

EXTRA CREDIT

A SUMMER & WINTER SESSIONS PODCAST

Season 3, Episode 1: Dr. Mark Robson Transcript

[00:00:00] Introduction: Welcome to Extra Credit, hosted by the Rutgers University Office of Summer and Winter sessions. Listen to hear from students as they share their experiences at Rutgers and some tips on how to navigate a condensed semester. Also gain the perspective of professors and learn more about the courses they teach.

[00:00:21] Sammi: Welcome back to a special episode of Extra Credit. Today's guest is a long time Rutgers faculty member and professor. Welcome to the podcast! Can you introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about yourself?

[00:00:32] Mark Robson: So, hi, I'm Mark Robson and I'm a faculty member over the department of plant biology here at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.

[00:00:41] And I always liked to introduce myself the way I did to Dr. Holloway, which is my mom dropped me off in 1973, and I'm still waiting for her to come back. So this is my 49th year - four degrees, three jobs, and one wife - all from Rutgers. I've been here, my entire adult life, and I am trained first as an agricultural scientist. And later as a toxicologist and public health scientist.

[00:01:03] Sammi: So how'd you get interested into your field of study?

[00:01:06] Mark Robson: So I grew up on a farm in Burlington County. And so my Rutgers time actually started before I came to campus. So as you might know, uh, we're the state land grant school, which includes the New Jersey agricultural experiment station, that means that we have county agricultural agents and 4H agents in each of our 21 counties.

[00:01:25] So as a kid on the farm, I was in a 4H dairy project. And so I was going to Rutgers, uh, for 4H programs at nine and 10 years old. And since I grew up on a farm, it made sense to me to pursue a field that I knew the best, which is agriculture.

[00:01:42] Sammi: That's so wonderful that you were able to find your passion growing up on a farm.

[00:01:47] Now in following that passion, what exactly drew you to Rutgers?

[00:01:51] Mark Robson: So I applied to four places and Rutgers gave me a scholarship. So my parents said, you know, I'm first gen in my family. So no one had gone to college before, but as soon as my parents found out, I had a scholarship to go here. The discussion ended very abruptly and here I am.

[00:02:07] Sammi: And you're still here.

[00:02:07] Mark Robson: And I'm still here.

[00:02:09] Sammi: So what inspired you to become a professor? Obviously, you really liked being at Rutgers and you really like your field, but what made you want to teach?

[00:02:15] Mark Robson: So I really enjoy what I do and I knew, um, so I'm, uh, I have siblings, but I'm the eldest. And so, uh, it probably wasn't a place to go back home and farm. We already were doing all of that. So the next best thing of course is still teach about farming and work with farmers. I think I probably have one of the best jobs at the university. So I had really good professors when I was a student and as a professor, I've had really good students. And so that is why I wanted to become a professor and continue to be one.

[00:02:45] Sammi: What do you like best about your students? You know, like teaching college students?

[00:02:48] Mark Robson: Three things. The first thing is they keep you young. They keep you contemporary. And I think that's really important to keep you moving. You know, you have to keep up with them. Uh, and, and that ranges from graduate students teasing me.

[00:03:01] I had one of my favorite students a while back said, you know, Dr. Robson, you need an Apple Watch. I said, I don't think so. He goes, yeah, you do. And he goes, you need to get one for me too. So we went to New York, we bought two Apple Watches and he goes said, I'll show you how to use it. So now and you know, I, I wouldn't know what to do if I didn't have my Apple Watch.

[00:03:19] So my, my graduate students and undergraduates challenge me and push me. I think that young women and men are so much more sophisticated and worldly in 2022 than I certainly was in 1973. Um, they, they just know a lot more. And I think that that keeps the, if you, if you work hard to keep doing a good job teaching, it pushes you to stay up and keep up with the students.

[00:03:43] Sammi: I love that. It kind of plays into it, but how have you seen Rutgers evolve? Maybe the students, the campus, the community.

[00:03:49] Mark Robson: So I would like to think, uh, that in many respects, uh, the Rutgers I found in 1973 and the Rutgers today, today, it's a better place. Um, I, you know, there've been changes. There's some of the changes, um, like all changes are a little hard to get used to, but we've gotten used to them.

