four main categories. But they’re interpreted differently. Yes, there was an emphasis that in order to be promoted you had to have an active research program. But especially in the early years, there wasn’t that much money around. They were happy if you had a research program that was funded a little bit by the research council or something like that.

I remember when I first came there, one of my key requirements was what was called the Firebird apparatus for measuring tissue escalation. The whole thing, I think, cost about six hundred dollars. So I got a grant from the Research Council for three hundred dollars. So how do you buy it? You buy the machine one year, and the water bath one year and you buy the rest of the manometers the next year. So it took two years to assemble this vital piece of equipment.

But now there is a greater emphasis on research and on the obtaining of federal grants. The impression that I have, and I don’t say it’s a hundred percent correct, is that it doesn’t much matter so far as your teaching is concerned or how much you teach. It doesn’t matter even how much you publish, although that’s a great deal, it’s the federal grants. When you get a big federal grant, you’ll get promoted. You don’t get a federal grant, you won’t get promoted.

COHEN: What is the relationship between…

HALL: The emphasis is on research, on federally-funded research. The person, especially the younger faculty striving to gain advancement and eventually tenure, are less concerned with the student, that’s not going to matter very much so far as his promotion is concerned. So he spends his time on research. He’ll teach a little bit here and there when he feels like it. But nobody is going to say, Well now you have to teach this course this term, so on and so forth. I doubt it.

[Break in recording]

COHEN: We’re back. I wanted to go back again to the old campus. What role did you and your colleagues, if any role, have in the planning of the new facility?

HALL: Well, after it was determined, with endless meetings and with the higher administration in New Brunswick and so on, as to what buildings were going to be built in the first phase. The first phase included the Dana Library, a science building, the Conklin Building for the humanities and so forth—

COHEN: Conferences—

HALL: And what was the fourth? And the law school.
COHEN: Well, Ackerson was in sixty-six, I believe. I’m not sure exactly. It was Ackerson, Boyden, and Conklin, and Dana and what is now Robeson Center.

HALL: Right. Well, Robeson was after the initial.

COHEN: Ohh—I’m trying to remember the dates. I have to double check it.

HALL: But then we were very concerned with the planning of the facilities. This started at the departmental level. Endless meetings with the department as a whole or with the committee of the department and with the architects.

COHEN: That was the zoology and physiology departments.

HALL: Yes, yes. I remember endless meetings with the architects in what was called the President’s Room. Remember the President’s Room, you remember the President’s Room in 40 Rector? It was across from the Dean’s office.


HALL: And it’s a President’s Room because, when I came there to be interviewed for the job, which would be in the spring of forty-seven—a man by the name of Dr. Black had been the president of Newark, before it joined—.

COHEN: Before it became part of Rutgers.

HALL: Yes, before it became part of Rutgers. And he still was there; that was his office. I remember going in and talking with him. It was called the President’s Room, and it was the only room that was available for small faculty meetings or departmental meetings or that sort of thing. We went through endless planning and deciding upon what square footage was available. At one time, because the initial four buildings were involved with the bond issue which was approved, I think, in 1959. But then there were endless delays in the implementation. I remember one year, this was in the early sixties some time—because since it was funded from urban renewal among other things. And there were endless papers that had to be filed with the city, with the state and with the federal government. In one of those years, there was a change in city administration. The outgoing administration forgot to file the renewal of the application. So everything had to go back to square one and we had to start all over again. So the actual building, although the funds were allocated in fifty-nine, the building never began until about sixty-four or sixty-five, something like that. And when we moved into the buildings, there was a mad scramble to get into them by September of sixty-seven.

COHEN: You had mentioned before we went on tape that you heard about our present campus being the first campus to be on wholly Urban Renewal land. Could you go into that just a bit, please? What you know about it?
HALL: Well, I don’t know much about it but I always have heard that this was the first campus in the country that was built entirely from Urban Renewal land. It’s such a…I guess it is rather unique.

COHEN: What alternatives, if any, were considered for the location of the college at the time that you’re aware of?

HALL: I don’t…

COHEN: You have no recollection of…

HALL: I don’t know particularly. I guess there were alternatives, but there was a long debate for a while during the fifties, as to whether or not there was going to be a consolidation and the building of a campus in Newark, rather than this collection of odd buildings.

COHEN: There had been, after, the University of Newark became part of Rutgers had been a discussion of—Could you elaborate on that point, if you have any recollection?

HALL: Not much. The University of Newark was based mainly on 40 Rector Street. I know there was gym that we used over in the Y. There was an insurance building, the old Globe insurance building, that housed some of—over there, diagonally opposite from the Y. There was a—I don’t know. On the next street, to Rector Street. [They both speak at the same time.] Fulton Street, there was a building there, that the University had. That’s one thing. So we’re scattered in buildings in downtown Newark. And then there was the College of Pharmacy up in north Newark. There were discussions in 1950 as to whether or not we were going to, you know, put greater support in Newark to build a consolidated campus. But I don’t remember specifics.

COHEN: Well, when the new campus was being planned, which is now the University Heights campus—how did the planning for it and the construction of it affect, in your view, the mission of the college, from what it had been, or what is was at the time?

HALL: Well, I think that was all positive. I mean, certainly it gave us better facilities, a more centralized college. It gave you a sense of belonging [dog barks] even if it was a suburban to a sort of a university campus, a little bit, or of university cohesion, not just classes in a downtown building.

COHEN: How did it affect the relations of the university with the community, the actual construction of the campus, do you feel, that you understand?

HALL: I don’t know too much about that aspect of it. I know there were some discussions, especially with the black and Hispanic communities and with the—there was some concern that people were being displaced because of the buildings. That was terrible area before the college.

COHEN: Who conducted these discussions with the people who had been displaced, do you have a recollection of that?
HALL: I don’t believe so.

COHEN: Concerning Smith Hall, again going back to the campus, what is your opinion of the conflicting findings, there seemed to be conflicting findings in the two reports that were issued, one by the state and one by the federal government, I think it was the Environmental Protection Agency. There seemed to be differences, at least, of emphasis on the possible dangers at Smith Hall. Do you have any sense of that situation?

