



Robert L. Barchi, President

September 13, 2018

Ms. Mary Mickelsen  
University Senate  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Liberty Plaza, Suite 1200  
College Avenue Campus

Dear Ms. Mickelsen:

I am responding to the University Senate's April 2018 report and recommendations on Charge S-1604, Process for Unit Mergers or Other Structural Changes. I thank the members of the Senate's University Structure and Governance Committee for their work on this issue.

The report recommends that the Senate be consulted prior to any "major structural change ... major service or system change, or major restructuring of services, systems, and units within the university community."

University Policy 50.2.2 gives the Senate an advisory role with respect to the creation or dissolution of academic units such as schools, colleges, divisions, institutes, and similar educational units, and it is appropriate that the Senate provide such advice. That rationale, however, does not, in my judgment, extend to the administrative offices and units at Rutgers.

The consultation recommended by your report would apply to virtually every unit in the University, including academic, business, and service units. Some examples given in the report—student information systems, HR services, and scheduling – would be subject to Senate review and recommendations. The report promises to have a Senate response "within 4-6 Senate meetings."

Beginning with the last point—the length of time that the proposed change would be under Senate review—Senate review could span an entire calendar year, since the Senate does not meet in the summer. If, for example, the proposed change were submitted to the Senate in the spring, the Senate's response would not be due until mid to late fall. Given the complexity of the University's needs and, in some cases, the urgency of upgrading and improving the services of our business units, this length of time would delay implementation of systems that are sorely needed, such as a new student information system.

In addition, the planning and implementation process for new or upgraded business and service unit changes already involves numerous staff, occasionally external consultants, and selected faculty advisors. Pilot testing is sometimes done to ascertain the impact on users of these systems and services. Decisions to improve, upgrade, or replace systems and/or services are made with the explicit intent of improving services to faculty, staff, and students.

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The Senate could play a useful role in addressing the impact of new systems and/or services after they have been implemented. This would assist the managers who are responsible for operating and evaluating the new or upgraded systems and services to ensure that they are functioning appropriately and serving the Rutgers community.

I appreciate the time and attention the Senate has devoted to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Barchi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Barchi