

REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENATE REVITALIZATION

March 1999

INTRODUCTION/HISTORY

On November 14, 1969, the Rutgers University Board of Governors approved University Regulations establishing a reorganized University Senate, composed of students, faculty and administrators, and assigned to it three areas of responsibility:

- to concern itself with all academic matters pertaining to the University,
- an advisory role which requires the President of the University to seek the advice of the Senate on matters of broad educational and research policy, and
- an appeals function through which any unit of the University may appeal a decision from any other part of the University.

In the ensuing years, the University Senate has changed dramatically, adding alumni members, and nearly quadrupling in size in reflection of the expansion and dynamics of Rutgers University. The three primary areas of Senate responsibility, however, stand as they did in the Fall of 1969. To the Senate's and University's detriment, however, awareness of these responsibilities, and the degree to which they are carried out, have declined. For example, it is often said that the University Senate's only authority is in establishing the University's academic calendar, yet the very same sentence of University Regulations assigning that authority to the Senate also mandates:

"The Senate shall also regulate formal relationships among academic units within the University, including the organization of the disciplines, recommend norms for teaching loads, and establish the University calendar." [University Regulation 2.2.2.A. "Duties and Powers of the Senate"]

Recognizing a gradual but cumulative decline in Senate enthusiasm, involvement, effectiveness and morale, the Senate Executive Committee established what became known as the "Senate Revitalization Committee." It was charged primarily with examining the state of the Senate, and, after securing broad input, with recommending improvements which could help the Senate become the University-wide deliberative and advisory body envisioned by the Board of Governors thirty years ago when it approved the reorganization of the University Senate. In that reorganization, the Board endowed the Senate with real powers and authority to influence -- indeed to shape -- policy as well as to advise; reinforcing a system of checks and balances intended to promote shared governance at Rutgers.

The Revitalization Committee anticipates that the recommendations presented here will stimulate participation of all the Senate's subgroups in Senate deliberations. Ideally, these recommendations will help reverse the growing apathy among faculty relative to the Senate through their strong restatement of the Senate's potential and responsibility to share governance with the Rutgers administration.

THE REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

The University Senate Revitalization Committee met eight times during the period November 17, 1998 to March 30, 1999. Between the formal meetings, informal discussions took place among committee members, and with many members of the University community.

The committee identified three major and interrelated problem areas: weak articulation among the multiple faculty governance bodies at Rutgers, inefficiencies in the conduct of faculty governance, governance agendas that very often lack sufficient substance to command attention and involvement, and the University administration's reticence to bring important issues to the Senate in a timely manner. As this indicates, faculty governance was seen by the committee as the overall area most in need of revitalization.

The committee here puts forth a set of resolutions and rationales for consideration by the Senate. We believe that Senate adoption of these resolutions will promote revitalization of the Senate.

University Senate Revitalization Committee:

Douglas Blair, At-Large New Brunswick Faculty Senator
Natalie Borisovets, Former Senate Chair
Ken Carlson, Former Senate Chair (Committee Co-chair)
David Jefferson Harris, Jr., Board of Trustees Chair
Carl Kirschner, Dean of Rutgers College
Lori Krantz, Douglass College Student
Robert Kubey, SCILS Faculty Senator
Paul Leath, Faculty, Former Provost
Richard Levao, Board of Governors Chair
Samuel Rabinowitz, Senator, School of Business-Camden
Ken Swalagin, Executive Secretary of the Senate (Committee Co-chair)
Barry Qualls, FAS-NB Associate Dean
Maryann Scoloveno, Nursing-Newark Faculty
Antonia Tripolitis, Former Senate Chair

RESOLUTIONS/RATIONALES

NOTE: THESE RESOLUTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AND VOTED UPON INDIVIDUALLY BY THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

1. The Senate Executive Committee shall meet with the University President and the University Vice President for Academic Affairs at the beginning of each academic year to discuss the administration's and the Senate's goals for the year. Chairs and administration liaisons of Senate Committees shall be surveyed in advance of this meeting for their ideas.

Rationale: Such a meeting at the beginning of the year will help to focus the Senate on important issues.

2. The University President and/or the University Vice President for Academic Affairs shall meet periodically with the Senate Chair and Vice Chair to explore informally matters within the purview of the Senate.

Rationale: Small, informal meetings allow for more efficient and candid exchanges, and enable more efficient and timely Senate responses to issues.