HALL: I always tend to think that it was [unintelligible], partly due to the construction of the building, especially the location of animal behavior on the upper floors. And, apparently, sometimes a little carelessness in the care and the disposal of animal products and so on. And there were, and I think one time there was some isotope being used in experiments and it got into the main drainage system somehow. I heard some story of urine dripping down from the ceiling light down on one of the floors below, which might have been caused by a plugged duct or something, I don’t know. But I think a lot of that was over emotional. When you get these—it’s very difficult to prove, especially when you have pockets of—the question was there were a lot of people involved that got cancer, that worked in there. But it’s very hard to prove that they actually, it might partly have been fortuitous. It might have been something, but I don’t think it was as serious as... I mean, take for example, something entirely disconnected from the university. On the street on which I lived next door, during the year before and maybe the year after, for a couple of years, when I lost my wife to cancer, in 1984. But at that time, within the course of the year, there were six or seven people within about a one block radius, who died of cancer. Are you going to say there’s something sinister at Seven Kirkland Avenue? I don’t think so.

COHEN: Other perceptions at the time, again on the subject of the campus, the perception of crime in the neighborhood—my question is, what effect did this perception have on faculty recruitment in your department, if you know, in other departments throughout the university? Was that a problem?

HALL: I don’t know. I mean, so far as faculty recruitment was concerned, you know, and I was actively involved in it because I was serving during the sixties. I was the senior person for thirty years there. The question of danger on the campus, I don’t think was—Oh, we discussed that it was a downtown, urban campus. But it was fairly well lit and there was the university police, close-by parking lots. No, I don’t think it entered into—not to my knowledge.

COHEN: How about the effect on student recruitment?

HALL: Some, I suppose. But, I don’t think too much because we had a very active graduate program in the evening. Though there was one incident I remember, and this was in the late seventies, something like that, of a person who had attended a class and was subsequently knifed on the street. But that’s the only specific case that I know of.
COHEN: You say graduate program, you were talking about, in the zoology and physiology department at the time, is that what you were referring to?

HALL: Well, I don’t think this person was involved in those programs But yes, yes we did have those.

COHEN: You mentioned that the graduate programs were a draw. How significant would you consider the graduate programs, as a draw on students to attend?

HALL: Well, I was referring to the graduate programs because there were classes in the evening, where you would have expected maybe some people, especially women, to be timorous. And some were, to some extent, but they usually came anyway. If you want me to go into the graduate program and so on, I can go into that.

COHEN: Yes, in fact that’s a major category, and since we’re on the subject why don’t you go right into it. I have a couple of questions. I guess my lead-off question on the graduate program was why was the graduate school at the time established? Why was it considered so important? Why was it such a priority at the time it was established in 1975?

HALL: Yes, something like that. I guess because we had grown up to the point where we needed to be a separate entity. So far as graduate work at Newark was concerned, it began, of course, as an offshoot of comparable programs in New Brunswick. The first program in the biological area was a program which I and a couple of other people like John Gilson [sp] and Forrest Wood at the time were involved in—a program in what was called biological sciences. But, partly the department didn’t approve of it. [Laughs] It was always zoology, which we got permission to run through the graduate school in New Brunswick. And, there were courses in—many of our students came from the pharmaceutical industry. And there always was, for years and years, a very strong relationship between the graduate program in Newark, which was this biological sciences program and the pharmaceutical industry. We started that program, I think, in fifty-six, fifty-five or fifty-six. And there were courses in physiology, in biochemistry, in pharmacology, in physical chemistry, in zoology, evolution, that sort of thing. And we got many good students from industry.

COHEN: Was this mostly evening programs?

HALL: Yes, as I said, these were all evening programs. I was used to always being down there not only during the day, but two or sometimes three evenings a week for the graduate courses. And that program usually ran, for years, between twenty to thirty part-time students. The chemistry department developed graduate courses in chemistry, which of course was taught with the approval of the chemistry department in New Brunswick, and approved through the section. Of course, in those days we worked through the sections, right?

COHEN: Yes.

HALL: And then I guess there were a third group of graduate courses in psychology.
COHEN: Were these a mix of these students working for master’s and the doctorate, or mostly one or the other, or what?

HALL: Well, at first the biological sciences was a master’s program. If, like I did, and the people in chemistry, which were for years the only people that had any Ph.D. students—the students would have to be approved by the graduate school in New Brunswick. Because in addition, of course, to being on the faculty at Newark, the people who were involved in the graduate courses were, of course, members of the graduate faculty in New Brunswick in their appropriate discipline. And so, I had many students in the graduate program in zoology, or the graduate program in physiology and biochemistry in New Brunswick. But—they took some courses in Newark, they would have to take some courses in New Brunswick—but then they did their research in Newark, or they would do their research with the chemists in Newark. And the support for that sort thing and support for research assistants and so on would come from federal money. I remember I got one of the first federal grants in the department from the National Science Foundation and then from NIH.

COHEN: When were you chairman of the department, what years were they, approximately?

HALL: Ah, sixty-two to sixty-nine.

COHEN: What effect did the establishment of the graduate school itself have on the curriculum? Courses were taught before the graduate school, but then—. What effect did it actually have on the curriculum?

HALL: Well, it was a positive effect, I think. More courses were offered. In many ways it made the administration easier, than having to do everything through situations in New Brunswick. And it got to the point where in chemistry and in zoology and so on, there was a wide enough diversity of courses and there was sufficient graduate student—

[Break in recording.]

COHEN: We’re back. I was asking, what effect did the establishment of the graduate school have on the undergraduate curriculum? That’s number one.

HALL: I don’t know whether I can answer that question. I don’t think it had a tremendous impact. I think it facilitated graduate work, but that is a different question from what I was going to comment on: and that is that the presence of graduate work and of graduate students and so on, always has a very positive effect on undergraduate education. I really don’t see—or it’s very difficult in many scientific fields—for a professor or instructor to keep up in his field and to be able to teach stimulatingly at the undergraduate level if he doesn’t have graduate work and an ability to teach graduate courses.

