

# An Introduction to the Rutgers University Senate

<http://senate.rutgers.edu>

## What is the Senate?

The Rutgers University Senate is the only advisory and legislative body that represents the entire community of faculty, students, staff, administrators and alumni to Rutgers' president and boards. It serves as the principal advisory body to the president. On certain matters, the president acts only after receiving the advice of the Senate or giving the Senate time to present its views.

More specifically, the Senate advises on areas including:

- Budget priorities, allocations, and general planning;
- Special affiliations and programs;
- Establishment or dissolution of colleges, schools, divisions, institutes, and other educational units;
- Regulations affecting students and faculty, such as those concerning academic freedom, equal opportunities, and personnel practices and procedures as they affect the academic mission of Rutgers; and
- Such changes in educational and research policy as are covered in University Regulations.

Beyond advising, the Senate has the authority to legislate:

- The academic calendar;
- Minimum standards of admission, scholarship and honors; and
- Formal relationships among academic units.

## How does the Senate work? (<http://senate.rutgers.edu>)

The Senate is a representative body. Most members are elected by their constituent groups to terms specific to that group: 3 years (full-time faculty and alumni), 2 years (staff), 1 year (students and part-time/annual-appointee faculty). The Senate currently has seven active standing committees, and one Executive Committee. Senators are usually appointed to the standing committee of their choice. The Executive Committee generally functions as a steering committee, and its members are elected each year by the full Senate. The standing committees look at (<http://senate.rutgers.edu/standchg.html>):

- **Budget and Finance** - budget priorities, allocations and general planning
- **University Structure and Governance** - relationships among units at Rutgers, relationships among student and faculty governing bodies, and the structure of the Senate itself
- **Faculty and Personnel Affairs** - matters directly concerning faculty and other personnel as they affect the academic mission of Rutgers, with the exception of matters included under the collective bargaining agreements
- **Student Affairs** - matters directly concerning students
- **Instruction, Curricula, and Advising** - matters directly concerning these areas
- **Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions** - matters directly concerning these areas
- **Research, and Graduate and Professional Education** - matters directly concerning these areas

## What kinds of specific issues is the Senate looking at now? (<http://senate.rutgers.edu/pendchgs.html>)

- Rutgers' financial investments
- Ways to enhance shared governance
- Emergency communication processes
- Evaluation of administrators
- Changes to academic reappointment/promotion instructions
- Academic Calendar/Commencement dates
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Accessibility of student services
- Role and mission of University College
- Faculty orientation programs
- All-funds budgeting integration
- Opportunities for full-time staff who teach part-time
- Merit scholarship funding
- Online master's and professional courses

## On what types of issues has the Senate made recommendations and reports to Rutgers' administration recently?

(<http://senate.rutgers.edu/reports.html>)

- Add/drop period
- Commencement dates
- Employee professional development
- Academic freedom for contingent faculty
- Hybrid courses and model of teaching
- Dealing with psychological emergencies
- Weekend exams
- Admissions and financial aid
- Full-time tenure- and non-tenure-track appointments
- Academic integrity
- Student fees
- Student Charter Trustee elections

### **What does a Senator do?**

Senators bring the voice and perspectives of their constituent groups to Senate issues. They do this first through their work with their standing committees, and later by acting on all committees' reports and recommendations at Senate meetings. As representatives of their constituents, they also suggest new issues for the Senate. All Senators are expected to attend Senate meetings, and, **of equal or greater importance, to attend and fully participate in their committee activities**. If you accept nomination to the Senate, you are asked to arrange a schedule that does not conflict with Senate meetings. Full Senate meetings occur on one Friday afternoon each month during the academic year (the schedule is available one year in advance) (<http://senate.rutgers.edu/11-12Calendar.pdf>); committees generally meet in the morning on those same Senate Fridays.

**Participation in the Senate involves** being aware and informed on the issues under consideration by the Senate (mostly in its committees), so you can respond and vote on the reports and recommendations on those issues when they come to the Senate floor. To the extent possible, you should also communicate with your constituents so they know what issues are current, and so you have a sense of their views. All Senators serve as representatives of their constituents. As such, they are the voice of the Rutgers University community in the shared-governance process.

**Participation on a Senate committee requires** a willingness to understand and discuss the specific issues charged to your standing committee. Working together, committee members bring their perspectives and ideas to a discussion that eventually becomes a report that the full Senate (in most cases) is asked to adopt. Whatever the Senate adopts is sent to Rutgers' administration as the voice of the greater Rutgers community on that issue, so committee work is a significant responsibility. In the committees, Senators may be asked to do research on issues, and perhaps draft sections of or comments on reports. Outside of committee meetings, members are often asked to read and comment by e-mail. The Senate rarely acts on an issue without first considering that issue in committee.

### **Why might I want to be a Senator?**

You'd want to be a Senator if you recognize the importance of bringing the Rutgers community's voice to the president and administration. After reading this, if you think you can devote the time and attention Senate membership requires, and you feel you could ably represent the views of your constituency (faculty, staff, students, alumni) in advising Rutgers' administration on a wide variety of issues, you should consider running for a position on the University Senate. You should probably *not* join the Senate if: you can't contribute to committee work (attending full-Senate meetings is only one-third of the job); or if the travel costs to New Brunswick meetings (sorry, there's no budget for reimbursement), or your work schedule, prohibit it. It's also important to remember that, in many instances, the Senate advises on policy; it doesn't dictate it.

### **How do I get elected?**

For information on being elected to the Senate: Full-time faculty should contact their deans. Students are elected through their student governing associations. Staff will be informed about elections that are conducted electronically through the Office of Human Resources. Part-time and annual-appointee faculty will be contacted via e-mail from the executive secretary of the University Senate. Alumni are elected through the Alumni Federation.

**Additional information is always available on the Rutgers University Senate website at <http://senate.rutgers.edu>.**