

## **A. Charge**

Consider and make recommendations concerning the proposals on the undergraduate experience, the structure of undergraduate education, learning communities and campus life, and special student populations of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education (TFUE), as well as alternative proposals submitted by members of the university community. Include advice on the potential advantages and disadvantages to students of the proposed dissolution of the arts and sciences colleges and the proposed centralization of authority over advising, residence-life programming, student centers, and counseling centers. As time permits, consider other aspects of the Task Force recommendations that are of particular concern to members of the Student Affairs Committee. Coordinate the Committee's discussions with those of the Student Caucus.

## **B. Documents and information forming the basis of our conclusions:**

1. Attendance at meetings and forums:
  - a. New Brunswick Faculty Council Conference on Undergraduate Teaching
  - b. Cook College Forum
  - c. Busch College Forum
  - d. Douglass College Forum
  - e. Rutgers College Forum
  - f. Livingston College Forum
  - g. University College Forum
2. Activities held in committee meetings:
  - a. Drs. Qualls, O'Donnell, Miller provided question/answer session
  - b. Meeting with Student Government Representatives
  - c. Meeting with members of the Senate Student Caucus
  - d. Review/evaluation of alternative proposals appearing on Senate website
  - e. Overview and discussion of the nature and structure of learning communities provided by Deans Carbone, Briddell, Manganaro.
3. Review of alternative proposals and responses posted on the Senate website
4. Informal discussions with students, faculty and staff

## **C. Observations**

Through active participation in the public forums as well as debate and deliberation within the undergraduate colleges, the student governing associations have seriously engaged the Task Force Report on Undergraduate Education (TFUE). This deliberative process has produced multiple opinions about the TFUE recommendations. The Rutgers College Governing Association (RCGA), the University College Governing Association (UCGA), and the Engineering Governing Council (EGC) have taken votes within their respective bodies that generally support

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the TFUE report, with minor caveats. The Cook College Council (CCC) and the Livingston College Governing Association (LCGA) have posted responses and resolutions. The Douglass College Governing Association (DCGA) has not, to date, taken a formal position on the TFUE.

In their deliberations, forums and statements, it appears to us that the Cook students have focused their response to the TFUE report primarily on the Student Experience and, while agreeing with many recommendations set forth in Chapter 3 of the TFUE report, disagreed with some issues regarding resident life and student center management. Livingston students appeared to concentrate their discussions on the need to upgrade their facilities, including residence halls, dining areas, student center, library, classrooms and public spaces. However, the LCGA did comment extensively on curriculum, student experience, academic support and counseling. It was no surprise to us that Douglass students focused their debate upon the TFUE recommendations that relinquished their designation as a "College". Many Douglass students (and alumni) are adamant that history, common cause and identity should weigh as heavily as the need for service streamlining in making decisions about the structural future of the University. University College students were understandably most concerned with the expansion of majors and courses available to them as well as to the availability of evening and weekend classes. Although students are not of a common mind about the entire report, on some issues students appear to agree. Among these areas of agreement are that there should be common admission and graduation standards for traditionally aged arts and sciences students, a vice president for undergraduate education, common core course requirements for arts and science students, elimination of administratively cumbersome and inequitable policies and procedures for students, and that the Livingston Campus should benefit from improved facilities. The New Brunswick Faculty Council Report supports the consensus view of these recommendations.

Areas of difference with the TFUE expressed by the student governing associations center on the issues of nomenclature, reporting structures, a single school of arts and sciences, and the future of Douglass College. The TFUE recommends that the nomenclature for the current undergraduate colleges be changed from colleges to campuses. The rationale for this change is that colleges have faculty, admit students, offer degrees, and offer courses for academic credit. Under the proposed changes, none of these college-defining elements would be located under the administration of the campuses.

The term "college" is viewed by most on the SAC as unsuitable because it acts to add to the confusion of new students. What will exist under the TFUE proposed reorganization are not the structures of individual colleges, but the coordinating structures of campus communities. Although a single college (school) of arts and sciences and a common admissions policy will hopefully help to change misperceptions, students' connection with what is called a "college" may continue the notion that some of the undergraduate "colleges" are better than others. While

changing the nomenclature seems appropriate, SAC members and students alike could not form a consensus as to the alternative.

The DCGA and the LCGA do not want to lose the designation as a “college”, even though it may be in name only. These students argue that the term “college” defines their association and is the formative structure for giving students a sense of community and connection within the University. The New Brunswick Faculty Council (NBFC) has proposed a compromise. They have suggested the use of the term “residential college”. The NBFC contends that this name would be understood as something different from a “college”. The NBFC identified other institutions in higher education that use this term as evidence that the term could work within an academic community.

The greatest points of disagreement between those supporting the TFUE recommendations and those who disagree with a part of the recommendations rest in the area of structure. The structural concerns focus on competing views of how best to provide student services and programs on the campuses. The model recommended by the TFUE calls for a unified organizational structure and local delivery of student services. Under this model, offices or programs such as career services, learning communities, EOF, and Learning Resource Centers, would report to the Vice President for Undergraduate Education (VPUE); offices and programs such as the recreation centers, residence life, student activities, and the student centers would report to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA); and academic advising and academic services would report to the Executive Dean of the College (or School) of Arts and Sciences. The intent of the unified model is to bring better management and the consistent application of policies and practices to administrative areas so that there is a normalization of administrative functions benefiting students. The restructuring is intended to eliminate the confusing and often conflicting idiosyncratic processes and procedures that the colleges have created to administer the routine business of the University. Although the TFUE recommends a unified reporting structure, the TFUE is clear in its expectation that student services should be delivered locally to students.