It gets boring. I imagine it would get boring to teach ABC’s all the time and not be able, say for instance, to teach an advanced course in literature. Just the same as, it would be boring to teach general biology if you weren’t able to also learn some of the great advances that are going on, say for instance, in my field in cellular physiology and biochemistry and that sort. So I think it is
vital to an undergraduate program, to have a graduate diploma. And the graduate students have been good, and they make superior teaching instructors.

COHEN: Huh! I don’t know how to phrase this question, I think we were talking before about the effect of the pressure for doing research and getting grants, as having a negative effect on undergraduate teaching. Now how does that situation tie in with what you were just saying about the positive effects of teaching graduate courses on the campus? Isn’t there a conflict on the one hand between greater emphasis on graduate research?

HALL: Well, I think the answer—in my own opinion—in having a reasonable division of effort between the two. I always was able to teach one or two key undergraduate courses per term, and one or so graduate courses and be involved with research. That’s fine. And I think the undergraduate teaching is not damaged until there is an over-due emphasis not only on research but on financial productiveness.

COHEN: I see.

HALL: Certainly, I am all for having the ability to teach graduate courses and the ability to do research and also to get outside support for it. In some cases it is a lot more important than others where very expensive equipment is involved. You can’t expect the university to provide all of it. But this should be a compelling factor in deciding whether or not you want to invest in the future of a faculty member for the next thirty years in deciding questions of tenure. You want to have somebody who’s productive and who’s going to be productive and is going contribute to the reputation of the department.

COHEN: Where does the ability to teach come in here? How does it relate to productivity in deciding whether one gets tenure or not?

HALL: Well, that is a difficult question to answer. Some people always have the ability to communicate well with undergraduate students. Some people maybe have a lesser ability to communicate. But I think you should be involved in both. And, I think a person’s ability to communicate and his willingness not only to communicate in classroom, but to understand students and their problems and advise them and be interested in their careers and so on and so forth—is a vital part of being a college professor.

COHEN: Do you think—I’ve said this before—the old days you were talking about the kind of teaching that was done in the old days, in the old Rector Street days compared to the kind of teaching that was actually done in the seventies.

HALL: We didn’t have as good facilities.

COHEN: You didn’t have as good facilities.

HALL: We maybe tried harder because we didn’t have the facilities.
COHEN: You’re saying that the main reason for the poorer teaching in the seventies was because of the pressures on faculty to—you mentioned to be financially productive research, is that…?

HALL: Well, I don’t say “poor teaching.” My impression is that maybe not so much in the seventies as in the eighties there was less of a concern for undergraduate curriculum than for... Alright, well, let me be personal.

COHEN: Okay.

HALL: As I said, one of the key subjects for the pre-med, pre-dent major was my course in animal physiology. This group of students, you’ve got pre-meds and pre-dents, a very important component of the good students in the zoology majors. There were a few pre-meds and pre-dents as chemistry majors, but the majority of pre-med and pre-dent, and I was very concerned about that, because for years and years I wrote the letters of recommendation and I was in charge of it all, for pre-medical and pre-dental students. Animal physiology was a key subject. For instance, one year when I was on sabbatical I found somebody who I had confidence in to teach the course in my absence. Since I retired there have been—I don’t know the specifics, but there are many semesters in which it hasn’t been taught at all. I don’t know where these students may get this knowledge. It is a key subject so far as the M-CATs were concerned, in preparation for the M-CATs. Well, [laughs] maybe that is a personal prejudice, but this is an example.

COHEN: You were there. Students. How did the student body evolve during your tenure at Rutgers? If you want to start back in the early days and going into the eighties. If you can give me a sort of a capsule history, in terms of preparation, background?

HALL: Well, I don’t know. They were better prepared, I believe, when I first came than they are today.

COHEN: Yes.

HALL: And yet I wasn’t particularly impressed with them when I came….

COHEN: In 1947.

HALL: Yes. Of course, I was used to, in Canada, a relatively uniform, white Anglo-Saxon population in Toronto—you know, some ethnics, Jewish students. In short, a fairly earnest and well-educated group of students. And we took high school education and so on seriously and went on to college seriously. For instance, I remember the first years I was there, at least in advanced courses, I never resorted to objective examinations or true-false questions, things like that. I tended, at least in advanced courses, to have essay-type questions, and I was appalled sometimes. I would try not to... I remember one student. I talked to her after she took the test and I said, “Really, I’m trying to not take off marks because of your poor English.” But I said, “I honestly can’t understand what you mean.” And I said, “What’s the reason for that?” I always forget, and this being something that was alien to me at that time. “Well,” she said, “I come from Polish Jewish ancestry. My parents, at home we speak a mixture of Polish and Yiddish.” “And,”
she said, “in college I write English, but I think Polish-Yiddish.” And I remember bursting out laughing and said, “My god, girl, that’s exactly what it sounds like.” [laughing]

COHEN: This is, what? In forty-seven?

HALL: Yes, in forty-seven.

COHEN: That’s very interesting. Okay. How did that situation evolve into the seventies?

HALL: Well, the population, when I came there, was, I would say, fifty to sixty percent Jewish, twenty to twenty-five percent Catholic, and the rest a mixture. I think, because I remember at least the first year, on the occasion of a Jewish holiday, there was practically nobody in class. And sometimes when there was less than fifty percent of the class, you say, what the hell we’ll wait until next time it meets. But that gradually changed over time, partly, of course, reflecting the changing population of Newark.

COHEN: With the changing population, the student population, questions of admission standards came up, and this was apparently one of the issues involved in the takeover of Conklin Hall, which we all remember. What recollections do you have of that episode in terms of what led up to it?

HALL: I don’t remember very much. I mean I was relatively an apolitical person. I was deeply involved with the development of graduate work. I was deeply involved in my own research. I was deeply involved with the department. But of college politics and so on, etc., I stayed clear of. I did serve on admissions committees. I did serve on, I forget the years now. I did serve on the academic standards committee, so that I would interview failing students and so on. But about was my involvement in it. I know that they were—because we discussed it with the faculty. There was some accommodation allowed of less qualified people in order to open the door for some minority students.

