

**Rutgers University Senate
Student Affairs Committee
Response to Charge S-1804**

How Student Senators Are Elected

January, 2019

S-1804: How Student Senators Are Elected: Evaluate and make recommendations on how Student Senators are elected. Consider if there should be a requirement for direct election of Senators. Respond to the Senate Executive Committee by January 2019

Background

In responding to this charge, the Student Affairs Committee: identified existing policies governing the number of Student Senators allocated per campus and per colleges and schools within in each campus, assessed the extent to which the current representation of students via the Rutgers University Senate aligns with these policies, and evaluated the current system including the manner in which Student Senators are selected. Among other findings, the Student Affairs Committee concluded that the current situation not only does not reflect policies in place but it does not adequately represent students and is unclear and not well-communicated to the student body. Our research is presented in this report and concludes with a set of recommended best practices for selecting Student Senators.

Policies Governing Number and Selection of Student Senators

The number of Student Senators allocated per campus is governed by the Handbook of the Rutgers University Senate.

Governance regarding the allocation of Student Senators to each academic unit is provided in Rutgers Policy 50.2.1 regarding Senate Membership and Organization. Regarding student representation, the policy reads,

One student senator shall be elected for each 1200 full-time equivalent students, or major fraction thereof, of each school or college offering degrees, except that: (i) each school or college shall be entitled to at least one student representative; (ii) for a school or college whose entitlement has reached 10 student senators, further entitlement shall be based on one senator for each 2400 full-time equivalent students or major fraction thereof; (iii) the maximum number of student senators for each school or college shall be 20.

Selection of senators is left to the individual academic units. The Student Affairs Committee was unable to identify any policy governing the manner in which Student Senators are selected. Any

written governance regarding the selection of Student Senators can be found in those instances when Senators are selected by Student Governing Councils and these Councils have included provisions regarding selection in their constitutions.

Student Senators Currently Serving

In comparing the current system of Student Senators with existing policy, it is clear that the number of Student Senators allocated per campus are not being utilized across all campuses.

As the table below shows:

- New Brunswick has filled 31 of the 33 seats allotted to the campus (if the Student Charter Trustee is included as a Student Senator)
- On the Camden campus, 5 of the 7 allotted seats have been filled
- For RBHS, 5 of the 8 allotted seats have been filled
- On the Newark campus, only 1 of the 12 seats allocated to Student Senators has been filled.

School/Campus	Number of Senators Allotted	Number of Senators Filled
School of Arts and Sciences-NB	13	13
Engineering-NB	3	3
School of Graduate Studies-NB	3	3
School of Communication and Information-NB	1	1
School of Management and Labor Relations -NB	1	1
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences-NB	3	2
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy-NB	1	1
Rutgers Business School-NB	3	3
Student Charter Trustee	1	1
Graduate School of Applied	1	0

and Professional Psychology-NB		
Mason Gross School of The Arts-NB	1	1
Graduate School of Education-NB	1	1
School of Social Work-NB	1	0
Total	33	31
College of Arts and Sciences-C	2	2
School of Law-C	1	1
School of Business-C	1	1
Graduate School-C	1	1
University College-C	1	0
School of Nursing-C	1	0
Total	7	5
School of Arts and Sciences-NWK	3	0
School of Criminal Justice-NWK	1	0
School of Law-NWK	1	0
Graduate School-NWK	1	0
School of Public Affairs and Administration-NWK	1	0
Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate-NWK	2	0
Rutgers Business School: Graduate Programs-NWK and NB	1	1
University College-NWK	1	0
Total	12	1

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School-RBHS	1	1
Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy-RBHS	1	0
New Jersey Medical School-RBHS	1	1
Rutgers School of Dental Medicine-RBHS	1	1
School of Nursing-RBHS	1	1
School of Public Health-RBHS	1	1
School of Health Professions	1	0
Total	8	5

The Student Affairs Committee found great variety in the methods pursued for selecting Student Senators. Specifically, the Committee found that students arrive to the University Senate in one of three ways: they are elected by the general population of students whom they serve, they are elected “internally” by the relevant Student Governing Association (SGA), or they are appointed by their school’s dean or similar administrator. It’s worth highlighting that some of these SGAs are more formal in nature than others and that the less formal structures may be more similar to an ad hoc committee.

In several instances, the Committee was unable to determine the method by which Student Senators are selected (see table below).

