

## How Not to Choose a President

What went wrong with Boston U.'s presidential search

BY THOMAS BARTLETT

**D**ANIEL S. GOLDIN's presidency was over before it began—one day before, to be exact.

Mr. Goldin was to have become president of Boston University on November 1. But on October 31, he and the trustees who had chosen him reached an agreement to part ways. Mr. Goldin, the 63-year-old former NASA chief, walked away with a tidy \$1.8-million for leaving a job he never started, the trustees rid themselves of a leader in whom they had lost confidence, and everyone promised not to discuss the dispute again.

**Why college presidents don't last: B20, The Chronicle Review**

"Each party wished the other well," read the statement from the university.

Both parties will need all the good wishes they can get

after the debacle, details of which are still leaking out.

Mr. Goldin was reportedly concerned about possible conflicts of interest between the university and trustees who do business with it. Many trustees, for their part, were reportedly concerned that Mr. Goldin planned to fire nearly all of the university's top administrators. Mr. Goldin was said to be unhappy about the continuing influence of the university's chancellor and former president, John R. Silber. The trustees were said to be unhappy that Mr. Goldin planned to spend his weekends at the beach—in Malibu, Calif., three time zones away from the campus.

All of this combined to undo a deal that, in retrospect, seems to have been doomed from the beginning.

Now BU is left with a bigger mess than it had when it started its search for a new president last January. What everyone—including professors and students—wants to know is, How

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## Reframing the Game

Many liberal-arts colleges worry that they overemphasize sports, but one says it has undervalued them: **A34**



BRUCE ZAKE FOR THE CHRONICLE

Vin Lananna left Stanford to become athletics director at Oberlin College to try to end its pattern of consistent losing.



## Pencils to Pixels

Computer technology is revolutionizing architecture education, but some professors think students are missing key skills: **A29**

## What They Make

A special report on executive compensation finds that the era of the million-dollar college president is nigh: **Section S**





## SYLLABUS

**The course: "The Science of Harry Potter," at Frostburg State University**

The adventures of the gang at Hogwarts may be fiction, but one professor is out to prove that the magic in J.K. Rowling's popular books isn't all fantasy.

George Plitnik, a physics professor known for donning the garb of Aristotle and Galileo in his classes, came up with the concept for his honors seminar after happening upon a book of the same title by the British science writer Roger Highfield.

The professor devised the course to explain the scientific underpinnings of Potter's magic through reading, discussion, and experiment. The books themselves are not on the syllabus. Only about 4 of the 15 students have read the entire series; one student has not read any of the books.

By showing, for example, that a two-headed dog can be a product of genetic engineering, and that a state of invisibility is theoretically possible with simple deflection techniques, Mr. Plitnik hopes to provide his nonscience majors with an appreciation of modern science.

"Most of the stuff in Harry Potter does not violate any scientific laws," he says.

His unusual teaching style—sometimes he dresses as Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry—has earned Mr. Plitnik substantial news-media attention in recent months. "I had no idea it would be like this," he said of the radio interviews and of news articles written on his seminar.

Among the letters that have arrived in response, Mr. Plitnik has a favorite: A fifth-grade student who is president of a Harry Potter fan club in Florida invited the professor to attend a Christmas party. (He can't go, he says.)

**What students say:**

"It's difficult, especially when the inevitable physics appear," says Samantha Parsons, a sophomore majoring in sociology. "Plitnik's methods make sure everyone participates, and [he] is very clear in his explanations. . . . The occasional quirkiness on his part, and his energetic sense of humor, guarantees everyone's attention."

**Reading list:**

Assigned books include *The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works*, by Roger Highfield (Penguin, 2003) and a collection of essays titled *Reading Harry Potter*, edited by Giselle L. Anatol (Praeger, 2003).

**Assignments:**

In addition to daily reading and quizzes, students take two exams and write a research paper demonstrating the scientific possibilities of an incident of their choice as described in the Harry Potter books.

—RACHEL GOULD

Got a great course? E-mail [syllabus@chronicle.com](mailto:syllabus@chronicle.com)

## THE FACULTY

## A Happy Medium

A compromise on reviewing the work of tenured professors satisfies everyone

BY PIPER FOGG

**E**IGHT YEARS AGO at the Rochester Institute of Technology, a proposal to review the work of tenured professors sent shock waves through the faculty.

At a deans' meeting, Rochester's president, Albert J. Simone, announced that the institution needed a way to force out underperforming professors. He envisioned rigorous reviews every five years for all tenured faculty members. Professors who received less than satisfactory marks and then failed to improve, he felt, should lose their positions. Tenure, he argued, should not protect mediocrity.

