

Rutgers University Senate
Research and Graduate and Professional Education Committee (RGPEC)
Report on Charge S-0913
Opportunity Disparities between Part- and Full-Time
Master's and Professional Degree Programs

March 2010

Charge: Evaluate existing and potential disparities in intellectual opportunity and services offered between part-time and full-time master's and professional degrees. Look into the effects of such disparities on students, including students' ability to complete these degrees on time. Assess logistical constraints as well as cross-listing benefits. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by March 5, 2010.

Background: This charge was requested by the RGPEC based on anecdotal evidence that part- and full-time students had access to different levels and quality of opportunities while pursuing their degrees. It was viewed as an important area to investigate based on 2009 data from the Rutgers Fact Book that indicates that about 20% of the university's total enrollment is attending the university part-time and that, at the graduate level, 49% of students attend the university part-time. (Note: It is difficult to calculate a comparable number in professional schools due to missing data in the fact book.) The number of part-time students is likely to increase over the next several years as more students work full-time jobs to pay their bills. We will also be competing with online degree programs that mainly cater to this population.

Data Collection: In addressing the charge, the RGPEC met with the following individuals:

- Dean Teresa Delcorso - Assistant Dean of External Support , Graduate School-New Brunswick
- Dr. William Firestone - Associate Dean of Academic Affairs; Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy
- Dr. Claire McInerney - Chair and Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, School of Communication and Information
- Ms. Silvia Muller - Instructor, Division of Continuous Education and Outreach
- Dean Jorge Schement - Dean of the School of Communication & Information –NB

The RGPEC also looked at operating hours for many student services. Some of the available data, which the committee found mostly in online resources, can be found in the table below:

Office	Camden	Newark	New Brunswick
Cashier and Student Accounting	8:30-4, M-F	8:30-4:30, M,T, TH, F 8:30-6,W 6 during 1 st week of semester	8:30-5, M-F
Financial Aid	8:30-5, M-Th 8:30-4:30, F	8:3-4:30, M,T,Th, F 10:00-6:00, W 6 during 1 st week of semester	8:30-5, M-F
Registrar	8:30-5, M-F	8:30-5, M, T, Th, F 8:30-6,W 6 during 1 st week of semester	8:30-5, M-F
Health Services	8:30 - 5:30, M-Th 8:30 - 4:30, F	8:30-4:30, M-F	- Hurtado: 8:30 – 8, M-F - Busch-Livingston: 8:30 -5, M-F - Willets: 9 - 12:30, 1:30 -5, M-F
Career Services	8:30-6, M & Th 8:30-4:30, T, W, F	10:30-12, 2:30-4, M 11-1, 3:30-5, T 9:30-11, 2:30-4, 5-6, W 1-3, 4:30-6, Th 9:30-11, 1:30-3:30, F	8:30-5, M-F Busch: 8:30-8,M,Th CAC: 8:30-8,T,W
Undergrad Admissions (hours not online)			
Graduate Admissions (hours not online)			
Disability Support Services	No office staff on campus	No office staff on campus	8:30-5, M-Th 8:30-4:30, F
Parking	8:30 - 12:30, 1:30-4, M-F	10- 3:30, M 9 -3:30, T, Th, F 9- 6, W	8:30- 5 ,M-F

Findings: After meeting with the above-named individuals, reviewing data about office hours, and conducting extensive discussion among committee members, it became obvious that most student support offices do not operate outside of “normal” business hours thereby presenting many difficulties for students who do not normally arrive on campus until after 5 p.m. due to work or family obligations. These problems occur most often at the beginning of semesters. It is hard to know exactly what services are under-provided versus under-utilized, or how many other, similar issues might be found with further exploration. It would benefit Rutgers to identify these offices and make the needed corrections.

On a more academic note: many of the learning experiences that occur in masters and professional degree programs happen outside of courses. Many seminars, workshops, and other intellectual opportunities are held during the business day; very few occur after 5 p.m. Also, in the sciences, meetings are regularly scheduled in faculty members’ laboratories, and those meetings are usually scheduled during the day, putting part-time students at a disadvantage relative to their full-time peers. We note that most full-time and part-time students are, in fact, evening students equally subject to these disparities.

Considerations: The Committee understands that budgetary issues make accommodating part-time students more difficult because many student support units can barely staff business hours, much less add evening hours. Union contracts also affect the ability of departments to afford to operate out of normal business hours due to the higher pay required in these situations. Additionally, there are personal obligations that make accommodations difficult such as looking after children or working part-time in the evening.

However, the committee believes that changes in the operating structure must be made to adjust to the specific needs of part-time students if Rutgers is going to be able to compete effectively with schools that focus their efforts on this population.

Recommendations: The RGPEC recommends the following as an initial step in addressing the disparities found through the committee’s analysis:

1. Offices that serve both part-time and full-time students should shift hours at least one day per month (e.g., the first Tuesday of every month) to provide services to students who are only on campus in the evenings.
2. Faculty who have research meetings that include part-time students should arrange for at least one per semester to occur in the evening.
3. Departments that host seminars that include part-time students should arrange for at least one per semester to occur in the evening.
4. Schools, departments, and support units, especially those units that have a high proportion of part-time students, should be encouraged to consider the unique needs of part-time students in their planning activities. These have both an obligation and an interest in serving these students.
5. Efforts should be made at providing more cost-effective ways of serving students, e.g., online services.

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