[00:04:08] Rutgers is a very big place. Not long ago, I participated in a, uh, you know, Zoom cast for, uh, uh, hiring someone and the person was trying to understand the university. And they said, oh, you should ask Mark, he's been here a long time. And they said, you know, Rutgers is the eighth oldest university college in the United States. And I said and easily, the most complicated. So I think Rutgers is still a very complicated place with lots of moving parts, but it's a good place. I'm excited about Dr. Holloway's beloved community. I think that's important. I think we do need to feel a sense of community, a sense of belonging. So that's a good thing.

[00:04:44] Um, it's a little tougher too, you know, uh, with scheduling and things. Uh, I couldn't dream, as an undergraduate, classes ended at 5:50. I lived in at Helyar House, a cooperative living dorm, which is still over on College Farm Road. It's co-ed now. In the seventies, it was male. And, uh, you know, we all had dinner together as a group every night, five days a week during the weekday. That's part of being a cooperative.

[00:05:09] Now, of course, you know, some of my students have recitation till 10:55 at night. So part of, part of the, to accommodate people's schedules and the way we are in 2022 is a little less personal. And I think the university has worked hard to make it more personal.

[00:05:25] I think one of the most exciting things are the Byrne Seminars. Now for full disclosure. I am the faculty director of the Byrne Seminar program, but I thought it was exciting before. That's why I was asked to do it. I've been teaching a Byrne since Dr. Barry Qualls, uh, came up with the idea and Dr. McCormick. And, you know, I said, gee, if I, I wish that was around in 1973. We've been doing them for 16 years now to engage first year students, to let them find some common ground, uh, to take a course where they get to meet the professor.

[00:05:56] Part of it is to learn the topic. The other part is to get to know the professor and to know someone at Rutgers when they come as a freshman at this giant institution.

[00:06:06] Sammi: I really love the idea of the Byrne Seminar. When I was an undergrad here, I actually took one in social media. And look where I am now!

[00:06:12] Mark Robson: And here you are now. And I teach one in global health that I enjoy, and I also teach a second one called Food: What do we eat? Where does it come from? And how do we grow it? And, and we have food every week and the students enjoy it. And, uh, sometimes when they do their presentations, they bring something interesting. Uh, you know, we had a student, a. Uh, one student, uh, is from Ecuador and brought a native dish.

[00:06:36] Another girl, uh, grew up in a very, uh, Orthodox, uh, kosher home and brought a challah. And we did a little broth on a Friday and we, we had the challah. So, you know, you get to share people's culture, their faith traditions, and how can you go wrong eating? I mean, it's my favorite thing to do.

[00:06:54] Sammi: Yeah, it's my favorite thing to do to. I think that sounds like a perfect class I would've loved to take.

[00:06:57] Mark Robson: I think it's a great class. The reviews are good and not because of me. It's because the kids get to eat.

[00:07:02] Sammi: I mean, you can't go wrong with the class about eating.

[00:07:04] So can you explain the importance of your research?

[00:07:07] Mark Robson: So my research is kind of fun. I think. So I grew up on a farm and one of the things, my first faculty position here at Rutgers was I ran the pesticides' training and impact program. And we still have that program here. It's a USDA and EPA funded program. And what I learned when I grew up on the farm, of course, you know, pesticides have a place, they're an important tool in the farmer's toolbox. And part of the reason we can feed almost 8 billion people in the world are because we can control pests, insects, and diseases.

[00:07:38] You know, about a third of what is grown around the world is lost to insects, rodents, diseases, weeds and things. And there are about a billion, uh, undernourished people in the world. So, you know, if we could, uh, go ahead and not have that loss to all those pests, we wouldn't have a billion under nourished people.

[00:07:57] So I learned about that. And then I started to realize that there are, I mean, I knew that were there, but I started to realize in a more quantitative way, the health risks associated with using these tools, if you don't use them properly. And a good example is where I do most of my research. I have an NIH funded, uh, geo health hub project in Thailand.