Professors immediately decried the idea. About 350 faculty members, nearly half the faculty, signed a petition opposing the concept. Thomas Lightfoot, then president of the campus chapter of the American Association of University Professors, told a local newspaper, the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, "It would mean the end of tenure as we know it."

Such protests were not uncommon on college campuses in the 1990s, when calls from legislators and trustees for greater accountability prompted scores of colleges to design post-tenure review policies.

But at RIT, what could have been a battle between faculty members and the administration was avoided, and a compromise between the two sides has turned dissenters into believers.

The result has not only satisfied the pres-

ident and other administrators, it has also pleased the faculty.

The university calls it Faculty Evaluation and Development, or FEAD. Because the program offers help to successful faculty members as well as those who fall short, professors do not consider it post-tenure review, and technically it's not. But it accomplishes the same thing. In conjunction with a beefed-up annual-review policy, the program allows administrators to weed out professors who have fallen behind in their teaching, research, or service, and gives them the chance—and the resources—to get back on track.

In the most serious cases, a tenured faculty member's unwillingness or failure to improve can lead to dismissal. In the six years since its creation, the administration estimates that the program has resulted in 25 professors' leaving the university, including some who chose to retire rather than to improve.

Christine M. Licata, a senior associate at the American Association for Higher Education and associate dean for academic affairs at Rochester's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, says that number "does suggest the process is working."

Ms. Licata, an expert on post-tenure review, co-edited *Experienced Voices: Post-Tenure Faculty Review and Renewal* (AAHE, 2002). She says the FEAD program is a good example of how an institution has incorporated a policy into its existing programs. "The

process is almost a nonissue here because it has been integrated well into day-to-day practice," she says.

Post-tenure review policies are now in place or being developed at public institutions in 37 states, according to the higher-education association. And a 2000 Harvard University study reports that 48 percent of private institutions have a post-tenure review policy.

The programs differ widely. Some are mandatory and impose sanctions on professors who receive poor reviews, while others are voluntary and focus on professional development. At Rochester, a combination of those elements has resulted in a case study in harmony.

**A COMPROMISE**

In 1995, RIT faculty members feared that the president's vision for post-tenure review would translate into the death of academic freedom.

"As it was originally proposed, I thought it was absolutely against what the academy stands for," recalls Bruce L. Oliver, a professor of accounting who was chairman of the university's Faculty Council at the time. Professors, he says, "should be able to say, the emperor has no clothes, so to speak, without losing their jobs."

While Mr. Simone, the president, believes in academic freedom, he says he does not believe that anyone is entitled to a job. Pro-



Albert J. Simone, president of the Rochester Institute of Technology, wanted some form of post-tenure review, but let a committee of faculty members and administrators work out the details.

FOREST MCMULLIN FOR THE CHRONICLE



fessors who can earn tenure, he reasons, have an obligation to keep current in their field, teach effectively, and generally perform their jobs well. On any given campus, from 3 to 10 percent of the faculty is "unsatisfactory," he says. Those are the professors, he says, "you wish weren't there."

That kind of blunt rhetoric is typical of Mr. Simone, who always says exactly what he thinks, colleagues say, even if it's undiplomatic. He is also quick to generate ideas, and, as one professor puts it, "to stir the pot." Then he'll step back and let professors and administrators hash out the implications.

At the University of Hawaii-Manoa, where he was chancellor before coming to Rochester in 1992, Mr. Simone created a post-tenure review policy that is still in place today. He was eager to come up with something similar at RIT, so, despite opposition within the university, Mr. Simone asked a committee of faculty members and administrators to come up with policy recommendations.

Paul H. Ferber, an associate professor of political science who led the committee, was happy to find the president willing to compromise. That's when the process, he says, "turned from acrimonious to cooperative."

The committee persuaded the president that having faculty committees separately review tenured professors every three or five years, as they do at the University of Hawaii,

university could move to dismiss the professor for cause. In such cases, which have been rare, the burden is on the administration to prove the tenured faculty member should be dismissed, and there is an appeals process.

The committee also suggested adding an important new component. They asked the university to make money available to support professors who needed improvement. Mr. Simone initially frowned on the idea. He did not want the university to appear to be rewarding weak faculty members. So the committee decided the money should be used for general faculty development as well.

"We didn't want to penalize well-performing faculty, nor did we want to stigmatize the people who did need help," says Mr. Ferber.