School/Campus	Student Governing Associations	Selection Method
School of Arts and Sciences-NB	Rutgers University Student Assembly	General Elections
Engineering-NB	Engineering Governing Council	Internal Elections
School of Graduate Students-NB	Graduate Student Council	General Elections
School of Communication and Information-NB	N/A	Appointment
School of Management and Labor Relations -NB	N/A	Internal Elections
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences-NB	SEBS Governing Council	General Election
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy-NB	Unknown	Unknown
Rutgers Business School-NB	Rutgers Business Governing Association	Internal Election
Student Charter Trustee	N/A	Appointment
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology-NB	Unknown	Unknown
Mason Gross School of The Arts-NB	Unknown	Unknown
Graduate School of Education-NB	Unknown	Unknown
College of Arts and Sciences-C	Student Governing Association	General Elections
Camden Law-C	Student Governing Association	General Elections

School of Business-C	Student Governing Association	General Elections
Graduate School-C	Student Governing Association	General Elections
University College-C	Camden College of Arts and Sciences	Internal Election
School of Arts and Sciences-NWK	Student Governing Association	General Elections
School of Criminal Justice-NWK	Unknown	Unknown
Newark Law-NWK	Unknown	Unknown
Graduate School-NWK	Unknown	Unknown
School of Public Affairs and Administration-NWK	Unknown	Unknown
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School-RBHS	N/A	General Elections
Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy-RBHS	Pharmacy Governing Council	General Elections
New Jersey Medical School-RBHS	N/A	Unknown
Rutgers School of Dental Medicine-RBHS	N/A	Unknown
School of Nursing-RBHS	N/A	Appointment
School of Public Health-RBHS	Unknown	Unknown

Evaluation of Current System

Our committee has determined that there are two overarching but related concerns regarding the current system of Student Senators: inequities regarding student representation in the Rutgers University Senate as well as a culture that does not support a thriving system of Student Senators.

Inequities

Our research uncovered inequities regarding student representation between campuses and within campuses. The most obvious inequity between campuses is the case of Newark - although Newark is allotted 12 Student Senators, due to conflicts with Newark's Student Governing Association's Constitution and the University Senate, there currently is only 1 Senator serving the students of Newark. Another concern is that the manner in which the number of Senators that are allotted between schools and colleges can result in inequities. Specifically, large schools (such as SAS) on large campuses (such as New Brunswick) tend to dilute the representation allotted to small schools on smaller campuses. Additionally, there are instances in which, although they are eligible to have Senate representation, schools are unaware that the opportunity exists resulting in no Senate representation for students in that school.

Culture

In large part, vacant Student Senate seats is a function of an existing system that doesn't necessarily support a thriving body of Student Senators across campuses and schools. Our research highlighted unequal understanding among students of the existence of the Rutgers University Senate and the opportunity for student service, unequal understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Student Senators, unequal availability of peer Student Senate mentors or leaders to acclimate new Student Senators and support serving Senators, and unequal presence of a system of accountability. Inconsistencies in the selection of Senators as well as their term lengths offer additional challenges. Fluctuations in Senate membership certainly further complicates understanding of the system of Student Senators.

Part of the committee's research process was to survey Student Senators about their selection processes, the constituencies they serve, and recommendations they offer regarding selection of Student Senators. Current Student Senators offer an invaluable perspective and their recommendations have played an important role both in our understanding and recommendations.

The totality of this committee's research leads us to conclude that variety between campuses and between schools within these campuses naturally results in a variety of selection methods. Still, our committee is offering a set of best practices, noting which methods are most preferable.

Resolution

As a result of our evaluation on how Student Senators are elected, we present the following resolution with appropriate recommendations:

Whereas, the Student Affairs Committee has considered the process by which Student Senators are elected,

Be it hereby resolved:

that the University Senate recommends the adoption of the following best practices in the selection of Student Senators

- A. Schools or colleges should utilize elections in which all students enrolled in that school or college vote; candidates for such elections should submit a personal statement expressing his or her reasons for seeking office; petitions (either in-person or online) should be considered as a method for nominating candidates; and “meet the candidate” opportunities should be offered. Where that is not possible, schools or colleges should utilize internal elections or elections in which members of schools’ or colleges’ governing bodies vote for candidates. If neither general nor internal elections are possible, respective deans should appoint Student Senators.
- B. Student nominees for the University Senate should be posted in a visible location and online by those responsible for managing the election.
- C. Expectations of Student Senators should be clearly articulated and posted on the Rutgers University Senate website, including: roles and responsibilities of Student Senators, time commitment, Senate culture, and parliamentary procedures. These responsibilities and expectations should be communicated to nominees via the election or appointment process.
- D. Student Senators should be selected prior to the first meeting of the new University Senate.
- E. Schools and colleges should develop contingency plans for when a Student Senate seat is vacant.
- F. A point person on each campus should be appointed by the Student Caucus, to orient and on-board Student Senators.

Student Affairs Committee, 2018-2019

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