[00:08:16] It's for the whole Southeast Asian region, but we're focused in Thailand. And, uh, the Thai government push Thai farmers in a very positive way to grow more rice and to export more rice. China grows more rice, they have more citizens. But Thailand is a big exporter of rice. And so they gave them all these tools they hadn't had before.

[00:08:35] And the good news is they grew more rice. The bad news is they had very high increase in pesticide poisonings, in injuries, on farms because the farmers used a tool they weren't trained to do. So I took what I had been doing all these years at Rutgers. We literally took the show on the road to Southeast Asia, and now we're taking it to West Africa, uh, and to train farmers to better use these tools.

[00:08:58] We're not saying the tools are bad, but you have to use them properly. If I give you my car keys and you've never driven anywhere. And I say, Hey, you know, go up to Newark and pick someone up at the airport. You might, because you've been in the car a lot, get all the way to Newark and back, or you might get out here on Ryders Lane and, you know, have a terrible problem. So it's, it's not just giving you the keys, it's doing the driver's ed.

[00:09:19] And so we have, so that's what we've been doing is training farmers. But what makes it important is to train them in a way that's practical. You know, I gave a talk to the medical school a while ago about some of my research and, you know, it was very, it's your lots of data with urinary metabolites and blood levels, all this stuff that you do when you go talk at the medical school.

[00:09:39] And one of the young residents said, Dr. Robson, I believe you've missed the point. And I smiled and said, yeah, I do a lot. What's up. He goes, you should just put all these people in Tyvek protective suits. I said, you know, doctor, have you ever been to Southeast Asia? Well, no. I said, well you know, on a cool day, it's 110. On a warm day, it's 120. So I said, who can help him? And we asked one of the other young residents because you know, they already have their medical degree. They're very smart, young women and men. I said, who can help him understand? How long would you last in a Tyvek suit on the Thai-Malaysian border? Kid goes 20 minutes. I go, if you're lucky.

[00:10:14] So you've got to come up with a different plan. And so what makes it fun for me is to do that. I also like to brag that after doing it all these years, I can get off a plane in about 50 different countries. And I can get somebody to pick me up at the airport because we've had students from about 50 countries now.

[00:10:32] And that's a lot of fun, something I'm very proud of and they've done really well. It's all them. It's not me. I just kind of steered the boat a little bit. They've all been really successful. I have students that are minis- top officials and ministries of health, leading universities, uh, ministries of agriculture, and in big Fortune 200 companies all over the globe. But they got their training here at Rutgers.

[00:10:54] **Sammi:** That's amazing. That's truly amazing.

[00:10:56] **Mark Robson:** I'm a very proud academic papa. They're doing it themselves.

[00:10:59] **Sammi:** Right.

[00:10:59] **Mark Robson:** I mean, our goal, you know, Rutgers is a land grant and our goal is to, to really take out the information, give people the tools and then sit back and watch them just fly. It's good.

[00:11:10] **Sammi:** So you said that you're opening up another Institute in West Africa?

[00:11:14] **Mark Robson:** So our plan prior to COVID is that Dr. Jim Simon and Dr. Ousseina Alidou and others. Uh, Dr. Alidou is over in the Center for Women's Studies, Dr. Simon and I are in the department of plant biology. Dr. Simon will be the lead, but we're looking to set up a, uh, a project in Niger to work with, uh, folks who are, uh, agriculture is a big part of, uh, the economy of Niger. It's the second poorest country in the world. It has the highest birth rate and the lowest, uh, uh, mean age of citizens. The average Niger citizen is 15. So it's a real young, rapidly expanding population.

[00:11:54] And, uh, we have a couple parts to this, including things like helping them with value added product to, uh, shipping to wealthier parts of Africa and to Europe. But my part of this too, is to set up a professional science master's program. You know, this a professional science master's program actually has a direct connection with, over here at DoCS. Dr. Deborah Silver and I work closely together. She's the executive director.

[00:12:18] And so we're looking to set up a master's in business and science program in Niger and we're looking to bring young women and men from new share to come to Rutgers to get their MBS. We've had that model in the Philippines, in, uh, El Salvador, in Liberia. It's really fun to have all these Rutgers grads and they come here with us or we take the show to them. And that's how we really are, you know, Jersey roots with a global reach.

