



Report on Proposed University Merger (S-0608)  
Committee on University Structure & Governance

March 2007

In his comments to the Joint Assembly-Senate Task Force Higher Education on November 9, 2006, President McCormick gave five guiding principles for any merger or restructuring of higher education involving Rutgers.

1. Any changes to the structure of public higher education in New Jersey can only be justified if they improve the quality of education and research in the state.
2. Institutional governance, no matter what the structure, must maintain of academic integrity and intellectual freedom.
3. Any decisions about structural changes to higher education in New Jersey or to Rutgers in particular, must be made with great care and deliberation.
4. Adequate and stable state funding must be provided to higher education no matter what its structure.
5. The public colleges and universities of the State of New Jersey must be held accountable to the people of New Jersey.

The University Structure & Governance (USG) Committee heartily agrees with these points and supports the President and the Board of Governors in their efforts to see that they are adhered to in any restructuring of higher education in New Jersey.

As the President notes, our paramount concern is the quality of education and research in public higher education. Our noblest duty to the state is to provide the highest quality of both that we possibly can. Members of the Board of Governors, appointed by trustees and the Governor of New Jersey, agreed to in the Higher Education Act of 1956. From this, the structure of governance of Rutgers has been a great success, allowing Rutgers to become a major national institution of higher education, an indication of which is our membership in the AAU. More directly, Rutgers is a critical asset to the State of New Jersey in our ability to educate and serve the state's citizens, and in our role as an engine of economic development statewide. Rutgers needs to retain its strong and independent governing structure to continue to flourish in the future as we have since 1956.

The USG Committee believes there is a strong benefit to the merging of existing institutions in order to create a comprehensive university. A university with schools of arts and sciences, law, business, medicine, dentistry, engineering, architecture, nursing, criminal justice, public administration, among others, would have the elements of a major research university. With strong leadership and thoughtful planning, Rutgers, and the regional campuses, could be better known around the world.

The USG Committee has additional comments to add to those made by President McCormick. They are as follows:

- The recent Constituency Research Project (2004) confirms the Rutgers name, which is widely recognized nationally and throughout the state as a mark of excellence, must be maintained in any restructuring.
- Any changes in the structure of public higher education in New Jersey should be done in phases, learning as we go, so that the net result is an improved environment for

teaching, learning, and research. Restructuring must be carefully planned and then gradually implemented over a period of several years. Budgetary issues, governance, reorganization of academic and administrative units, debt service, allocation of endowments, tenure, union contracts and the status of the university hospital must be studied carefully before restructuring can move forward.

- We strongly support the merger of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School with Rutgers-New Brunswick, as part of the first phase of the restructuring of public higher education in New Jersey. Rutgers-New Brunswick and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJ) already run a number of joint graduate programs and several research institutes and there is a very large number of research collaborations among faculty at the two institutions. Merging RWJ into Rutgers presents clear and obvious synergies for teaching, research, and service to the State with very few risks. However, no matter how this is done, the University must be protected from the kinds of cost increases and possible litigation that inevitably arise in a health care institution.
- We believe that Rutgers-Camden should remain part of the university system and that it should merge only with other institutions that share the Rutgers mission as a research university. Additional resources should be provided to the Camden College of Arts and Sciences to achieve parity with other non-flagship campuses.
- We do not support the establishment of a separate research university in Newark. The research universities of Newark already have extensive collaborations and joint programs. The strength and competitiveness in the biological sciences would be greatly enhanced by bringing together in one institution the medical and dental schools, bioengineering and computational sciences, and the basic sciences of Rutgers –Newark, UMDNJ, and NJIT. However, we believe splitting Rutgers University, by creating a separate comprehensive research university in Newark, would not result in two strong institutions of public higher education, but instead would create two weakened ones. There would be many costly consequences of such a split.
  - The Rutgers School of Business and the College of Nursing both operate on the Rutgers-Newark and Rutgers-New Brunswick campuses, with students and faculty on all three regional campuses. Putting these schools in one place or the other would only weaken them for a considerable time, and lead to major increases in costs as programs are rebuilt or created completely anew.
  - The School of Law in Newark has many links to faculty and programs on the Rutgers-New Brunswick Campus. Splitting it away would hurt these programs and the School of Law itself.
  - The University Libraries have their collections distributed across the entire university. Splitting Rutgers would cause serious and costly disruption to research and learning.

If it is decided that an expanded research university in Newark is in the state's interest, we urge that it be part of Rutgers University. Similarly, any plan for restructuring the state university must give serious consideration to enhancing the standing of and maximizing the value of the assets already in place on its Camden Campus.

- The creation of a strong comprehensive research university in Newark is very appealing in many respects; however, given the State’s financial problems and the current lack of cooperation and collaboration between Rutgers and UMDNJ in Newark, creating a stand-alone University of Newark in the near future seems very risky and ill advised. We suggest that UMDNJ in Newark stand on its own for a time as a state medical school, with strong state oversight and financial support. University Hospital in Newark is in crisis, and needs to be supported directly by the state at this juncture.
- None of the current proposals for restructuring of public higher education would result in reduced costs. Considerable costs of transition would be required no matter which plan is implemented.
  - It is clear that any restructuring that would involve complete separation of the Newark and/or Camden campuses from Rutgers would require very large one-time and substantial continuing expenditures to provide first-rate library and computing resources in Newark and Camden.
  - We also must face the fact that public higher education in New Jersey is inadequately funded and has been for a long time. Before any merger or restructuring is to go forward, the State must commit adequate one-time funds to make the transition smooth and efficient.
  - To achieve the paramount goal of excellence in our public research universities, the State government must commit and sustain stable long-term funding for public higher education in New Jersey.
- The state’s commitment to stable and adequate long-term funding of public higher education adequately must be met by the accountability of public higher education to the citizens of the state. This does not imply micro-management of the institutions of higher education by the state government. It requires a process driven by a vision for the next generation, not by self-interest. It does require that all such public institutions of higher education make their educational goals clear, and work visibly to succeed in meeting all of them.

**Recommendation:** The USG Committee proposes that the Senate endorse both the points made by the President before the Joint Legislative Task Force on November 9, 2006, and the points raised by the Committee in this report.