

Rutgers University Senate
Student Affairs Committee
Response to Charge S-1401: Taking Courses on Other Campuses
October 2016

The Student Affairs Committee was issued the following charge by the Senate Executive Committee:

Charge S-1401, Taking Courses on Other Campuses: Examine obstacles preventing students from accessing educational resources located on other Rutgers campuses. If deemed appropriate, recommend policy and process changes that would promote growth of inter-campus collaboration. Refer to the Student Caucus proposal for this charge when deliberating. Identify issues to be further considered by the Instruction, Curricula and Advising Committee, if necessary.

Background

The factual basis of this charge was first noted in February 2014 by the Student Caucus. The Caucus stated:

A number of obstacles currently prevent students across all three of Rutgers' campuses from accessing educational resources located on any of the other two campuses. One such obstacle is the administrative difficulty of transferring course credit; another are the logistical difficulties associated with transportation and parking; still another is the low visibility of some of Rutgers' most prestigious programs on other campuses. Many more exist. The Student Affairs Committee shall look at these obstacles, as well as others not enumerated in this charge but which the Committee may find relevant in the course of its discussion, and investigate changes the University can make to promote and encourage the growth of inter-campus collaboration on the part of students. This includes not only changes to current policies which may inhibit such activity, but also affirmative steps the University may take to promote such a vibrant student culture. New Brunswick students are actively discouraged from taking classes at Newark and Camden. Various administrative and academic barriers disincentivize taking these classes to fulfill requirements, or in many cases at all. The same is true for students at Newark and Camden campuses seeking to take advantages of programs and opportunities on the New Brunswick campus; a range of logistical considerations stymie most students who may otherwise benefit from such opportunities. While there are certainly natural geographic barriers to this type of activity on the part of students, it is unconscionable for Rutgers, through administrative negligence, to continue erecting additional barriers or exacerbating the natural ones further. It is a direct contradiction of our professed commitment to the principle of "One Rutgers", and as long as our actions and our words differ in this regard, feelings of mutual mistrust and competition (instead of cooperation) will continue to characterize the relationship between the three campuses. If we are to truly consider ourselves One Rutgers, it is incumbent on us to seek to mitigate these barriers as far as the natural geographic distance will allow.

Historically, students who pursued an inter-campus transfer from the Camden or Newark Campus to the New Brunswick Campus found difficulty obtaining recognition for the courses they took at other campuses. Students report less difficulty transferring credits from New Jersey community colleges than transferring credits from other Rutgers campuses. This stems from state law requiring public universities to accept community college credit. Additionally, the NJ Transfer website helps students determine which classes to take. In this report we analyze the causes for this difficulty and issue recommendations.

Currently, there are two task forces under the authority of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs investigating the issue addressed in this report. They are the “Transfer Student Support and Services Taskforce” and the “Transfer Student Curriculum and Credits Taskforce”.

Summary of Investigation into Inter-campus Course Transfer and Equivalency

Inter-campus class credits always transfer. The course retains its original numbering on a student’s transcript and retains its credit hour count. This course is always available for elective credit. The problem arises when one begins to ask for equivalency of that class at another campus.

From this committee's investigation we identified two scenarios that typically cause equivalency issues:

1. A school to school transfer within Rutgers University; OR
2. A student taking a course on a campus other than the student’s current campus

We discuss the issues that arise with both scenarios.

The first scenario is the primary reason this charge was brought before the committee. This committee heard testimony, how students originally enrolled in the Camden or Newark Campus, could take a class at that campus with the same title as a class at the New Brunswick campus. Students would then transfer to the New Brunswick campus, only to find out that class they took would not be equivalent to the similarly titled class at the New Brunswick campus. While the students still received elective credit in New Brunswick for that class, some of these students would end up retaking that class in New Brunswick in order to fulfill graduation requirements.

For the School of Arts and Sciences at New Brunswick, students transferring from the Newark Campus had on average satisfied 6 core requirements and received equivalency for 5 core requirements at Rutgers. Students from the Camden campus, on average, had satisfied 7 core requirements and received equivalency for 5 core requirements at New Brunswick. One of the reasons students did not receive equivalency is due to the different education structure at the Camden Campus, which relies on a distribution structure^[1]. Additionally, the New Brunswick

residency policy for Writing and Communication courses as well as 21st Century Challenges courses prohibits equivalency for courses not taken at New Brunswick.

In contrast with the core requirements, it is more difficult to obtain equivalency for courses towards one's major. Some intercampus transfer students are able to eventually obtain equivalency for a number of their classes at their previous campus. For most departments, students do not automatically obtain equivalency for their classes. Students must meet with the departmental chairs and request equivalency for classes taken at other campuses. Oftentimes this is an ad-hoc process that is not particularly standardized. Departments must individually evaluate the courses and determine equivalency. One exception is the Psychology department at Rutgers-New Brunswick. The Psychology department at the New Brunswick campus has evaluated the classes from the other campuses and determined what, if any, equivalency may be granted for classes taken at other campuses. This simplifies the transfer process for Psychology majors.

The second scenario which causes equivalency issues arises when students register to take a course on another campus during the summer or winter sessions. Students are strongly urged to submit a pre-approval request to their school's intercampus transfer office at New Brunswick to ensure they will receive equivalency for a class taken at another campus. When students fail to preapprove a course they are taking at another campus, there is no guarantee of equivalency at the New Brunswick campus.

Miscellaneous Issues

When students do receive equivalency at the New Brunswick Campus, oftentimes those students have difficulty registering for classes which require prerequisite courses the students did not take at New Brunswick, but do have equivalency for. Students are able to eventually register for those classes, but only after registering through a dean.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the Senate considers it important to remove obstacles that prevent students from accessing education resources located on other campuses,

Be It Hereby Resolved That The University Senate Recommends:

1. That the Office of Information Technology create a web service titled Rutgers Transfer. This service would be created in consultation with the various academic departments. The goal of this service will be to index the courses of each campus and indicate the equivalency of that course at other campuses.
2. Any time an academic unit at a particular campus evaluates a course from a different campus, that evaluation would be recorded in this service, and future inter-campus transfer students would automatically receive equivalency.
3. The electronic class registration system be updated to allow students whose classes were deemed equivalent to register for classes unhindered by the prerequisite system.

Acknowledgements

The committee would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their assistance in preparing this report:

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[1] Distribution requirements simply require courses from a particular subject matter, ie. humanities, social science, or natural science. Core requirements have additional requirements in a particular course. The core requirement committee ensures that a course that fulfills a core requirement satisfies the learning objective of that requirement. In the Rutgers-New Brunswick School of Arts and Sciences, in order for a course to fulfill a core requirement, the department must adapt the course to satisfy the learning requirements of that core requirement.