

# Alumna talks business strategies and confidence at the Eagleton Institute

She was once shy, but now Nancy Floyd has met CEOs of major corporations and United States presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. At the end of the day, she stressed the importance of taking risks and sticking to personal principles to achieve success.

The Rutgers alumna sat down for a “fireside chat” with students and faculty at last night’s Eagleton Institute of Politics event, “An Alumni Success Story.”

Floyd focused the conversation on Nth Power, the 22-year-old energy venture capital firm that she founded and currently works at as its managing director.

Recognizing that no other firm invested in certain energy technologies at the time, she seized the opportunity to found Nth Power, making her business vision a reality.

“I decided to specialize in something that nobody else had ever invested in, which was new energy technologies. ... I wanted to fund that innovation,” Floyd said. “I saw that there was an opportunity that nobody else was meeting, and I hoped [to] address problems such as climate change.”

Floyd, who participated in the Eagleton program as an undergraduate, stressed the importance of understanding policy and decision-making in order to make executive business choices. Having a proper understanding of policy is critical to succeeding with energy technology investment.

Providing the model of business investment as a stool, she emphasized the necessity of a proper understanding of the technology itself, the market it is targeting and the impact of public policy. Without knowledge of different policy platforms, she said the stool would never stand.

“The reason why I think I got to start the company successfully was [because] I brought a policy, regulatory [and] political perspective,” Floyd said. “Policy is important for every industry — it’s unbelievably important in the energy industry.”

Floyd’s extensive understanding of the three tenets of her stool model — technology, market and policy — was one of the major points of interest for students sitting in on the chat.

Kira Kaur, a Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy senior, was particularly interested in how her work influenced environmental issues.

“I hope to learn more about energy-efficient technologies,” Kaur said. “Nancy Floyd’s Nth Power is investing in a lot of them, and I’m very interested in climate change and those types of issues.”

Sitting next to Floyd and occasionally chiming in with commentary was Ruth Mandel, director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics. Mandel made it a point to crack a joke about the audience’s lack of understanding of what venture capitalism is.

Mandel was excited to have Floyd speak at the Institute. She said in an email that she hopes listening to Floyd will inspire students to become leaders.

“Learning about the course taken by someone who was once where they are today really resonates with students,” Mandel said. “We hope that hearing from Nancy Floyd today inspires them to become leaders, sparks their entrepreneurial spirit and expands their thinking about their own career opportunities.”

In addition to developing Nth Power, working with investors, moving to the West Coast and being considered for a position in the U.S. Cabinet, Floyd talked about how the Institute formed her professional self.

Although she “never took a business class in [her] life,” Floyd gained a lot from the Institute.

Along with her knowledge of policy and executive decision-making, she said the most important characteristic that she acquired while studying at Eagleton was confidence.

“Being in this small setting that [Eagleton] had, the interaction that I had with ... some of the smartest people I’ve ever met, and the fact that I could hold my own in a debate gave me a lot of confidence,” Floyd said. “A lot of this [business] is confidence in your vision and that you’ve made the right decisions.”