


# James Dickson Carr Library Honors First African-American Graduate of Rutgers College; Previously Known as Kilmer Library

The undergraduate and business library on Rutgers University's Livingston campus was renamed for James Dickson Carr, the first African-American graduate of Rutgers College, on February 8, 2017. The library was dedicated to Carr on October 17, 2017. 

Carr, who lived from 1868 to 1920, attended Rutgers Grammar School, completed his Rutgers College degree in 1892, and was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. He was one of the first African-American college graduates in the Northeastern United States.

According to a 1985 biography of Carr in the *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, after graduating from Columbia Law School, he served as an assistant district attorney of New York County and held other offices in New York City government. He accomplished all of this despite many obstacles due to racial discrimination. In 1919 Carr wrote a remarkable letter to Rutgers President William H.S. Demarest protesting the action of the Rutgers football team to pull Paul Robeson from a game because the opposing team would not play against a Black player.

Built in 1971 and formerly known as the Kilmer Area Library or the Kilmer Library, the James Dickson Carr Library is located close to the center of campus and adjacent to the Livingston Student Center, according to a Rutgers University Libraries announcement about the renaming. The library is a popular spot for students who can study with friends at the tables on the first floor, find a quiet carrel on the second, or use one of the largest computing and printing labs on campus.



"The Libraries are honored that one of our spaces will be named for James Carr," said Jeanne Boyle, interim assistant vice president for information services and director of New Brunswick Libraries. "By all accounts, he was an excellent scholar and we hope students who use the Carr Library in the future will find inspiration in the personal story of 'one of the best known of New Brunswick students,' as he was described by his fellow student Henry Kimball Davis."

Rutgers' Board of Governors renamed the library for Carr as part of the

university's response to enact recommendations by the Committee on Enslaved and Disenfranchised Populations in Rutgers History. The committee, formed to examine Rutgers' ties to slavery and the displacement of Native Americans, created the Scarlet and Black Project and has produced the book, *Scarlet and Black, Volume 1: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History*.

The Board of Governors, at the same meeting on February 8, 2017, named the College Avenue Apartments for Sojourner Truth, a formerly enslaved person who was owned as a young girl by the family of Rutgers' first president, Jacob Hardenbergh, according to a Rutgers press release. After escaping to freedom, Truth (c. 1797–1883) became an abolitionist and women's rights activist.


The 14-story Sojourner Truth Apartments opened in fall 2016. The first floor is known as the Yard and features communal areas and green spaces, along with retailers and restaurants. The board also voted to name the walkway from Old Queens to the Voorhees Mall as Will's Way, in honor of Will, an enslaved person who laid the foundation of Rutgers' iconic administration building.

The university plans to install plaques at the apartments and the library to tell the stories of Truth and Carr and to put a marker along Will's Way, said Antonio Calcado, executive vice president for strategic planning and operations at Rutgers.

*Carr portrait photo courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries (RUL). Carr Library photo courtesy of RUL.*

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## [Dean Paula Van Riper Remembered; Honored with Memorial Bench on Livingston Campus](#)

Rutgers University has honored **Paula K. Van Riper**, a former assistant dean and director of advising for Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and previously for Livingston College, with a tribute plaque erected on a bench outside the James Dickson Carr Library (formerly the Kilmer Library) on Livingston campus. 

Rutgers dedicated the plaque to Van Riper's memory at a ceremony on Saturday, September 24, 2016.

Van Riper, 67, of Branchburg, New Jersey, passed away on August 20, 2015, after a long struggle with multiple myeloma.

Van Riper had served as a dean at Rutgers in various roles since 1992. Prior to joining the university, Van Riper served on the Piscataway, New Jersey, Board of Education as a member, Vice President and President, and as President of the PTA Presidents Council.

Diagnosed with myeloma in 1999, Van Riper founded the Central Jersey Multiple Myeloma Support Group, providing information, guidance, and support to many fellow patients and their families. She had spoken and written extensively in support of the myeloma community, and had appeared as its advocate before legislative bodies. She also started a yearly 5K race to support multiple myeloma research. In fall 2015, shortly after Van Riper's death, the proceeds from the race funded a research grant in her name.

A fund-raiser for Van Riper's memorial plaque, which ran from August 10-September 12, 2016, raised \$8,840, with \$7,000 earmarked for Rutgers and \$1,840 for scholarships for Piscataway High School students.

"Thousands of students remember her fondly as the advisor ready with a word of good advice, a smile and a gentle push forward," her colleague, SAS Assistant Dean Robin Diamond, said in a video explaining the fund-raising campaign (also embedded on this page). "Need someone to talk to who would give it to you straight while still caring about your experience? Paula was your person."

Among other accomplishments, Van Riper established a connection between the radio stations at Rutgers and Piscataway High School, allowing them to merge and serve both the university and the high school since 2000.

Garth Patterson, an academic advisor in SAS since its founding in 2007, remembers Van Riper as a professional mentor "and in uncountable ways, influenced my growth as a person."

Jason Goldstein, a 2002 alumnus of Livingston College, remembers Van Riper from an open house event he attended before entering college.

"As a dean, Paula Van Riper provided remarks, led a panel discussion, and provided insight when answering questions from the audience. She showcased her warmth, energy, and love for students, a disposition that represented Livingston College very well," said Goldstein, who is also a former President of the Livingston Alumni Association. "As an inquisitive high school student, I had a million questions. After the event ended, I approached Paula in the hallway to introduce myself and learn a little more. Paula spent what must have been a half hour with me and my parents sharing her passion for Livingston College and tips to be successful at Rutgers and in life. I felt there was now a face, with a beautiful smile, on this intimidating university."

Sabrina Laudent, an alumna from the SAS Class of 2015, remembers Van Riper as "thoughtful, kind, witty and very honest to me about everything."

“Dean Van Riper was thoughtful, kind, witty and very honest to me about everything. Dean Van Riper guided me through a lot of my academic and personal struggles, and was always willing to meet with me in between work and classes,” said Laudent, a secretarial assistant at the Livingston Advising Center. “During each advising session she encouraged me to try harder and simply do better, and I always left feeling a little more confident in my abilities and myself.

“There were plenty of fun conversations too, about puppies, the weather and our hair. I loved everything about Dean Van Riper from the way she appreciated everyone around her, the way she spoke, the pretty scarves she wore, her cute green Prius, and the hugs she gave me before and after every long break.”

Van Riper was born in 1947 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and graduated from Franklin High School in 1965. Van Riper earned a B.S. in Business Administration from Rider University in 1969, and a Master’s in Social Work from Rutgers in 1997.

She is survived by her son Ryan Van Riper, daughter Renee (Whitman) and her husband Eric Whitman, brother Richard Bonopane, sister Bonnie (Fochi), brother Alan Bonopane, and grandson Alexander Whitman. She is predeceased by her parents, Vincent and Frances Bonopane.