[00:12:46] **Sammi:** So, what do you believe your key contribution to the field is? Would you say it's that the fact that you're giving all these people, the tools to enrich their commute?

[00:12:54] **Mark Robson:** I think there's two parts to it. The first one is to, to provide a platform for people to train and to learn, to get those tools.

[00:13:03] And the second and most important thing is to take what I know and apply it, too. And I have a, I think it's a interesting little story. So I grew up on a farm and farmers are the same, whether you talk to farmers in Southern Poland, Western Africa, or Southeast Asia. And my favorite little story is that I went to, uh, Hebei province in China with a group of researchers from the Beijing Institute of Technolog. Uh, Dr. Carl Pray, uh, our distinguished professor over here in our department of Agricultural Economics, has some collaborators over there. They're economists as well. And so he invited me to start a collaboration with them. So off we go way out into the heartland. Uh, it's the first time I had donkey for lunch.

[00:13:48] But after we got past that, um, we went to meet the farmers and, um, the educational system is very structured in China, where the very senior people talk to the seniors. So there's a bright, young woman, assistant professor. I said, you're going to do my translation, not the senior people. I want you to do the following.

[00:14:05] So we sat with the farmers and I know just a very tiny amount of Chinese. And I said to them, you know, I'm so happy to be here with you because I'm a farmer, just like you. And everybody smiled. And I said, my dad was a farmer, his whole life. And in his entire career, Pop never had a good year.

Every year, you say, so how was the season, Pop? Oh, it was terrible. I don't know how you could stay in business for 75 years and never have a good year.

[00:14:30] So I said to the Chinese farmers, so how has your season? Was it Hěn hǎo (很好), which is good, or was it bù hǎo (不好), which is bad. And to, every one of them: bù hǎo, bù hǎo, bù hǎo. So whether you're a farmer in south Jersey or a farmer in south China, it's always bù hǎo. But after we got over laughing about that, it was a bonding experience. You have to have credibility, you gotta... you will be accepted more quickly if you literally understand what those folks are doing and the importance of what they do and you respect what they do and you appreciate it. And I think my contribution has been to, to take very, uh, skilled and talented Rutgers people and Rutgers students and take them to these places and have them interact.

[00:15:15] I'm sort of the talent agent, you know, I'm not very talented, but on the talent scout and I can put these things together and I think that's what makes it work. So that's my contribution is to, to inventory the talent and put together a program and then watch it fly.

[00:15:30] **Sammi:** I love that. You have a lot of impact on, you know, bringing all these people together.

[00:15:33] **Mark Robson:** I feel like the conductor. I don't play any instruments well, but I appreciate everybody in the orchestra.

[00:15:38] **Sammi:** I love that.

[00:15:39] You've been a long-time faculty member of summer and winter courses. What do you love about teaching during this period?

[00:15:46] **Mark Robson:** So, summer and winter classes are completely different from, from the traditional semester classes. So it makes me organize myself differently, but it also gives me a chance. So my, uh, the classes I teach for summer and winter session are Plants and People. Um, so as a senior person, you know, it's, it's a large 100 level class that students can fill the natural science requirement, uh, ENF on the natural science requirement.

[00:16:12] And so I started teaching this when I was, stepped down as department chair, plant biology, because it was under subscribed and it was an opportunity for us to, to get people more interested in what we do: plant science. And it was also an opportunity to, to deliver the course better. And so then we decided to offer it in the summer. Before COVID, it was offered in person.

[00:16:34] It was offered every day. It was a lot of work for the students. And it wasn't trivial for me where you could take little field trips, we'd walk around campus, there's great plants there. The Rutgers Gardens is right up the street. We'd have a picnic, you know, and that summer class, there's a different attitude, that the students are in it to get through it.

[00:16:50] And I know that too. I mean, you have to be realistic, you know, why, why do you take this class? Well, you take this class because it's straightforward. It fills a requirement and it can be fun and not too hard. We have a chocolate tasting. We have a nut tasting, but with nut allergies, that has to be a lot more careful.