COHEN: What was your perception of the effectiveness of the Academic Foundations Department on prepping students to come to into the academic mainstream? Any feeling for that, after it was established or even before it was a department?

HALL: Well I think that was the positive side.

COHEN: Did you have any recollection of students who came through the Academic Foundations program, either as majors or whatever? Any recollection at all?

HALL: Oh, there would have been students in some of my classes who would have had involvement with the Academic Foundations, especially with regard to their basic math requirements. I always thought that the Academic Foundations Department or whatever it was—I don’t think it’s that anymore.

COHEN: No, Center of—.
HALL: Yes—that it was a very positive thing, because you did need to give help to these promising minority students who hadn’t had correct or sufficient education. I think that for a while there was a bit of an overcompensation. There’s one particular student which comes to mind, and this was in regard to professional education, like I said I dealt a lot with pre-med and pre-dents. And, after the riots and so on, in the first great wave of accommodation to minority students, at least in the professional schools. They occasionally admitted minority students who then were not able to make the grade once they got there. Their heart was in the right place, but sometimes they went a little too far. The problem there lies with the differing degree of ability that you have to have between undergraduate college and professional school.

There’s a great deal of difference between undergraduate college and high school, right? You’re expected to do a lot more, you’re expected to do it on your own. And it’s even greater between undergraduate college and professional school, especially medical school, where the amount of material is absolutely staggering that they have to assimilate in a relatively short period of time.

Undergraduate students worried about whether they were taking organic chemistry and physics at the same time, so far as their grades were concerned. And I used to tell them, you “ain’t seen nothin’ yet.” If you get into medical school, you not only have to memorize a book this thick of anatomy and you’ll also be taking other courses at the same time. You’re going to be taking physiology and you’re going to be taking biochemistry and you’re taking histology and so on, all at the same time. In order to do that, you have to have a person who is able to get good marks at the undergraduate level, working at maybe thirty to forty percent of his capacity. Because when you double and triple the load, you know, there aren’t more than twenty-four hours in the day and you have to sleep a few of them, right?

COHEN: [laughs]

HALL: So no matter how earnest the student is, no matter how much he wants to succeed in professional school, say—if you take a student who is able to get acceptable grades in college. I don’t mean outstanding, but I mean Bs and Cs, let’s say. If he’s able to accomplish that by working at ninety percent of his capacity—eighty to ninety percent of his capacity—you put that student, no matter how sincere he is, into professional school and he will not make it. Why? Because the work load is two to three times as much. And there aren’t that many hours in the day. I mean he can only work at a hundred percent of his capacity. If he was running at eighty percent before, that would mean two hundred and forty percent of his capacity—and that’s not possible.

So, I remember one particular student, he was an older man—I mean at that time, I mean compared to the regular student population. He made his money by driving a taxi in Newark. He was very concerned about wanting to get into medical school. And eventually he did get into medical school. And even with the additional help they gave him, from what I recollect, even giving him a chance to repeat his first year, as they did sometimes in an effort to try to retain the minority students. He just couldn’t. I had that feeling when I knew him. Because he just took too long to assimilate information. He was an awfully nice man and was trying very, very hard. I applauded his efforts, but I didn’t think he would be able to make it.
COHEN: Very demanding. On the subject of students, do you have any recollections of some of your outstanding students?

HALL: Oh I…

COHEN: What they did? Where they went?

HALL: I have memories of many outstanding students that ended up in medical school and so on. What always surprised me about the student body. If you had a group—and now I’m talking about a typical class in my undergraduate physiology course, where I would have maybe seventy-five to eighty students in five different laboratory sections. In that representative class there would be about—it followed a fairly predictable frequency curve. There’d be twelve or fifteen outstanding students. There’d be a bunch of better than average students, about fifteen or twenty. There’d be a group of average or sub-average students, you know the ones that got Cs. But then there always was about ten to fifteen students and you wonder, for one thing, how they ever got into a junior or senior level course. They didn’t belong in the course at all. And oftentimes they hardly showed up. I always wondered why we always had a small number of students who didn’t belong in the course at all. But other than that, it followed a fairly normal distribution.

COHEN: Can you recall specifically any outstanding people, that is, individuals as far as their achievements go? Not necessarily mentioning names, but some people, what their careers were?

HALL: I do remember some specifically. Collectively, many of my students went on to medical school. And some of them I’ve heard of and met afterwards. I remember one example. When my wife was ill, and they called me in, she was in the hospital. They called in a consultant. Internal medicine, cardiologist. And this man walks into the room. I said, “you look familiar”. “Oh,” he says, “Dr. Hall, how are you?” I said, “You took physiology with me in sixty-two or sixty-three, didn’t you?” [laughs] He said yes, and he’d gone on to medical school and I’ve come across more than one like that.

COHEN: That’s the kind of story we look for in oral history, that kind of anecdote. Do you have another one? That’s really very good. I mean it really brings a lot.

HALL: Another time, a few years after that, I was referred to, I guess, a gastroenterologist, and when I walked into his office he said, “Hoo yes, how are you?” [laughs] I said, “You were my student back in what sixty-four or sixty-five!” And then he was a specialist.

COHEN: Wonderful stories, I’m sure very satisfying to you.

[Break in recording.]

COHEN: We were talking about students, and you were mentioning your first Ph.D. student?

HALL: I think was a student of, a man named Dr. Blye, if I remember correctly, he was a student, I think, of Dr. Carol.
COHEN: Ben Carol.

HALL: Ben Carol. Then there was a Ph.D. student of Dr. Wiles [sp], and then my first graduate student. I think they got their degrees at the same time. [unintelligible]…has been for years at Baylor Medical School.

COHEN: Still with students. You mentioned before you were on the Admissions Committee. How did the Admissions Committees deal with the changing environment in the seventies, as far as admissions and scholastic standings? If you have any recollections of that when you were on that committee? What adjustments were made?

