

THE UNIVERSITY

AT

***{Ravens reflect on
Franklin Pierce's
first decade as a
University}***

BY LIZ MASSEY

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“By the time of the change, we had already become a university ... This move was necessary to define what we’d already become.”

**GEORGE HAGERTY,
President Emeritus**



name change, whether for an individual or an institution, often happens at a critical moment in its life story. It frequently marks the passage into a new stage of existence. People get married and may drop a maiden name or hyphenate a last name with a spouse's; a person may legally change her name in order to claim a moniker that better suits her personality; or an institution may change its name to clarify what it is and whom it serves.

When Franklin Pierce attained university status on July 1, 2007, the achievement reflected the school's evolution over its 45-year existence. Franklin Pierce College had expanded far beyond its original mission of providing a quality undergraduate liberal arts education to students in New Hampshire.



1962

**Franklin Pierce College
chartered by New Hampshire
State Legislature**

2007

**Franklin Pierce
achieves
University
status**

“It was a defining change.”

KIM MOONEY '83,
President, Franklin Pierce

By the time the school transitioned to a university, it had developed thriving graduate programs — including a doctor of physical therapy degree — international study programs and many other hallmarks of a traditional university.

As Pierce celebrates its 10th anniversary as a university this year, Pierce Magazine spoke with administrators, alumni and faculty who were part of the process. These keen observers both provide detail on how the transition to university status came together and discuss the rising regional and national reputation that happened in the wake of the switch — a change that continues to benefit current and prospective

students, faculty and alumni.

“I don’t think any of us realized at the time how important the elevation to a university would turn out to be,” says Kim Mooney ’83 Ph.D., current president of the University. “But it was a defining change.”

Laying the groundwork for change

George Hagerty was president of Franklin Pierce from 1995 to 2009. With such a long tenure, he could potentially name a number of achievements as his favorite: the addition of new NCAA Division II sports, for

example, or the opening of the Grimshaw-Gudewicz Activity Center. However, he says that the drive to attain university status was by far his most memorable accomplishment as a Raven. “Getting to university status was the pinnacle for the institution during my tenure there,” he says.

While obtaining that status may have been the most outstanding accomplishment in hindsight, when Hagerty arrived in Rindge in 1995, steering Pierce toward becoming a university was the farthest thing from his mind. Franklin Pierce was still struggling with the aftermath of the 1992 recession, and Hagerty said he felt his first job was to help the college

compete more effectively for prospective students.

There was one element in play when Hagerty arrived that would facilitate the institution’s path toward becoming a university: the Board of Trustees had previously agreed to create an MBA program. While this graduate program, and several others, began their development during the late 1990s, Hagerty says his focus through most of that time was stabilizing and advancing the school’s undergraduate core.

As the 2000s began, Franklin Pierce College found itself in a curious position. While its historical niche had been as a liberal-arts undergraduate college, as the institution

2007



Goodyear, Ariz.
campus opens

Ravens women’s soccer wins 12th
consecutive NCAA Championship
New England Regional title

Ravens men’s
soccer wins national
championship



From left to right:
James Birge, Lloyd
Astmann and Milt Kahn

Franklin Pierce stayed faithful to its commitment to undergraduate education.

expanded its satellite campus network within the state, it also expanded its graduate programs into the fields of physical therapy and education. By 2005, Hagerty recalls, Pierce had hit a turning point — it now had a doctor of physical therapy degree program and was in the process of building international study programs in Vienna. Some talk of transitioning the college to university status had surfaced, but the Board of Trustees and the community surrounding the college had not coalesced around the idea.

To make the transition process more intentional, Hagerty tapped Raymond Van Der Riet, his vice president of strategic initiatives, to

author a detailed plan for how Franklin Pierce would navigate the switch from a college to a university. The report was presented to the Board of Trustees, and by 2006 an 18-month transition plan was in motion.

Van Der Riet's assistance was crucial to the process, as was that of Board of Trustees Chair Zeddie Bowen, who helped align the Board leadership so passage of the plan went smoothly. Hagerty also credits Mooney, who was then chair of the Board of Trustee Academic Affairs Committee, with playing a key role in the transition.