[00:17:05] You know, we have a, um, you know, several, uh, for the, the summer version, we, we, the picnic with tomato sandwiches, New Jersey tomatoes. And so what I like about the summer classes, the

students have a different approach to it. So I teach a little differently, too. The syllabus is the same, you know, and the contents the same, but you can teach it a little bit more relaxed atmosphere. It's accelerated. So you have to say to them, you know, here are the assignments. If you don't pay attention on the first day, you know, three weeks later, the semester is done. You, you can end up with a T grade because you didn't finish your work. So you have to teach it in an accelerated way.

[00:17:37] But I think for some students who are so anxious during the regular semester, or have, like the business school kids who have so many very rigorous courses during the regular semester, this is a chance for them to sit back and enjoy it, too. So I, I like teaching in summer session and winter session, uh, because it's a different, uh, mindset. Course is the same. Syllabus is the same, but I teach it at a little different pace.

[00:18:03] Uh, for the asynchronous ones. I still require virtual office hours and the required. And I think one of the compliments, like, uh, I took it as a compliment, reading the reviews. I take the reviews very seriously. And I'd take the less favorable comments much more seriously than the favorable ones.

[00:18:21] Uh, and the one students that I really thought it was annoying to have to do virtual office hours, but I liked it because then you actually get to meet the guy that's teaching the class and you can ask him questions. And I said, well, you know, that's why we do it. Right. So I, I think as long as you, uh, even in asynchronous, one, as long as you still try to maintain contact, maintain contact with this class, it works.

[00:18:43] **Sammi:** Yeah. Do you find that you like teaching it more in person versus the asynchronous?

[00:18:47] **Mark Robson:** So that's a good question. So this semester I have an asynchronous version of plants and people with 168 kids in it. And I have an in-person one that has about 90 and it's the same syllabus. And one set are recorded lectures, you know, and the other set is live and in concert. Um, I prefer in-person, but I've learned to do a better job with async. I finally think I got, after doing this for a couple semesters now and getting extraordinary assistance from, uh, uh, folks who are instructional design people. Every time you do it, you do it better.

[00:19:19] You know, I think the thing that, that faculty, well, I'm a faculty person. I can say this, you know, a bad course becomes a worst course online. And if you didn't do a good job, when you did it in person, you certainly aren't going to be successful. You got to really be organized. You have to think about every single frame and how you describe it because the students aren't there to raise their hand and ask a question and say, what do you mean by that? Or can you go back to that last slide? It's asynchronous. I suppose you can rewind the tape, but you know, or push the thing back. But the bottom line is you need to do a better job.

[00:19:52] So I enjoy, I like people. I like, I like the, you know, the food labs I like to interact with students. Um, and so I appreciate that. I am very, uh, I feel very rewarded when there's a, you know, when class is over and people aren't flying out the door, but there's a line of students to ask questions. That means I've done my job, or maybe I haven't and they have questions, but you know, there's an interest on their part to talk and to tell.

[00:20:19] Um, in our global health class, we do one online and we do two in-person, one each semester. And I start the class and they know they have to do this. Cause I make participation part of the grade, um, say, okay, three people have to tell me what something they've read or listened to on a

podcast because people don't read newspapers anymore. They either see it online. So what's something that you've read about global health. And three of them have to come up with that. And until they do, we don't start the class.

[00:20:45] Sammi: And you said that you were teaching an accelerated course this year. Can you tell me a little bit about which specific course?

[00:20:50] Mark Robson: So I have two for Summer Session, two sections of Plants and People, one at the beginning of the summer and one at the end. Uh, you know, we will have probably 40 students in each section and I've been teaching that for a while. So we're getting that one down, pat. Now it's asynchronous with those requirements.

[00:21:05] And then a section of global health. And a global health kind of become a signature course for me. Now I have great fun with that one, it's a 200 level class, um, it's a requirement for public health students, the Bloustein School. Um, I'm a SEBS faculty member, but it gives me a chance to interact with Bloustein students. Uh, we have a number of public health majors here at SEBS, as well as SAS and the whole university-wide system. So I get to meet students from across the university that way. And we do offer a section in the summer because it is a requirement.

