

November 19, 2015

Kenneth Swalagin
University Senate
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
ASB III, Suite 110
Cook/Douglass Campus

Dear Mr. Swalagin:

At the request of President Barchi, I write to you directly to respond to University Senate Charge S-1210, Early-Open Study Space, from May 2014, as proposed by the Senate Student Affairs Committee on behalf of the University Senate. The recommendations of that charge were as follows.

The Student Affairs Committee has the following recommendations:

1. Student Centers on the New Brunswick and Camden campuses track usage of the student centers and libraries during the hours of change and report back to the Student Affairs Committee of the Rutgers University Senate.
2. Further examination be done by those responsible for the student centers on each campus as to the cost and potential funding of such opening: a.) as already exists, and b.) as would be needed if even earlier opening is warranted.

Rutgers University – Newark has examined these and related issues deeply since spring 2014, enabling us to respond strategically to commuter needs—which accounts for the vast majority of our students—with both a long-term vision of meeting them and short-term actions already taken and under way, all done in very close and productive collaboration with our student leaders at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Strategic Planning

Throughout our highly democratic and inclusive strategic planning process conducted from spring through summer 2014, we gathered input from students through numerous open forums, targeted meetings, and confidential feedback protocols. Investing in our spaces and places emerged among the highest priorities for us going forward, as articulated in our strategic plan. At the same time, early opening of facilities such as the Paul Robeson Student Center and the John Cotton Dana Library did not emerge as an important issue for undergraduate or graduate students through the months of dialogue we had then, nor have they arisen as such in the year since release of our strategic plan. This may be because a number of measures have been taken in the

past year and a half to improve spaces and places where students at all levels can study and socialize, described below.

John Cotton Dana Library

- Although Dana Library opens at 8:00 a.m. it stays open later offering longer open study space hours throughout the work week for our commuter students. Library Director Consuella Askew also has instituted 24-hour access during finals. Current regular hours are.

Monday – Thursday	8:00 a.m. - Midnight
Friday	8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Saturday	10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday	12:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

- With grant funding, we created two collaborative multimedia rooms on the first floor which came online fall 2014. Between the two rooms, students have access to the following technologies: a media-scape table, smart board, four apple desktops loaded with multimedia software and accompanying laptop. These rooms can be checked out for group use.
- In spring of 2015, we conducted a survey and assessed how our students use our space. Based on our findings, here are some of the following actions we have taken to improve our student space:
 - Added more individual soft seating in first floor quiet study area;
 - Added more tables on our second floor level, where more collaborative and group studying tends to occur;
 - Purchased mobile white boards and placed them on the second and lower level floors where we group studying and collaborative learning occurs;
 - Created a graduate student study room on the second floor to address their concerns of a dedicated study space. This room will be card swipe accessible and programmed for RU-N grad students only. It is scheduled to come online spring 2016.
- In recent weeks, our students have expressed a desire for more group study rooms. A conversation with our undergraduate SGA leadership revealed that access to existing rooms was an issue. The SGA leadership and Library Director Askew agreed that a room reservation system will provide us with a solution, which RU Libraries is now investing in; it is scheduled for rollout in Dana in spring 2016. In the meantime, the library is getting the facility ready (i.e., doors, locks installed, etc.) for this next phase.

- We are in the process of planning and outfitting a second space in the library as a student videoconference room.
- The undergraduate SGA is working with the library to include questions about library use and spaces on their upcoming survey.

Paul Robeson Campus Center

Student Affairs staff maintain outstanding open and productive communication with student leaders at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Robeson Center staff is very responsive to student needs, arriving early and staying late as needed to accommodate student activities that extend beyond regular building hours, which are below.

Monday – Thursday	8 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Friday	8 am - 8 p.m.
Saturday	11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sunday	Closed

Further, significant upgrades to the Robeson Center are in process and will be completed during spring 2016, including extensive remodeling of the following areas of the building.

- Game room
- The most heavily trafficked area of the building on the first floor, affectionately known as the “Student Street”
- Third-floor lounge, which is a common area heavily used by student groups

Other Student Spaces

It also should be noted that the renovation and re-opening of 15 Washington Street as a residence hall in which more than 200 of the 333 residents are graduate students has included the addition of significant new study and socializing spaces.

Master Planning

It is fair to say that the Rutgers University – Newark master plan completed in 2015 places student needs among its very highest priorities. Included in the plans are the following major capital projects in this vein.

Commuter Hub

An RFP already has been composed to create a new commuter hub right in the center of our campus on University Avenue by renovating space in an existing building. The vision is to create dedicated space where commuters may transition to or from transit systems, relax between classes, and have a bite to eat.

Paul Robeson Campus Center Renovation

The vision articulated in the master plan for the Robeson Center is to enhance space for student groups and socialization, built around a major new design element—a “social staircase” through the core of the building—that will facilitate pedestrian traffic within the Robeson Center, as well as from Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. through the building and onto the Samuels Plaza, highlighting the western end of what will become a continuous pedestrian spine extending through to Military Park on the eastern edge of campus.

Dana Library Renovation

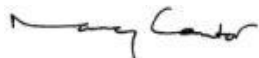
First and foremost in plans for Dana Library is to fit out the long-vacant third floor. A committee is about to begin meeting to plan for its development as a center for teaching and learning excellence. On a larger scale: integral to the master plan is re-envisioning the functionality of the lower level of Dana Library. To realize the pedestrian spine and provide the opportunity to rethink the use of study spaces on the first floor, discussions are under way to open the center of the building to pedestrian traffic while remodeling and renovating study areas to increase access.

Collaboration with Students

Our core principle in proceeding with all of the many current projects and plans highlighted above is that we are committed to doing them *with* students, not *to* students. We could not ask for better partners in this discussion than our student leaders with whom we meet regularly and frequently to identify and address issues of concern.

If the University Senate or its Student Affairs Committee has any questions or concerns about these matters, we would be happy to address them.

Cordially,



Nancy Cantor

Chancellor

Rutgers University – Newark