To his credit, says Mr. Oliver, "the president was very responsive." The policy officially went into effect during the 1996-97 academic year. Each year the program has about \$300,000 for faculty-development grants.

#### MONEY ISSUES

On paper, the policy seemed ideal. In practice, it hit a snag. The money for faculty development was being disbursed each year through the colleges. Professors who wanted FEAD grants had to apply to a faculty committee that awarded them on the

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would be redundant and too time consuming. "Nobody like me wanted to get too close to renewable tenure," says Mr. Ferber. The committee also convinced Mr. Simone that many of the tools to accomplish what he was asking for were already in place. The university just needed to use them better.

"While we had had a requirement of annual reviews," says Mr. Ferber, "there was apparent inconsistency in how it was carried out across the colleges of the university."

The members of the committee suggested standardizing the annual-review process for the faculty, while still allowing individual colleges within the institution some leeway. They eventually drew up a policy that included a common time frame and schedule, identical evaluation categories, and written evaluation rules. It required professors to write self-evaluations and come up with a plan of work, called a professional development plan, for the coming year. In that plan, which had to be approved by the department head and dean, professors would spell out how their goals and projects related to the goals of their department and the university, including teaching, research, and service.

Professors would also receive written evaluations from department heads. Professors who received "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory" in any one category would need to include in their development plans specific steps toward improvement, such as attending a teaching workshop, or completing a research project.

If a faculty member refused to create a development plan or get it approved, the uni-

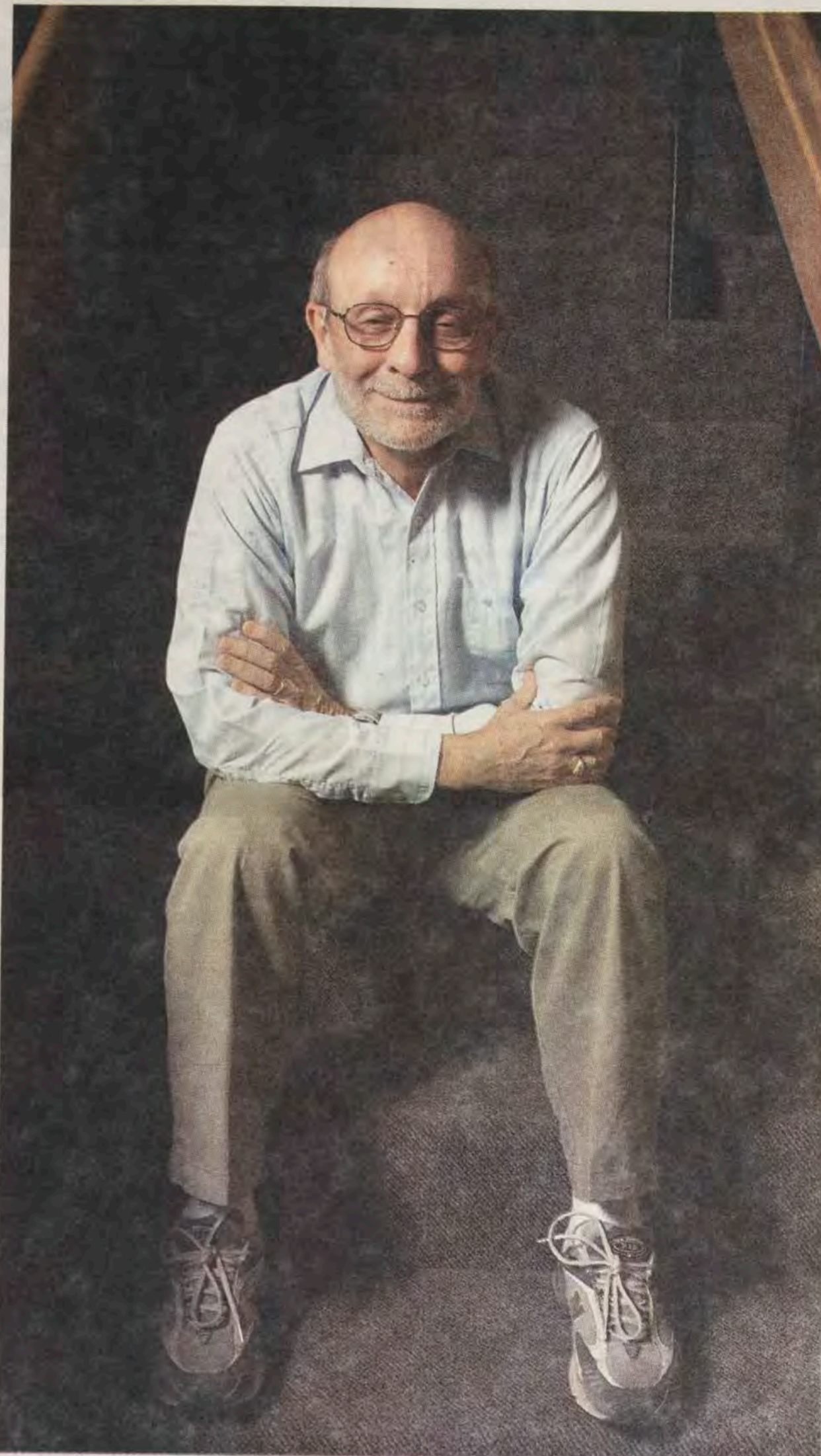
basis of merit. After a few years, department heads realized that the most productive faculty members were the ones applying for and winning the majority of the grants. Two years ago, the institute's provost, Stanley D. McKenzie, who administers the policy, gave college deans the discretion to hand out the grants to professors identified as needing improvement.