HALL: Ah, I don’t know. I can’t remember specifics now. You could go back to faculty meetings—

COHEN: The meeting minutes—

HALL: Yes, meeting minutes and so on. There were things that were changed. For instance, I know when I first came there in forty-seven, in order to graduate as a zoology major, you had to have a senior thesis. You had to have…well, it obviously wasn’t independent research because there wasn’t much of any research facilities, at least library research. And you had to write a fairly good paper on something. That was one of the things that went away. And I think there was a small shift in graduating average. It was relatively small, but it went, maybe, from 3 to 3.2 or something like that. There was pressure in change in curriculum to some extent about whether or not you had the language requirement and it gradually changed over the years and—

[End of Tape #1]

COHEN: We were talking about the degree requirements, scholastic standards.

HALL: There were little changes. Eventually, I think, physical education got dropped, you had to have four credits of physical education. But so far as courses were concerned, you had to have freshman English, you had to have English literature, you had to have freshman history, which was world civilization. You had to have a laboratory science. Then you had to have an additional six credits, in the other two divisions. If you’re a science major you had to have a language and you had to have an additional six credits in a social science other than history. And you had to have an additional six credits in humanity, and then of course your major requirements. Always there was some pressure to drop this requirement or that requirement or something which usually were resisted.

COHEN: In what ways did the presence of minority students on campus affect how standards of scholastic standing, degree requirements, admissions requirements were negotiated in the faculty do you feel?

HALL: I don’t think there was any great change. I think there might have been small points of accommodation or of accepting, say for instance, of approval of new courses such as Black
Studies or Puerto Rican Studies and using them as an alternative to some of the other more classical courses. Or later on there were things like Women’s Studies, you know, some not-so-traditional courses. And having them the equivalent of the more traditional courses. But I don’t think that there was any marked reduction in standing. I think there has been, maybe, a slight shift in standards now, not necessarily caused by minority participation, just generally.

COHEN: How do you think the general situation is since at the time of the development of the campus the war in Viet Nam was on. How did that affect campus life, or curriculum?

HALL: That question is difficult to answer. I just don’t know.

COHEN: Okay. I’d like to get into the area of the faculty because it’s a major component. Let’s start with you as a professor in the physiology department and the biology department. What were some of your memorable teaching experiences? Do you have any epiphany there?

HALL: Some of my more memorable teaching experiences was with regard to the evening graduate program. I came across good students and I was directly involved in the laboratory, biochemistry, physiology and so on, at a time when physiology labs worked directly on experimental animals in the laboratory. Some of those experiences were memorable.

COHEN: We were talking before about teaching research and pressures on faculty to produce, as you said. In the seventies, tenure policy, at least in my reading of the minutes, seemed to emerge more and more as a question. It was also at the time when the first AAUP contract was signed Why, at that time, why did the question of tenure, at least in my perception, emerge as a major issue?

HALL: Was it partly because the faculty numerically was on the wane, instead of on the increase? There was a time during the sixties when was difficult to get faculty and faculty were promoted rapidly.

COHEN: Okay.

HALL: And the department grew. You increased your total number of faculty. And this was in the time, in the late fifties and early sixties and so on. I think this is sort of the guide now, it’s bigger now because the department includes botany and everything else. But, at the time when it was—. The department became a department. When?

COHEN: After the division?

HALL: Sixty-two? Somewhere around sixty or sixty-one. There used to be a Division of Natural Sciences, right? And that was when [unintelligible], when that was divided, that was around 1959 to sixty. Then you became the Department of Botany and there was a Department of Zoology and Physiology. Then [unintelligible] was the first chair. And then I took over from Ben in sixty-two. And during that period I think the department reached a—during my tenure, around sixty-six, sixty-seven or so was when the department reached its largest population, you know, professorial and teaching assistant lines and so on. And from then, will you excuse me for just a moment?

[Break in recording.]
COHEN: We were talking about the question I had was why the question of tenure seemed to emerge as a big issue in the seventies and you were saying that you felt that...

HALL: I know what I was going to say. When I was hired, dating back to forty-seven, the conventional wisdom [laughs] was that in promotion, if you were an instructor, you were an instructor for maybe three years. You could only be an instructor for four years, and then you were up or out. You’re an instructor for two or three years, and then you’re an assistant professor, and that was a three-year term. And normally you had two terms as assistant professor before you were considered for associate professor, which of course carried tenure. Okay? That was the route that I had to follow because when I came here I came as an instructor. But I was promoted after the first year because I had been an assistant professor at the college I was at before. But then I went through two terms as assistant professor and so on, before I finally got promoted to associate professor. And then you were maybe five or six years as associate professor; six, seven years, sometimes ten years until finally you made full professor.

But by the time things changed there around the early sixties and so on, there was a pressure to retain good people. Faculty were in demand, so that if you wanted to retain a good person, and normally then they were often hired right from a Ph.D. as an assistant professor. Then maybe after the first three years you’d promote them to associate professor if they were promising, because that was the only way that you could retain them or the only way that you could get them a salary that was anything comparable to what they could get somewhere else. So for a while there was period of rather rapid promotions, because you needed to retain them. And then when student numbers began going down and the number of faculty weren’t on the increase, then there was somewhat greater pressure on tenure.

COHEN: Numbers going down in what years, now?

HALL: I’m not sure anymore. I’m not sure.

COHEN: After the new campus though, right?

HALL: Yes, after the new campus.

COHEN: So fewer students, more faculty than was needed.

HALL: Well, less faculty was needed and therefore there was greater pressure. There were less… in the sixties and so on you were able to get an additional line in your departmental budget. I remember one time, this was shortly after William Gilliland became dean, and we were going over the budget in his office. And he had a discretionary fund that he was able to give several professors and so on, two or three increments instead of the regular increment. So we were discussing who deserved it and who didn’t and that sort of thing. There was money around to encourage faculty, and sometimes it was given in extra increments. And that gradually changed, I think, in the seventies.

In regard to that promotion thing, the whole university machinery for promotion I think has shifted some emphasis. As it was, if a faculty member, say for instance, was supported in the departmental level and at the level of a college dean, and if he was approved by the overall university section for that discipline, then his promotion was fairly assured. And then in later
years, all this business about this Summit Committee, which there have been occasions I know of where people have been approved all the way up the line unanimously and still they’ve been refused tenure.