3. The University administration, through the President and the University Vice President for Academic Affairs, as well as through administration liaisons to the Senate's standing committees, shall keep the Senate informed of major issues and proposals under consideration, and shall seek the Senate's advice well in advance of their implementation or finalization.

Rationale: The Senate and its committees can better fulfill the roles and obligations assigned to them by University Regulations when apprised of pending developments that fall within their respective charges.

4. A substantive summary of the major actions and reports of Senate meetings shall be distributed to Senators via e-mail as soon as possible after a Senate meeting. Individual Senators are encouraged to communicate information on Senate actions and proceedings to their constituents, and to invite commentary.

Rationale: If Senators have summaries, they are more likely to communicate the actions and proceedings of the Senate to their constituents. The summaries will describe very recent Senate action, so the matters covered will not have become stale. In transmitting the information contained in the summaries to their constituents, Senators can take the opportunity to inform the constituents of issues still in committee, and to solicit suggestions.

5. Action items shall appear on Senate meeting agendas before reports (with the exception that the chairperson's and secretary's reports, which include convening the meeting, declaration of a quorum, and approval of the day's agenda, shall of parliamentary necessity be first on the agendas). Non-action reports shall be submitted in writing to the Senate office for distribution to the Senate in advance of the meetings whenever practicable, and any oral summaries of these reports shall be closely time-controlled.

Rationale: Those agenda items requiring a quorum and the most careful thought should be taken up while both are still present. Reports should be circulated in advance of meetings whenever possible to increase the meeting time available for discussion of the reports and deliberation on items requiring vote, and to accommodate media coverage.

6. The Administration should work with the Senate to help make the Senate's activities more visible to the University community.

The Senate's success depends on cooperation and input from sources within the Senate, the University administration, and the University community-at-large. Widespread knowledge of the organic nature and

purpose of the Senate can promote participation among the large community component now unaware of the Senate and its potential.

7. Senators who are also Faculty Council members should serve on counterpart committees where possible.

Rationale: The work of one committee will inform the work of the other, making efficient use of a committee member's time and allowing the committee member to make more knowledgeable contributions.

8. Accommodations shall be made to enable a faculty caucus of all faculty senators, and a student caucus of all student senators. Each caucus shall determine its own organization and agenda, and shall be able to bring proposals and issues to the Senate through its Executive Committee liaison. The Senate Executive Committee shall designate one of its faculty members as convener of the faculty caucus, and that person shall ordinarily be the Vice Chair of the Senate. The Senate Executive Committee shall designate one of its student members as convener of the student caucus, and that person shall ordinarily be the undergraduate student member of the Executive Committee.

Rationale: Caucuses will serve to have issues considered and discussed in advance of meetings of the full Senate. This should enable the full Senate to move to action more quickly and spend less time on education and clarification. The caucuses will also be sources of important agenda items.

9. The Camden Campus faculty should form a broadly representative faculty council, similar to those on the Newark and New Brunswick Campuses, but reflecting the structure and needs of the Camden Campus.

Rationale: For the purpose of discussing and advising on campuswide issues on the Camden Campus there should be a Camden Faculty Council. Also, this Council would elect the Camden faculty Senators, if Recommendation 11 below is adopted.

10. A single office and support staff should serve the Senate (including the faculty and student caucuses), and the New Brunswick, Newark and Camden Faculty Councils. This should include additional support staff and resources to be assigned to and located on all campuses to serve those respective Faculty Councils.

Rationale: A centralized administrative arrangement for these bodies and campuses will enhance efficiency and communication in the overall shared-governance structure.

11. Faculty Senators will be nominated and elected by each Faculty Council according to its bylaws and according to the representative number and distribution required by Senate regulations. Faculty Senators elected by each Faculty Council may be members of that Faculty Council.

Rationale: At present, there is very little overlap in membership between the faculty councils and those faculty who serve in the Senate. Coordination between the Senate and the Faculty Councils should be promoted in the interests of efficiency, for the generation of Senate agenda items from the campus faculties, and to reduce any conflict or competition that might result if the multiple advisory bodies were to operate independently.

12. Each year after the first year of implementation of those resolutions adopted from this report, a survey shall be conducted at a spring-semester Senate meeting to measure the degree of satisfaction with Senate operations and Senate-Administration communication.

Rationale: A carefully constructed survey can yield useful information on areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and enable the Senate to address areas of dissatisfaction.