



University Senate
Executive Committee

**Response to The Proposed Merger of the Rutgers College of Nursing – Newark and
New Brunswick and the Rutgers School of Nursing – Newark**

[Revised March 28, 2014]

Background:

At its January 24, 2014 meeting, the University Senate was asked to consider, in a compressed timeframe, a proposal prepared by William L Holzemer, Dean, College of Nursing – Newark and New Brunswick and Susan Salmond, Dean, School of Nursing – Newark to merge their respective units into a single school with the proposed name of the Rutgers School of Nursing. The Executive Committee of the Senate asked each Senate committee to evaluate the proposal and to provide a report with questions and concerns¹. All committees agreed to the merger (or did not disagree) in principle. Comments in support of the merger included:

- Nursing represents the only “duplicate” discipline in the RU/UMDNJ merger.
- The two schools are in close proximity in Newark.
- Space is currently limiting.
- The curricula are similar.
- A merged school will eliminate competition for students.

The committees also reported a number of concerns, chiefly regarding the lack of timely notice for consideration of the proposal as the Senate’s legislative authority over the change in structure of units’ demands, and the lack of detail concerning curricula, personnel, facilities, administration, and financing. In particular questions were raised concerning:

- the structure and governance of the new school
- the role of faculty in the development, approval and implementation of the merger plan
- PTLs hired by the units: role, number, and ratios of PTLs to full-time faculty
- different faculty and staff unions at the two schools
- staffing issues: layoffs, change in administrative processes
- reconciling academic calendar, payroll, etc.

- student issues: location of classes, access to needed coursework, impact on enrollment or time to completion of degree, name on diploma, recruitment, integrity policy
- curricula and alignment of degrees given different philosophies between the two schools
- change in MS-level programs offered, and impact on doctoral programs
- impact on Stratford University School of Nursing and the Rutgers School of Nursing – Camden
- why two nursing schools (north/south) should remain
- lack of financial information and rationale for the merger
- nature of change document required by accrediting agencies

A list of questions based on Executive Committee and Senate committee concerns was forwarded to RBHS Chancellor Brian Stromⁱⁱ. Answers to these questions as well as a revised proposal were forwarded to the Senate committees for consideration at the February 21, 2014 meeting, at which time the committees voted to support the merger and/or to provide further concerns to the Executive Committee. Even following receipt of a revised proposal and answers to specific questions, the Senate committees still had concerns regarding:

- the lack of clarity in the revised proposal given the size and complexity of the proposed merger
- the complete lack of a financial plan for the merged school
- the proposal to call the merged school the Rutgers School of Nursing while the Camden school would be called the Rutgers Camden School of Nursing
- the different union contracts, promotion procedures, and course loads at the two current schools

In addition, the Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee declined to support the merger until the Labor Management Committee, established by The Restructuring Act in 2013, had reviewed the document.

A final version of the proposalⁱⁱⁱ to be presented to the Board of Governors at its April 1, 2014 meeting was forwarded to the Senate on March 14, 2014; committees were given a final opportunity to consider the proposal prior to a planned vote on the Senate floor on March 28, 2014.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee supports the merging of the two schools in principle, but is still concerned with the lack of timely notice for Senate input as well as the lack of detail and of a financial plan in the current version of the merger proposal to be presented to the Board of Governors at the April 1, 2014 meeting. Some members nonetheless recommend that the Senate support the merger on its merits and request that answers to our remaining

questions be provided to the Senate as the merger proceeds. Other members are unwilling to support the merger occurring on July 1, 2014. The whole committee, however, supports giving the whole Senate the chance to consider and vote on the following resolution.

C. RESOLUTION

Whereas the 2012 legislative action of the State of New Jersey merged most units of legacy University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey into Rutgers University and formed the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS); and

Whereas the legislative act specified that the Rutgers College of Nursing would become part of RBHS; and

Whereas within RBHS, the School of Nursing (School) and part of the College of Nursing (College) are less than two miles apart; and

Whereas the School and College offer the same degrees (bachelors, masters, doctor of nursing practice, and PhD) and there is significant overlap in course offerings, resulting in competition for the same applicant pool; and

Whereas the School and College have identical goals and aspirations of research and scholarship and combined can increase productivity and recognition; and

Whereas the harmonization of course titles and learning outcome objectives aligns the curricula in each of the degree programs; and

Whereas the faculty of both units have voted and approved baccalaureate and curricular structure; and

Whereas the University Senate in committee has examined the merger proposals and has developed a list of questions and concerns to which the administration has responded in good faith; and

Whereas the Senate continues to have reservations concerning process, timing, and budget;

Therefore, be it resolved that the University Senate at a fundamental level supports the merger of the Rutgers College of Nursing – Newark and New Brunswick and the Rutgers School of Nursing – Newark but requests that the Senate be updated regularly as the merger proceeds.

Rutgers University Senate Executive Committee members:

Gould, Ann, SEBS(F), Chairperson
Cotter, Martha, At-Large, NB, Vice Chairperson
Barraco, Robert, Alumni Association, Alumnus
Benjamin, Joshua, CCAS(S)

Berman, Samuel, SAS-NB(S)
Boikess, Robert, SAS-NB(F)
Burrell, Sherry, At-Large, Camden(F)
Gillett, Peter, RBS:N/NB(F)
Oliver, Jon, New Brunswick Staff
Puhak, Robert, FAS-N(F)
Sheth, Meha, RSDM(S)
Thompson, Karen, PTL-NB(F)
Vodak, Mark, SEBS(F)

ⁱ<http://senate.rutgers.edu/NursingMergerProposal.pdf>

ⁱⁱ<http://senate.rutgers.edu/NursingMergerProposalQuestionResponses140220.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ<http://senate.rutgers.edu/NursingMergerProposalRevised031814.pdf> and
<http://senate.rutgers.edu/NursingMergerAppendixOnHarmonization.pdf>