COHEN: Around about that time, the issue of tenure came up in the Botany Department. There was quite a bit of publicity around that one professor, perhaps more than one. What were the issues there, as you understood them? Was this just somebody beating the drums, or what were the issues in the Botany Department around the question of tenure at that time? It seems to have gotten more attention, at least from my reading of the student newspaper, more attention than anything else I could think of? Do you have any sense of that?

HALL: No, I don’t think so. I mean other than the outspoken opinions of Dr. Greenfield at the time. He didn’t approve of some of the things that went on in the department. But, I don’t really know anything.

COHEN: How would you assess the role of the AAUP as a bargaining agent for the faculty, in contract negotiations, grievance procedures? What was your perception?

HALL: Well, I think the attitude I had and which I think was relatively general at the time when that question came up, was that we didn’t regard ourselves as union people. We were professionals, we weren’t union people. We didn’t want to belong to a union. If we had to have a bargaining unit, the AAUP was not a union like the Teamsters Union. I think, at least my attitude was, well it’s the lesser of two evils. I don’t particularly want a union at all. I’m more old fashioned, I guess. I’d rather just have, you know, your promotion and so on depend on your ability and the opinions of your peers, that was it. There wasn’t any need for collective bargaining. I guess there has a great deal of greater polarization between faculty and administration.

COHEN: Why? Why?

HALL: I don’t know. There has been a great growth of administration. There has been a great many more problems now than in simpler days, and a lot more paperwork involved. You have to abide by this rule and that rule and the other rule. There’s much more busy-work right now than in simpler days. I was brought up in somewhat a somewhat different academic tradition. I guess it is now, but at that time there wasn’t that much separation between faculty and administration. There were senior professors who taught, and there was also the dean of the college, or in my case, the man under whom I got my Ph.D. was a professor of physiology in the Zoology Department. He was also the associate dean of the graduate school, and dean for the sciences, where somebody else was the dean for social sciences. But, he worked two or three caps [sp]. That was it. There wasn’t this tremendous proliferation of administration. My impression is that the administration becomes self-proliferate.

[They both laugh.]

COHEN: Sort of like the animals that fertilize themselves?

HALL: Yes, yes.
COHEN: [Continue laughing.] Oh, still on faculty. During the seventies when things began to change in society, particularly in an attempt to exercise affirmative action requirements—how was that done in the college? How was that conducted, affirmative action, of faculty? How did faculty go about doing that, recruiting or attempting to recruit minority faculty members?

HALL: I know very little about it. I know there was one time when we were trying to fill a position, and we did have a good black candidate—[laughs]—and he got taken away from us by New Brunswick because New Brunswick needed a good black candidate. There was another faculty member that was hired, he was of Hispanic origin but that’s a particularly very involved piece and I don’t want to comment any further. You know to whom I refer.

COHEN: Okay, were there positive attempts to recruit minority faculty members? And the next question has to do with women. At the time was a network used or anything like that that you recall?

HALL: I don’t know specifically, if we advertised, we always advertised we were an equal opportunity employer. We always tried to get...

COHEN: The question of equal pay for women had surfaced in the seventies. What can you tell us about that? How was that dealt with?

HALL: Well, I never personally was aware of much inadequacies. I know the women banded together and Helen Strauser in our department was one of the main people involved in that.

COHEN: The late Helen Strasuer.

HALL: Yeah, yeah. Along with…the lady in psychology?

COHEN: Dorothy Dinnerstein?

HALL: Yes. Yes, they were the two powerhouses involved in that. I think they won their suit; they got additional compensation.

COHEN: So that was the case, okay. During the seventies also, there was the move to include student evaluations of faculty in the overall evaluation of faculty for purposes of promotion and tenure. There seems to have been differences of opinion among the faculty on the use of student evaluations. What were the differences of opinion based upon at that time? Some people think seem to have been in favor of them, some were not in favor of them.

HALL: I don’t know. Personally I think my reaction was, well if you have to have them, you have to have them. I still don’t know about their validity because, by and large, good students in your class will be the ones who will find your course interesting and stimulating. But poor students in your class, they’ll say I’m not interesting or the workload is too heavy. I don’t put too much emphasis on it. I think students input can be better established by say, for instance, of the students that he’s been involved with, when they go on to professional school or to graduate schools, are they well prepared? For instance, for several years students who took Dr. [unintelligible]’s course in histology at Rutgers, when they went to dental school, when they went to medical school, they hardly had to take histology.

COHEN: Hmm.
HALL: They knew it all already. [laughs] I think there were cases in which they were excused if they’d taken a histology at Newark Rutgers with Dr. [unintelligible], they were excused from taking histology.

COHEN: That’s a really telling point.

HALL: There’s an example. Somebody goes on to graduate school in chemistry and if they took Gil Panson’s organic chemistry and there’s an advanced organic chemistry course, they’d be in a good position in graduate school, right?

COHEN: Yes.

HALL: So he’s a good teacher. Everybody said he was a good teacher. The same thing with someone like Charlie Pine in his physics and in his—. He taught two terms of calculus. I forget. I don’t whether he even called it calculus or not. He called it math for physics or something like that. But he taught a two-term course in calculus which was an excellent course. It was excellent. That two-term course was better than Calculus 1, 2, 3, 4 and something else at the top of the math department.

COHEN: Yes.

HALL: Because Charlie Pine had an ability to teach math, he had tremendous ability. And he’s been in all sorts of state commissions and everything else for math education in secondary schools and colleges and so on. If my students having taken mammalian physiology, if they were able to score well on the physiology section or on the biology section of the M-CAT test, then I’ll consider myself a good teacher. I’ve prepared the students on what they’re going for. Right? That’s one way of determining a good teacher. Another way of evaluating teachers is actually sitting in on their classes. We used to do that, and actually listened to them lecture. But I think some of these are better or more reliable in some cases than student opinion, because it depends so much on the student’s ability or his interest.