Deans and department heads credit the program with helping to improve the quality of the faculty over all.

Joyce Hertzson, a department head in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, had a faculty member who was having problems in the classroom. The professor (officials at Rochester declined to identify faculty members by name) was teaching in an area in which she was not originally trained. In her annual review, Ms. Hertzson advised her to shadow other professors and take some courses on teaching. The professor, who was interested in developing a new course, received a FEAD grant to take a workshop on using new computer software for textile design.

"She came and taught a course on that and was very successful," says Ms. Hertzson. "It was a way of seeing something positive coming from something negative."

Other situations have not ended on such a high note. Joan Stone, dean of the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, says that in the last six years, five people have left the college as a result of the FEAD program. She describes one professor who had fallen woefully behind in his teaching and research. "It was hard to know what the point of his



*Bruce L. Oliver, an accounting professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology, at first opposed the push for post-tenure review. But he found the president to be responsive to faculty concerns.*

courses were," she says. "He had become routine, very stagnant. He handed in the same syllabus year after year." He had even failed to turn in student evaluations, she says.

During his annual review, Ms. Stone and the professor's department chairman suggested that he take a course at a local community college to refresh his understanding of how to write course goals and syllabuses. "He was, of course, offended by that," says Ms. Stone. They also offered him the option of working with other Rochester professors or administrators. "He just pretty much ignored us," says Ms. Stone. She had started the process of termination for cause, she says,

when the professor decided to retire instead.

The university prefers to talk about the professors who were not having problems, but have benefited from FEAD grants anyway.

Michael Peres, a professor of biomedical photographic communications, has long used a microscope to take photographs of plants and cells. Several years ago, his colleagues in the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences noticed the artistic value of his photographs, which feature swirls of color, intricate designs, and fascinating shapes.

In 2000, Mr. Peres was invited to put on

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a solo art exhibition of his work. He applied for a FEAD grant and won \$3,000 to pay for the materials for the art show.

"I never considered myself an artist," says Mr. Peres. "It enabled me to do something that was completely removed from my strengths." The experience helped him to step back and analyze visual ideas and to appreciate different approaches to problems, which in turn helped his teaching, he says. A graduate student even turned the photographs into a published book.

The experiment was so rewarding that Mr. Peres applied for and won another FEAD grant last year. He used the \$7,200 award to organize Images From Science, an internet-based project that displays a dazzling array of scientific photographs from academics all over the world.

Mr. Ferber, the associate professor of political science, has also won two FEAD grants over the last two years for research purposes. One will pay for another faculty member to cover his winter-quarter teaching load so he can complete a project on state legislative Web sites and their impact on democracy. When he returns to the classroom next spring to teach state and local politics, he'll be better equipped, he says.