[00:21:39] Uh, the, uh, the curriculum are so tightly organized for a lot of our undergraduate majors now, that I think the summer classes do allow the student a little flexibility if he or she has to, you know, take, want to take an elective during the regular school year, or if, you know, some students, I think they approach it. I'm not kidding myself. You know, they approach it by wanting to get it done. One or two students just like to have a little more flexibility and a little less credit load in the, in the regular spring and fall. And so they look to summer classes to, uh, just sort of take the pressure off.

[00:22:18] And so we try to make the classes interesting, but Global Health and Plants and People are my summer and winter session classes.

[00:22:24] Sammi: So what do you think the most, bit like, the biggest takeaway from your accelerated courses are?

[00:22:31] Mark Robson: I think two things for, for the students, I hope it's, it's, you know, again, the two courses I do accelerated are they fill requirements. They're not necessarily, um, uh, ones that the students might pursue. You know, a business student, they're taking Plants And People cause they need a natural science, uh, requirement. An English major, he or she is going to write, or they're going to go into journalism or something. They're, they're not, they're not looking to become plant scientists.

[00:22:59] And I think what students, like, if you make it appropriate, um, and you make it relevant, they'll get something out of it anyway. I mean, we talk about climate change and plants. I remind them that, yes, you know, this is not your major, but you eat three times a day. And I remind the business school students that, you know, as we approach climate, the, the people that climate change and to try to address it, people say, you know, we're gonna have to move our diets to about 85% plant-based to, to meet our requirements.

[00:23:28] Not for me, you know, I'll be gone soon, but for them, I remind them that, you know, today there are 8 billion people. When they woke up, there were 250 thousand people that weren't here yesterday. You know, there's about 200 or 385,000 people born every day, we lose about 150, 160. So

the net net is about 250,000 people every single day. So by 2050, they'll be still younger than I am now. And there'll be 10 billion people. I will have been dead for quite some time.

[00:23:56] So they're going to have to manage this. And that means scarce resources, rising temperature, rising sea level, uh, probably more conflict around the world. Uh, certainly we learned from COVID that we are a global community. You know, when you think about, I always tell the students in Global Health, you know, the plague, it took the plague three years, the black death it's look at three years to cross Europe, okay. COVID took 13 hours on a flight somewhere. If we really do believe that it originated somewhere in central China, it took 13 hours to get to JFK. Uh, so we don't take three years anymore. We take less than a day. What does that mean? That means that you know, this global community that we're part of, um, everybody's affected and impacted.

[00:24:41] Um, you know, the, the, the global, simply tell the business school kids, the supply chain was affected by COVID. Okay. You can't get a small part for something, so it's not going to be completed just because that small part was made in Laos or Cambodia and they can't get it to Detroit to finish a car at General Motors.

[00:25:00] Uh everybody's in the game, everybody has to know something about it. So the takeaway for these accelerated courses are we expose young folks to something that might not be their life's passion or might not. I hope at least when they finish it, I hope they're at least interested in it.

[00:25:17] And one of my other things that makes me feel good in the teaching review was the one student. Again, they're all anonymous and the candor in these anonymous things sometimes are very humbling. Well the one kid said that I took Plants and People, because I heard it was easy and it fit my schedule. The guy turned out to be pretty decent and I actually learned something. So part of me said, okay, that's pretty good. And the other part of me said, well then I did my job, you know, they learned something.

[00:25:43] **Sammi:** That's always what you hope for.

[00:25:44] **Mark Robson:** That's the plan every single day.

[00:25:46] **Sammi:** So what advice would you give to students that take an accelerated course?

[00:25:50] **Mark Robson:** I think there's, I, I'll give you the advice I give at the first lecture, whether it's the in-person accelerated one or the online one. This is an accelerated course. It is going to allow you to complete this requirement in a very short period of time, but the course is no less robust or rigorous than the full semester course. You got to come with your game on, just like you would if you came on in September or January. You have less opportunity to slack off. You know, you, you have 16 sessions to log into or to come to, uh, to successfully complete this class.

