

Rutherford College

Type: Four-year college (B.S., B.Eng, M.Eng)

Founded: 1949

Location: Milburn, Nebraska

Attendance: 8,000

Faculty to Student ratio: 1:12

Accreditation: ABET

Rutherford College is located more or less in the center of Nebraska, and is considered a very good but not unusual engineering/technical school. Students generally live and spend most of their time on campus, as the surrounding community does not offer many amenities for students; in fact, many of the locals traditionally go to the Rutherford campus instead for their entertainment. The college offers reduced tuition and a fairly solid Associates program for local residents; most townies who go past a high school education started their college careers at Rutherford.

The college can be fairly described as 'placid.' Rutherford has no history of social activism, with neither long-simmering conflicts between the students and teachers, nor between the campus and the town; while there is a vigorous fraternity/sorority presence on-campus,

there is little in the way of vandalism or public disturbances. Students typically go to Rutherford on a scholarship of some sort (it would startle the student population it ever collectively fully grasped just how few attendees had were on student loans), and then they go off to get jobs as various sorts of engineers and technical types. The school is **aggressively** unremarkable.

It's also essentially fiscally impossible for Rutherford to work as-is, either. The school is simply too functional for the kind of revenue that it's ostensibly bringing in. Anyone with any kind of university experience will quickly discover that Rutherford College is quietly subsidized, using so many shell companies and cutouts that it should have been audited to a fare-thee-well a decade ago. That it never has been even looked at officially argues strongly that whatever it is that's going on here is being fully supported by the American government; and, indeed, if players have the ability and clearances to make inquiries in the federal bureaucracy, they will eventually be politely told by a suitable contact that the college is being quietly maintained as an American strategic resource, there's nothing nasty going on there, and you now know as much as I do, Bob, so don't worry about it.

Indeed, nothing odd or ominous *is* going on at Rutherford. Nothing of the sort ever has gone on there, as far back as 1993 -- and that's when the records abruptly stop, as there was apparently a fire in 1992. It was a remarkably comprehensive fire that got all the college's administrative archives: student records, meeting minutes, curriculum, the works. There also aren't any pictures of Rutherford, prior to 1993. Nor are there any student organizations with a history that stretches back that far; even the student newspapers were all formed after that date. The Alumni Association (which includes those with associate degrees) doesn't have a member who graduated before 1995.

Alumni who were freshmen in 1993 *do* remember that there were upperclassmen attending at the time, but the freshman class that year was unusually close-knit and they kept up that habit for the next four years. Besides, the upperclassmen weren't *hostile*; they just kept to themselves and never stayed in touch after graduation. Both personally and professionally, but the fact that pre-1997 Rutherford graduates are essentially nonexistent in the field of engineering is another one of those things that people simply don't collectively notice.

About the only clue left about what was going on at Rutherford College between 1949 and 1992 can be found

in the card catalog. The **old** card catalog, which was put in storage in a climate-controlled series of locked-up basements. A truly dedicated searcher would soon discover that Rutherford's library used to be full of books about things like Persona Engineering, Pictographic Field Dynamics, Special Transference Theory, Applied Observation Mechanics, and a bunch of other terms whose casual entry into various search engines will probably set off some government alarm bells. But that doesn't really explain what all of that stuff was **about**.

Or why the feds seem interested in keeping said stuff on tap, as it were. Because why would they keep the card catalog, but not the books? And where **are** the books? And why aren't the books somewhere easy to find? So many questions. So little time before the government sedans show up to remind people that some things are on a need-to-know basis, and you don't need to know that.

They're still surprisingly polite about it, though. Almost as if they have to be. Which is yet **another** mystery.

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