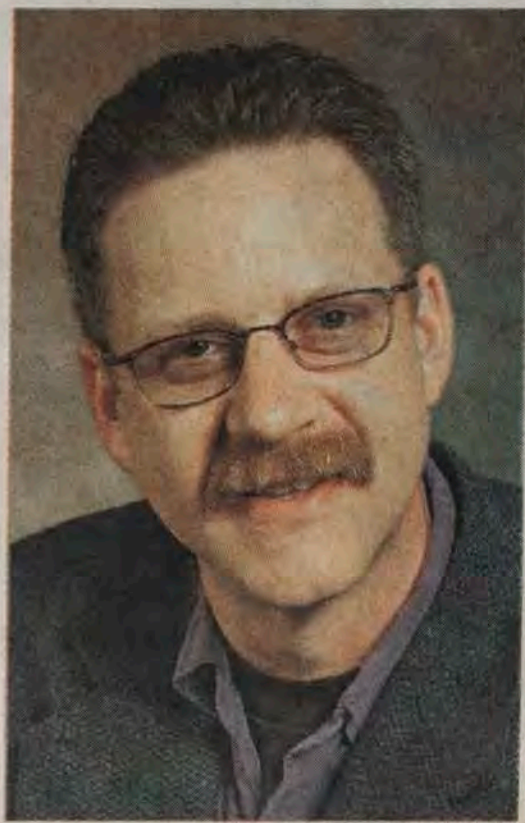
Faculty Evaluation and Development grants have also been used to help mid-career, untenured faculty members. When the information-technology department began to grow, the university hired many of its own master's graduates. A dozen or more of those people are coming up for tenure soon. "Now we are saying they need Ph.D.'s or they will not get tenure," says Mr. McKenzie. Ten of those professors are currently enrolled in Ph.D. programs at George Mason University. Rochester is paying their regular salaries and giving them significant reductions in teaching, plus \$1,500 each for tuition. Some of the professors are exempt from teaching, while others are teaching one or two distance courses. "They are valuable people for us," says Mr. McKenzie, and worth the investment.

Because the FEAD grants are used for various purposes, many faculty members are not aware of who is getting a grant for remedial purposes. "It's kind of gone invisible," says Mr. Oliver. And while some older pro-



AN ALBINO AXOLOTL, OR SALAMANDER

KARL GRIMES



ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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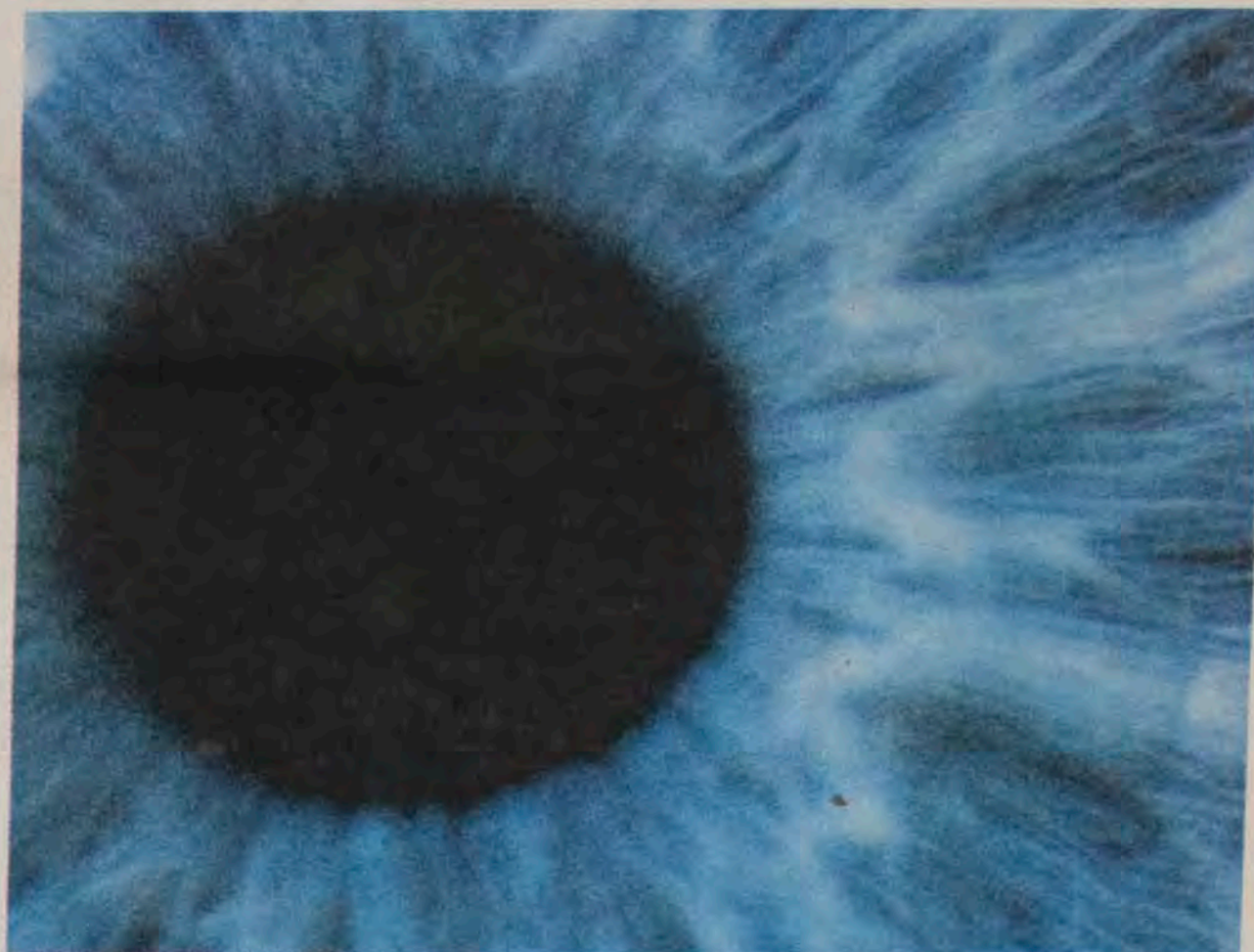
fessors choose to retire early rather than retool, only their dean, department head, and the provost tend to know what else might have contributed to their decision to leave. Some professors are surprised to hear that the program has resulted in the departure of 25 professors. "If that's true . . . it hasn't been advertised as related to the FEAD program," says Mr. Oliver.

