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of Planning and Public Policy

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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back! We are back with many of long-standing faculty now retired and doing other interesting things.

Time has moved on.

As some of you already know, I have to add one more name to that long list of people who have changed roles.

After a great deal of thought and discussion, I am stepping down as Dean of Bloustein. Ever since I arrived here, I have advocated tirelessly for the School to move forward towards excellence in all spheres – academic and research excellence, administrative resilience, and public prominence and service. We have undertaken significant steps regarding diversity and inclusion. Having positioned the School for even higher heights, it is time for new leadership to take the School to the next level. I look forward to collaborating as I resume my duties as Distinguished Professor and Director of the Rutgers Urban and Civic Informatics (RUCI) Lab.

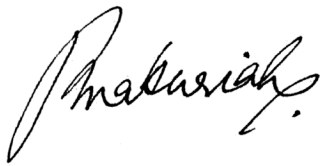
I am enormously proud of what I have been able to achieve for the School in the short time I have been Dean. We completed an ambitious Strategic Plan that brought together faculty, staff, students, alumni, and external stakeholders, which promotes an inclusive vision for our School that is centered on creating just, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and healthy local, national, and global communities. We increased revenues by a projected 18.5% compared to the fiscal year prior to my arrival, despite the global pandemic. Some of our program rankings improved, and exciting new academic offerings and research initiatives have started or are in process. For example, our Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) rose in the leading graduate urban planning program rankings in North America (Planetizen), from fifth nationally in 2017 to third in 2019. Our relatively new Master of Health Administration (MHA) program, which started in 2017, was ranked for the first time in 2020 by Top Masters in HealthCare Administration, as being tenth in the country, and #2 among the Big Ten schools. We are continuing to add talented new faculty members. A highlight of my administration has been the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and multiple programs associated with that effort.

None of this would have been possible without an excellent faculty, an outstanding staff, and a simply phenomenal advisory board. I am truly humbled by how talented, professional, empathetic, and interesting our School's community is. I am particularly thankful to our Associate Deans, and the two former Associate Deans and the former Interim Dean who just recently retired, as they were helpful in transitioning me into this

role. Our students are our biggest asset, and I look forward to working with them, and to learning from them.

Please know that I am fully committed to ensure that a transition is smooth and that the School, under new leadership, is able to take off in other directions.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. My warmest regards to you. Vonu

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Piyushimita Thakuriah". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Prof. Piyushimita (Vonu) Thakuriah, PhD
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