The changeover consisted of three main activities: receiving the approval of the New

2008

**Kim Mooney '83
Ph.D. appointed
Provost**



**Petrocelli Hall
opens**

**Bachelor of Science
Nursing Completion
degree introduced**

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Hampshire Commission on Higher Education, receiving accreditation permission from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and figuring out how to brand and market the new Franklin Pierce University. Hagerty says he received help in this last category from Richard Gustafson, the former president of Southern New Hampshire University, who had seen that institution through a similar process.

One reason the attainment of university status was successful, says Hagerty, was that Franklin Pierce stayed faithful to its commitment to undergraduate education, rather than piling up graduate programs without a strong foundation.

“I’ve seen other institutions add graduate program upon graduate program, and when the market dries up, it topples them if they’re not grounded in their undergraduate program,” he says.

As president emeritus, Hagerty says he could tell that becoming a university had provided a strong “halo effect” for Franklin Pierce alumni, faculty and current students.

“I honestly believe because the institution is defined as it is now. If you are a donor, a prospective student or a family trying to understand it, the university status immediately clarifies Franklin Pierce and the Franklin Pierce community,” he says.

Connecting past, present and future

Lloyd Astmann ’69 was a freshman in one of the first classes at Franklin Pierce College that attended the institution for all four years of their undergraduate experience. Like many early Raven alumni, his education had gotten off to a bumpy start near his hometown in northern New Jersey, and he appreciated the “second

chance” that Franklin Pierce had given him.

Astmann made good on that chance, becoming class president his junior year, and becoming involved soon after graduation with the group that founded the Alumni Association in 1970. Astmann had served on the Alumni Association board, and later, on the Board of Trustees, for many years by the time Hagerty became president.

He was impressed that early in Hagerty’s tenure, he had the Ravens join the Northeast 10 Athletic Conference.

“You’re known by the company you keep,” says Astmann. “He had athletics competing at an entirely new level.”

Throughout the early 2000s, Astmann served on the Board of Trustees or one of its committees. He admits



2008

Ravens women’s basketball wins its first NCAA Championship New England Regional title

**2008-
2009**

Earned 10-year NEASC accreditation

“Becoming a university... expanded the ways in which we thought about ourselves, and broadened opportunities for students.”

KIM MOONEY '83,
President,
Franklin Pierce

he was skeptical when he first heard about the idea to attain university status, but mainly because he wanted the institution to remain open to students who had backgrounds similar to his.

However, as the plan was unveiled, Astmann warmed to the concept. He saw that the educational experience that Franklin Pierce offered to its undergraduates was undiminished, and that the institution's reputation and attractiveness to prospective students was growing. After the transition took place, he began to notice another big plus: it was becoming easier to recruit Board of Trustees members, and students, from places other than the East Coast.

The push for more national recognition paid off, Astmann says.

“I was at an AGB [Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities] meeting in San Diego a couple of years ago, and everyone there had heard of Franklin Pierce,” he notes. “Before we had university status, no one knew who we were.”

Constructing tomorrow on a firm foundation

As Pierce enters its second decade as a university, its reputation continues to spread far beyond its New Hampshire home. Hagerty says

that because the institution approached the switch honestly, it has reaped, and will continue to reap, the benefits, as parents, peer institutions and academic colleagues across the globe see that Franklin Pierce University truly deserves its status.

“The marketplace understands what you are,” he asserts. “By the time of the change, we had already become a university.... This move was necessary to define what we'd already become.”

Astmann points with pride to the strength of the university's enrollment in recent years, and is excited about providing an endowment to ensure the institution will always be able to serve students.

“As a trustee, I hope we can

endow Franklin Pierce so it will be here for students for many years to come,” he says.

According to Mooney, who will lead Pierce through its future strategic initiatives to elevate and strengthen the school, becoming a university altered the way the institution regarded itself — and that has benefited everyone.

“Becoming a university was important in terms of our identity,” she says. “And it really expanded the ways in which we thought about ourselves, and broadened opportunities for our students. It transformed us into a significant resource for the state of New Hampshire and for graduate and undergraduate students across the region.” **P**

2009



Dr. James F. Birge
appointed
President

Began revision of the Core Curriculum,
which had been in place since 1991

**First Annual
Academic
Showcase held**