

Tribute to Dean Mark Schuster

“The first thoughts that come to my mind when thinking about Dr. Mark Schuster and the incredible legacy he has left us include his limitless energy 1) to right the wrongs that exist in society, 2) to make sure that justice always prevails, and 3) to support equity, inclusion and diversity always. I was very fortunate to collaborate on many initiatives and projects with Mark that supported his legacy, the last one being the First Annual Colloquium, entitled: Affirming Medical and Mental Health Care for LGBTQAI communities. This Colloquium took place on February 25th and 26th of 2021. And, as per Mark’s wishes, in addition to making the first Colloquium one that teaches and inspires, Mark also had definitive plans for having this one be the root of an annual Colloquium that would blossom every year. And, I’m happy to say that this second, student-run Colloquium of 2022 is the realization of Mark’s wishes and hopes for continuation of this educational forum. In an email to his Colloquium team right before the event (on 2/11/2021), he stated that he wanted, ‘To make it (the Colloquium) so provocative and interesting that tons of people will help and support students, med students, and community leaders to do Part II, as an annual event, run by them (transformational leadership).’ And, that I’m happy to say is a reality with this second Colloquium. Yes, I was very fortunate and blessed to be one of Mark’s colleagues. And, even more important, to be one of Mark’s friends.”

—Gloria A Bachmann, MD, MMS, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Medicine, Associate Dean for Women's Health, Director, Women's Health Institute (WHI), Medical Director of the PROUD Gender Center of NJ

“I first met Mark following the tragic death of Tyler Clementi. Over a number of years, I had the good fortune to work with him on a variety of issues. Most recently, we collaborated on a plan to offer writing support to graduate students at Alexander Library. Mark seized opportunities and possibilities for advancing student life. I recall our time together as kindred spirits dedicated to ensuring a promising new generation of Rutgers graduates committed to both excellence and social justice.”

—Nancy Kranich, Special Projects Librarian, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

“With Mark, I enjoyed sharing stories about childhood, teaching, the Adirondacks, and life at Rutgers. I will remember him as a gifted conversational companion, and friend.”

—Jorge Reina Schement, Emeritus Vice Chancellor & Dean, SC&I. Distinguished Professor of Communications Policy

“Mark Schuster's “pride” quotient was always high. He celebrated LGBTQIA+ accomplishments and critiqued our privilege. In sardonic tones, he would remind all of us at Rutgers—queer or straight—of our responsibilities in a heterosexist, racist, misogynist world.”

—Cheryl Clarke, Former Dean of Students/Livingston Campus (2009-2013)

“Mark Schuster touched so many lives, and the ripples of his influence are still felt by his students, loved ones, and the community at large. As Avi said, he loved his students and we loved him. In planning this colloquium, we are constantly met with reminders of the way our mentor brought people together, and the vibrancy with which he did it. I am so grateful to have met him and for the people he brought into my life. He’s gone, but never forgotten. May his soul rise in power.”

–Katharine Little, Rutgers Honors College ’22 and Graduate School of Education ’23

“Mark supported all students at Rutgers, but he was a fierce champion and advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community. We have the responsibility to make sure his legacy continues at Rutgers. Thank you for everything you have done, Mark!”

–Kayo Denda, Head of the Margery Somers Foster Center and Librarian for Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Rutgers University – New Brunswick Libraries

“Dean Schuster took me in as a silly Freshman, and supported me in every step of my development. Through him I learnt to question and investigate, to never underestimate the power or important fiction, sport, and writing have on my and our world’s identity. Dean Schuster didn’t shape me, he gave me the tools to shape myself, and was proud of every step I took.”

–Segev Kanik, RU SAS Class of ’20, GMU Law ’23.

“You’re everywhere. I see you teaching Sports in America, advising a student thesis on Serena Williams, guest lecturing on LGBT+ history in my 101, running Project Civility. I see you on Livingston, Douglass, College Ave, and on more relaxed days, on Easton Avenue. In each place, your energy created community with us, and your loud voice and hearty laughter resonated and amplified ours. Thank you for making that world, Mark.”

–Allan Punzalan Isaac, Professor of American Studies and English, Associate Dean of Humanities

“Dean Mark Schuster was an advocate for everyone he came across. Whether it be students he just met, students who worked with him, or colleagues, he was dedicated to ensuring that we all received compassionate care and advocacy for what we needed in order to thrive and succeed. While he is no longer here in his physical form, he has touched each of us in some way to which he is now around us and guiding us spiritually. Thank you, Dean Schuster, for all the work you did for us.”

–Ariel Chun, Graduate Intern and Coordinator for the Office of Graduate Student Life

“The dean was my ‘Gay Rabbi,’ a term he appreciated in humor and endearment. In my arrogance, and his humility, we bonded over honesty and empathy. He was a special and wise man who loved to teach and listen, even to a stubborn and undeserving orthodox kid.^[1] I was blessed with knowing him the last couple years, but even one more conversation would have been nice. Dude was raw.”

–Evyatar “Avi” Kanik, Rutgers SEBS ‘22

“Mark was my friend, my mentor, my boss along the way, a brother to me in the long struggles of life.

Mark became my first best supervisor when he joined the Housing Office at the New School back in 1985. And over the intervening years, he hired me onto his teams, and slid me project work, keeping me in the mix of his two-way support system; he counted on me to keep him looking good... of course, but that isn’t as superficial as it might sound.

You see, from the moment I first met Mark, he was always focused on ‘the Impact’... that often came off as what impact *he* was making; his competitive drive put to work against bad witches and oppressive situations.. But it was much moreso, in more subtle ways, a focus on the bigger impact we all can have for the people in our lives.

From the political scene to the consumption of “cultcha” - from the Academy Awards nominees to that Olympiads latest performance or controversial media splash - from gov’t agencies, to student centers, to that last campus event: *what was the impact?* If Mark was involved, he worked to make sure that the impact was always positive. Students first, not institutions first. For Mark, Rutgers needed to be (and perhaps as a measure, Rutgers, Iowa, IBS, the New School, NYU, they were all only) as good as that motto. Students first. People first.

As a disabled queer man with a compromised immune system, Mark experienced directly the ways that society, through it’s institutions, could press down on individuals caught in the cogs... he knew it had to be made more accessible, more times than not, only doing so after much kicking a screaming.

Institutions had to be made more gay-friendly, more body-positive, more feminist, more empowering (if not liberating in that moment). Of course society’s institutions are usually designed otherwise. So there was plenty of work to do. All of this points to a fortitude and a personal mission that Mark embodied. This was the “Just Cause” for a privileged & also challenged man as Mark presented himself. He was brave and determined to have a voice & to lift the voices of those in his circles.

That resilience and determination was Schuster, right to the end.

I’m going to miss Mark, a lot... but I want you all to know that he lifted so many of you in my eyes, as I now know he lifted me up in yours.

For this I'm ever grateful ~ for being seen by Mark, for being acknowledged as good enough to make an impact, for being given the opportunity to help Mark make his own. Good luck Mark, wherever your next adventure takes you."

-Paul Nocera, friend, co-worker & mentee of Mark, since 1985.