[00:26:28] And so I tell them, you gotta be prepared. You gotta hang on tight and you gotta do the assignments. And no place is it more important to keep up then this one, because they're, while they, you know, they could take it all in one day or they could take, you know, they could pace it over the three weeks. There are four distinct assignments and a paper due over a specified time in the three week period and they have to adhere to it.

[00:26:51] And I'm very strict about, the class is straightforward, the class is easy. But I'm very strict about deadlines. I think that's an important teachable moment for them. And I also it's important

management tool for me because I can't get backed up and inconvenience someone who turned his or her work in on time by the kid who waited until the very end, unless they have a really good excuse. Now, truth be told I'm pretty lenient. And I think with COVID, we've had all put our self in the shoes of the students who are trying to balance so many things.

[00:27:24] Sammi: So final question. What is your favorite aspect of being, being part of the Rutgers community?

[00:27:30] Mark Robson: I like the interaction. I like to be surrounded with interesting people. I think it's great fun to, um, interact with people from all over the place. Um, I have the, I've made it a part of what I do here to be part of the Global Health Institute and Environmental Health Institute. Uh, I chair the editorial board for the Rutgers Press, although cycling out of my term. And to sit there with an English professor and a sociology professor and an economics professor, to get to appreciate all this talent, all these wonderful people that reside here.

[00:28:06] I mean, you, you can play it two ways. You know, you can stay right in your department and focus entirely on what you do and be a specialist or you can be a generalist. And how wonderful it is to have all these interesting folks to, when time permits, to go to a mid day concert in Kirkpatrick Chapel and listen to the music from the really talented, you know, students and faculty at Mason Gross. Or to, uh, you know, go to the Zimmerli and appreciate our wonderful art collection that most people don't know we have there.

[00:28:35] I think if, Rutgers is a wonderful place, if you let it be a wonderful place. And if you want to spend all day and find fault with things like, you know, the bus didn't come, or I can't find a parking space or, you know, something went wrong with something. Yeah. You can do that. But then that's, that, you've missed the point. So I look at it as a, you know, it's a team sport to be here at Rutgers. It's, it's not. So if you, if you play Rutgers like a team sport, it's a great thing.

[00:29:02] One of the nicest things that I did two weeks ago was I got voted most valuable professor, MVP, for the girl's softball team.

[00:29:11] Sammi: Wow, congratulations.

[00:29:11] Mark Robson: And I went out and threw the first pitch and I've had, I, again Plants and People get a lot of our student athletes take the class. And, you know, and last year I got the same honor for the boys, for the baseball team, but this throwing out the first pitch was very traumatic for me. So I said to them, this is great. I said, we have to have a pitching coach. So I went an hour before, and we practiced because I was thinking about, and they were very funny. I was thinking about, uh, Dr. Fauci threw out a pitch for the Washington nationals. And I guess they say that he played ball as like, you know, as an undergraduate. And it was a wild pitch and it was, you know, it just wasn't good. And so I said, I don't wanna be like that. And they were really cute. They said, well, you know, Dr. Robson, it's pretty unlikely CNN or ABC is going to be here to watch you throw out this pitch. I said, yeah, I know. But I said, I'm going to watch it. So I practice and practice. I threw a strike. I was so excited and we had a wonderful little, couple of photo ops with a, with a women's softball team. It was just great.

[00:30:09] And I think that's what makes me so happy to come to a place that I like. Well, I have such good students with so many good ideas, but I'm still writing papers and grants and still, and I, I, um, said to my Dean, I have a wonderful Dean in Dr. Laura Lawson. And the other day she said, how long are you

going to stay? I said, I'm planning on working until 75. And I said, so you got me for eight more years. And if you're nice, I might stay longer. So I got this. This is good.

[00:30:36] Sammi: Well, thank you for joining us today.

[00:30:38] Mark Robson: Thank you. It's been wonderful. And thank you for being so kind.

[00:30:42] Outro: Thanks for listening and we'll catch you next time on Extra Credit.