COHEN: Also during that period, frequently you heard the complaint—that because of the weaker resource facilities in Newark, it was unfair to apply uniform standards for promotion and tenure to the faculty Newark compared to the faculty in New Brunswick. What validity did you feel that had, if any?

HALL: It was a complain which was historic and which was losing a lot of its validity. At the time when I came there first, there were no research facilities in Newark at all. So you really had to have your own initiative in order to develop something. And you had to do it in addition to your undergraduate teaching and all this sort of thing, especially since the introduction of the new campus and the new buildings and so on. That argument lost at least some of its validity. Although, generally speaking, I think we still did not have the facilities, especially in the laboratory sciences, like physiology, and biochemistry and so on that they had in New Brunswick. I don’t think even until, at least they got the new building, but even then the chemists in Newark—

[Break in recording.]
COHEN: So!

HALL: As I was saying, I think there was validity to it, although I know personally and I think many people, although they might use that for an argument, they did not want to be judged as second class citizens. That is, “I’m not being promoted just because I’m not as good as the rest of them, but I’m as good as could be expected in Newark.” I mean, you don’t want that sort of a tag.

COHEN: Okay.

HALL: I think our contributions to overall sections and so on tended to increase.

COHEN: We were talking before briefly about administration and relationships between faculty and administrations and the growth of administrations. What I wanted to address to you is your opinions, your assessments, of various administrators, if you can. My first question is, how would you compare the administrations of Mason Gross and Edward Bloustein, the two presidents who were there most of your tenure, if not all? I’m trying to remember the dates now, but I think principally those were the two presidents who were there in the late sixties, seventies into the eighties.

HALL: Well, who was president before Gross?

COHEN: Lewis Webster Jones.

HALL: Yes, Lewis Webster Jones.

COHEN: When you were first starting.

HALL: Yes, yes, because Gross was provost or something like that.

COHEN: I guess so, yes.

HALL: As a matter for fact, I remember Gross. He used to come up and teach a course in philosophy.

COHEN: Once I saw him at 40 Rector Street. You couldn’t miss his, because of his height. [laughs] How would you compare their administrations, particularly as they pertain to the development of the Newark campus?

HALL: I think, I really don’t have any definite opinion. But we always had the impression, I think, that Gross tended to be a friend of Newark.

COHEN: Yes.

HALL: I think that Webster Jones was too. The impression I think, way back when was that Newark got a fair deal with Gross.

COHEN: More so, you think, than under Bloustein?

HALL: Well, I don’t know—
COHEN: What was your perception?

HALL: At that time, Bloustein wasn’t there yet. I mean it’s gotten more complicated with Bloustein. I don’t think he was anti-Newark. I don’t think either one of them were anti-Newark.

COHEN: Uh, huh. Yeah. How would assess Malcolm Talbott’s contribution as vice president and acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences?

HALL: Malcolm was a real gentleman and a very able man. And a man who was very clear, followed his convictions. Blumenthal was too.

COHEN: What perception do you have of Talbott’s handling of the Conklin takeover, he was the negotiator, or the principal negotiator. Do you have any sense of that?

HALL: Not really, except that he was apparently successful in resolving it.

COHEN: He was successful how?

HALL: He was successful in resolving it.

COHEN: Resolving it, yes. Do you have any theories of why Malcolm Talbott was not appointed provost? Any understanding of that at all?

HALL: No. There was some opposition to him wasn’t there?

COHEN: This is my understanding, but I never really understood specifically what it was.

HALL: Politics, as I said, I never got involved in it.

COHEN: Yes, sometimes you pick things up and sometimes you don’t. Yes, right. The acting provost following Talbott was Horace De Pddwin. Any feel for his acting provost-ship?

HALL: No, no. All I know of the problem was my contact with him when I was in the graduate school as a very true and capable promoter of his own School of Business. He was a very able and capable person for that job. But that’s the only impression I have.

COHEN: Okay. Anything you can say about Provost Young’s tenure? Perception you have of that period?

HALL: I don’t really have anything too much. I had some contact with him. I don’t know whether he was as forceful a provost as he might have been in promoting the interests of Newark. I don’t know if other people could tell better or not.

COHEN: Um-huh, yes. The deans. The deanship of Herbert Woodward. What can you say about that? How would you assess his deanship?

HALL: I think it was good for the times. I think we got the impression that he sometimes didn’t carry the weight in New Brunswick. But maybe subsequently…but that was partly, I think, at
that time of the evolution of Newark from a very minor step-child to a greater component of the University as a whole.

COHEN: The deanship of his successor, William Gilliland?

HALL: As I said, I don’t know, I was directly involved with Gilliland in some budget matters and that sort of thing in which I found him relevantly affected. As to what contributed toward his eventual resignation, I really, to this day, I don’t know the specifics. I guess because I never bothered to find out. I know there must have been something that caused his rather sudden—was that involved with the takeover of Conklin?

COHEN: No, Gilliland, no during the takeover of Conklin Malcolm Talbott was the acting dean at the time.

HALL: Was acting dean?

COHEN: Yes, he was acting dean at the time. Gilliland was I guess back in the Geology Department at that time. The deanship of Henry Blumenthal?

HALL: I think he was alright.

COHEN: Richard Robey?

HALL: I don’t know how you evaluate a dean really. I didn’t have any particular bone to pick with him, but I wouldn’t say he was one of the stronger deans.

COHEN: Apparently there was some controversy around administration. Do you have any perception of that?

HALL: No.

COHEN: Gilbert Panson as acting dean and first dean of the graduate school?

HALL: I think of him very positively, especially as the dean of the graduate school. I mean, he was acting dean of the college a few years. But I think he was a prime, moving force in getting that graduate school going. And he was fighting for a greater piece of the pie for Newark, both undergraduate and graduate.

COHEN: Now we’ll move into the deanship of Norman Samuels, the present provost.

HALL: I think he was an effective dean. I think probably he’s an effective provost. Again, I think he was great for the importance of the college, the importance of Newark in the whole sense.