Administrators say that is precisely the point. "This does preserve some dignity," says Ms. Stone. "To me, it's an ideal plan created by faculty. It's not punitive, it's supportive."



BLUE LIGHT CONDITIONS IN THALE CRESS SEEDLINGS

JAMES E. HAYDEN



NORMAL PIGMENT PATTERN IN THE IRIS OF AN ADULT

KEVIN LANGTON

## Dean Apologizes for Medical School's Role in Sterilization Program

BY ALICE GOMSTYN

THE DEAN of Wake Forest University's medical school has apologized for the school's support of a state-sponsored program that sterilized mentally ill and mentally retarded people in the 1940s and 1950s. The program was based on eugenics, a now-discredited philosophy advocating the use of sterilization to prevent individuals considered less desirable by society from reproducing. Those included people believed to have inherited diseases, as well as people with behaviors then thought to have genetic roots, such as sexual promiscuity and drug addiction.

In the preface to a report issued by the North Carolina university's School of Medicine, the dean, William B. Applegate, criticized the "faulty science" of the eugenics movement and expressed regret that "a few faculty members" had taken "inappropriate leaps of faith" in participating in the state's eugenics program.

Reinforcing those comments in an interview, Dr. Applegate said that he "deeply regrets the role that our institution had in that movement" and denounced the sterilizations as a "fundamental violation of patient human rights."

The report was based on a 10-month internal investigation, which found that at least one faculty member at the medical school had performed state-ordered sterilizations, some of which were involuntary, and that the school's genetics department had provided affidavits in support of sterilization at a local hospital. The medical school also accepted \$180,000 in donations—which it used to support genetics research as well as an endowed chair for the genetics department—from Wickliffe P. Draper, an ardent supporter of eugenics and a known racist.

Administrators showed poor judgment in accepting Mr. Draper's donations, Dr. Ap-

plegate wrote in the preface to the report, but the investigation found no indication that the school or faculty members shared his views.

"We found no evidence of racist or ethnic bias in any of the teaching and activities" supported by Mr. Draper's donations, the dean said. However, the report does reveal "a deep lack of understanding of genetics" on the part of faculty members who supported eugenics, he added.

Dr. Applegate ordered the investigation, which was conducted by a committee consisting of two medical-school professors, an assistant dean, and one of the medical school's lawyers. The investigation began in January, when a series of articles by a local newspaper, the *Winston-Salem Journal*, detailed the school's participation in the state-sponsored eugenics program.

From 1929 to 1974, a North Carolina state board ordered the sterilization of 7,600 peo-

ple. The *Journal* reported that among those forced or persuaded to undergo sterilization were children as young as 10.

Last December the state's governor, Michael F. Easley, apologized for the board's actions.

According to Dr. Applegate, all Wake Forest faculty members involved in eugenics are now deceased.

Wake Forest is not the only major university to apologize recently for unethical activities by long-dead researchers. In 2001, the University of Iowa said that a 1930s experiment in which orphans were deliberately taught to stutter had been wrong. The federal government has also said it was sorry for other ethical lapses in medical research. The most notable of these were the Tuskegee studies in which the U.S. Public Health Service withheld treatment from poor black men to study how syphilis spread and how it killed.