Those opposing such a unified structure argue for a modification of the current system. The decentralized model they propose is that the colleges (the term they use) continue to have local control with student centers, residence life, EOF, academic advising and recreation centers reporting to the college dean and the college dean reporting to either the Executive Dean of the Rutgers College (or School) of Arts and Sciences or the VPUE. Consistency among the colleges would be created through sets of policies and procedures authorized and/or administered by the VPSA, the VPUE and/ or the Executive Dean of the Rutgers College (or School) of Arts and Sciences. Therefore, the structure debate can be framed as those that support a unified model with centralized reporting and local coordination of services, versus those that advocate a decentralized model with local reporting and centralized

coordination through policies and procedures – very similar to the current college system.

The New Brunswick Faculty Council supports a unified model with centralized reporting and management of student services. The services would be coordinated locally. They support the creation of the VPUE position and the restructuring of the responsibilities of the Executive Dean of the Rutgers College (School) of Arts and Sciences. The New Brunswick Graduate Council and the New Brunswick Faculty Council together have recommended that the VPSA report to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (EVPAA) to ensure that the student service needs of graduate students continue to be addressed.

Much of the debate about the recommendations of the TFUE concerns the status of Douglass College as a college for women. It is clear from the various communications that the DCGA and many of the Douglass students want to maintain the college name, most of the student services functions, and the authority to offer courses or experiences that distinguish Douglass College as a women's community. This viewpoint is not shared by the RCGA, the UCGA, or the EGC. Students in these associations would like to see that programming currently only offered to those enrolled at Douglass, be available to all University students. At this time, the opinions of the LCGA and the CCGA on this matter are not clear, except that the organizations generally support the decentralized model being promoted by Douglass.

The New Brunswick Faculty Council offers a compromise. Douglass would be given special status as a four-year women's centered program with a separate curriculum, co-curriculum, and student life experience. This idea has yet to be publicly debated. However, a variety of issues need to be considered concerning the practicality of such a structure. For example, when students are offered the opportunity to either enlist with Douglass or participate with other students in a newly structured Rutgers experience without the restrictions suggested by this special Douglass College program, would a sufficient number of students be attracted to such a program? In addition, being required to take certain courses in order to reside on the Douglass Campus, or to participate in the "residential college" raises questions about how such "requirements" would be understood within the context of a single core curriculum. We on the SAC have an appreciation of the role of women's programming, especially as it can facilitate leadership competencies and provide encouragement for women to enter the so-called "traditional male" majors and professions. Obviously, the details of such a solution are at the heart of the matter.

#### **D. Recommendations:**

We on the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) recognize and appreciate the enormous time and effort that the TFUE spent in over a year studying the current University structure, talking with students, faculty and staff, and consulting widely across the campus. Their report reflects an astute understanding of Rutgers University

and an insightful analysis of the issues that need to be addressed for Rutgers to improve undergraduate education. In most areas, the SAC agrees with the recommendations of the TFUE. We are in agreement with their vision of what a Rutgers University liberal arts graduate “should look like”; a well-rounded, critical thinker who is learned in the ways of scientific inquiry as well as competent in quantitative and literary accomplishments. We are also in agreement with the Task Force members’ vision that a major public research university *can* be the provider of a strong and diverse educational experience for undergraduate students. We have come to find that many of the students we have spoken with value and embrace the need for a sense of community in their college life, especially those traditional first year students, who are making a significant developmental transition. Although many across the University community displayed limited knowledge about learning communities, through our investigations we have discovered that such learning structures are being utilized at a variety of major national and international universities, including Douglass College. These learning communities may prove to be important vehicles for nurturing a sense of community among students.

Specifically we endorse the following recommendations from the TFUE and/or the New Brunswick Faculty Council Report:

1. The creation of a unified Liberal Arts and Sciences structure to be named either “School or College”. Within this unified “mega” structure, there be one admitting unit and one admission standard. In addition, we recommend a common core curriculum for all undergraduate students in the liberal arts.
2. Only the faculty, through their respective professional schools and/or academic colleges, should authorize courses for academic credit, establish the curriculum, set the academic requirements for graduation, and be responsible for academic advising.
3. A newly structured office of Vice President for Undergraduate Education (VPUE) should be established. This VPUE is to report directly to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (EVPAA).
4. “Campus/residential college/community” deans should report to the VPUE and have primary responsibility for the local coordination and delivery of services to students living on their campuses as well as for the oversight of the creation and implementation of specific curricular and co-curricular programs and learning communities that are consistent with the requirements of the “unified school”.
5. The Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) should report to the EVPAA to provide unified management of policies and procedures of student services and to ensure that the student services needs of graduate students continue to be met centrally.
6. A unified organizational structure with centralized reporting and management of all student and academic services should be established to ensure coordinated and uniform delivery of those services.
7. Increased University resources should be directed to construct improved student facilities on the Livingston campus.

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8. The term “campus”, “community” or “residential college” rather than “college” should be used to identify the primary geographical units of the University, with the exception of University College, which should be a non-residential college.
9. At the time of decision-making on whether to attend Rutgers, all students who are admitted, will be able to choose their campus/community/residential college affiliation. After the first year, students will continue to choose their affiliation, subject only to residential availability.
10. The Douglass “residential college” should continue as an all-women’s community, with the students there served by the same policies and procedures as students living on other Rutgers campuses.
11. Programs, administrative structures, academic entities such as learning communities, and other inducements should be created to bring faculty members and undergraduate students into closer and more frequent contact.
12. A task force be established to investigate the feasibility/desirability of the creation, maintenance and sustainability of learning communities.
13. A task force be established to investigate the organization of services that could best serve non-traditional students.