COHEN: There have been various moves or discussions and even attempts to at least talk about the possibility of the Newark campus spinning off from New Brunswick. It comes up from time to time. My question is, why, since the whole question of administrative relations has been sort of a vexing one over the years, as indicated before. Why, do you feel, has the Newark faculty
effectively resisted such an administrative spin-off from Rutgers? There’ve been various proposals. Any recollection of that?

HALL: Well, I think it is partly that we in Newark like to think of ourselves as one component of a major national university. Prestige, if you will, but unless you build it up tremendously, Newark University would be more in a class, say for instance, with the state colleges. But it makes a difference between that and whether you’re a section, albeit not the biggest section, but an appreciable section of the state university, which is the highest public, academic institution in New Jersey—so far as prestige and everything is concerned. I mean, the only one with a greater international reputation is Princeton, and that’s private. And there’s a great deal of difference between Rutgers University, or being part of Rutgers University, and say, for instance, being a state college.

COHEN: Yes, fair enough. We’re getting close to wrap up. One thing I wanted to touch on before, in fact we were talking about the situation in society as whole, I want to go back to the war in Vietnam at the time and touch on this. How did it affect teaching on the campus? How did it affect you or your colleagues, if in any way—or was it possible just to go on and do your work and not be affected by it? Was there any—?

HALL: My own personal reaction was it did very little I mean, [laughs] I taught the same courses, I still had my students. I still had my graduate students. I still had my undergraduate students. I taught essentially the same courses, you know, Vietnam or no Vietnam. I remember for a while the number of ROTC students that were present in your classes decreased dramatically for a while, so you didn’t see the ROTC uniforms anymore. And then they gradually began coming back.

COHEN: It had no effect, that you felt, the whole tenor of the times on classroom teaching?

HALL: Personally, very little.

COHEN: Nothing. Did you see any effect it had on your colleagues at the time, good, bad or indifferent?

HALL: I can’t really answer that.

COHEN: Okay, a little bit on the Dana Library, my home base. What were the major shortcomings, as far as you were concerned? Let’s start with the shortcomings of the library as far as your interests and your needs and concerns.

HALL: Well, it was better in the science areas, I guess. In my particular area, in chemistry and so on, than in many other areas. Of course, we tried to get more journals. We had to resort to the other, either the main library in New Brunswick or in my case I often went over to CMDNJ library when it was there. But I think we gradually got the current issues of the main journals, but it was the backlogs of many other journals and so on that we were missing.
COHEN: How effective was, in your opinion, the interlibrary loan in securing the materials, the literature that you didn’t have, do you have any recollection?

HALL: I don’t have any great, big recollection. I know I used it somewhat, but I often went out to New Brunswick or CMDNJ.

COHEN: And the services in the library, generally—the reference services, how would you assess the services of the library other than the interlibrary loan? The reference services, circulation services?

HALL: Well, I never had any great complaints, let me put it that way. You know, I didn’t have any obvious complaints. By and large I felt everybody was helpful if I wanted something.

COHEN: Okay, my wrap-up is, any topics we haven’t covered that you would like to discuss your experiences or wrap-up remarks?

HALL: With regard to what? The college?

COHEN: Well, you know, anything that might have some general observations about the college, the university, it’s significance as an educational institution of higher education? Special experiences that you’ve had that you think that…?

HALL: Well, I think that Rutgers has grown a lot. I know the Newark campus has grown a lot in the last forty years. I think it is quite a positive force in the neighborhood. I think it is good to have the cooperation between it and the, well I was going to say the College of Engineering but it isn’t called that now...

COHEN: New Jersey Institute of Technology—NJIT.

HALL: Yes, the cooperation there. And I think it has grown a lot. As I said, I don’t know whether the quality of students has improved any. I think I would wait to see a better pool of students to choose from. Usually that’s partly the fault of the department and the changing population of Newark, and generally one of the things, I think, that has been decreased at least at the graduate level is the continued reaction between the graduate programs, especially zoology and chemistry, with nearby industry.

COHEN: You say decrease the—

HALL: Yeah, yeah.

COHEN: Oh! Could you comment on that? I mean, that’s a very interesting nobody else has commented on that, that’s worth my attention.

HALL: Well, I don’t know about chemistry, but there always was, beginning from when we started the Master’s program in the fifties, and going on to the zoology program. When the university introduced its own graduate program in zoology, which was introduced in the early 1970s. With having a large support, to some extent also financial support from the
pharmaceutical industry, and having a lot of their students come down for advanced courses. And we also got many good part-time Ph.D. students, some of whom did their research at Rutgers and some of whom did their research at their institutions. They took courses here and they would do their research at their institutions. Of course we had regulations such that it had nothing to do with what they were being hired for, and it had to be done on their own time. But you would include one of their superiors in the department of the pharmaceutical company on their Ph.D. committee, and that sort of thing. So you got many good specialists on Ph.D. committees, you got many good students, you had access to sophisticated equipment that the college couldn’t afford, and so on, etc. I think that was very positive. The tendency now is, I guess, a more high-powered—not snooty, but the only good Ph.D. student is the full-time student. He has to be full-time, he has to be on campus.

COHEN: Is that the reason why this tie with industry has weakened then?

HALL: That’s correct. That’s one of the things.

COHEN: Now is that policy imposed by—? Who imposes that policy of full-time residency at this point? How did that come about, that change? I haven’t heard of that. It’s a significant development.

HALL: Well, I don’t know. But that’s the impression I get. I think it’s partly promoted by the dean’s office, and it certainly was promoted at the departmental level.


HALL: I always thought that was one of our strengths, especially when we didn’t have as much facilities, we were able to use other facilities. I think it was a good degree of cooperation between the university and industry. I think in a couple of cases, industry is... But I think they were a little irritated by this—that the only good Ph.D. student is a full-time student. And of course ideally that’s so, but we’re not in an ideal society. [They both laugh.]

COHEN: Well, I thank you very much, Dr. Hall. I think it was very rich.

HALL: Well, okay, I wondered before you cam, as to whether or not I could contribute anything…

COHEN: Awww—I see, I see!

-------------------------------------------------[End of Interview]-------------------------------------------------

Reviewed and edited by Catherine Carey 8/23/2013