

**Rutgers University Senate
Student Affairs Committee
Response to Charge S-0708 on
Student Charter Trustee Nominations and Elections**

April 2008

INTRODUCTION

The Student Affairs Committee of the Rutgers University Senate researched and discussed processes by which students become charter members of Rutgers' Board of Trustees, pursuant to a charge issued to the committee as follows:

Examine and make recommendations for improving the processes and policies related to nomination and election of Student Charter Trustees, and for efficiently communicating nomination and election information to students and student governing associations.

This report and its recommendations are the Student Affairs Committee's response to that charge.

Background

Board of Trustees bylaws provide for Student Charter Trustee members. Bylaw I.2.D. establishes criteria for the election of student Trustees:

Twenty-eight charter Trustees, of whom at least three shall be women, [shall be] elected by the Board of Trustees. Commencing with the charter Trustee election of 1991 and continuing biannually thereafter, with the final total of three being reached in 1995, three of the charter Trustees shall be initially elected as undergraduate students entering their junior year at the University following the completion of a minimum of two full years of study at the University. Efforts will be made to the extent possible to diversify representation among the three Rutgers campuses in the selection of the student charter Trustees. Commencing in 1995, at least one of the three student charter Trustee seats shall be occupied by a student from Camden or Newark campuses. If a student charter Trustee resigns during his or her term of office, the vacancy shall be filled by an undergraduate student entering his or her junior year at the University following the completion of a minimum of two full years of study at the University.

Bylaw IV.1.A.2.(a) states that the nominating Committee of the Board of Trustees shall select one candidate to place before the Board from among at least three students recommended by the University Senate. Eligible students include those with 48 to 83 credits in a school requiring 120 credits for graduation, 48 to 85 credits in a school requiring 124 credits for graduation, 48 to 87 credits in a school requiring 126 credits for graduation, and 48 to 88 credits in a school requiring 128 credits for graduation.

The existing procedure for election of Student Charter Trustees is:

Each undergraduate Student Governing Association is invited to present to the Student Affairs Committee of the University Senate, for each open Student Charter Trustee position, one student who will be a junior on July 1, who is in good standing, and who is willing to carry out the responsibilities of the Student Charter Trustee term(s) commencing July 1.

To assure an open process throughout the University, it is suggested that each Student Governing Association establish a procedure and give notice on official bulletin boards as well as through campus print and electronic media.

The one submission per vacancy from each undergraduate Student Governing Association must include the following: name, college affiliation, campus address, a one-page typed resume or background statement, a cover letter of intent by the individual being nominated, and certification of selection by the SGA.

The submissions from each undergraduate Student Governing Association must be addressed to: "Student Affairs Committee, Rutgers University Senate" and must be received in the University Senate Office by a stated deadline, usually in early January.

The Student Affairs Committee reviews all complete submissions for evidence of public service to the University and community. The Student Affairs Committee will then forward at least three of the submissions to the Executive Secretary of the University Senate by a deadline, usually in late January, to be circulated for Senate Executive Committee review and transmission to the Nominating Committee of the Board of Trustees.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Responsibilities of Student Charter Trustees

Term: Each Student Charter Trustee (SCT) is elected for a term of six years. Students are eligible for these positions only upon reaching their junior year, in which case most SCT terms would continue for a full four years after graduation. Those students who do not pursue graduate studies at Rutgers will move on to the workplace to begin their careers, or may continue their education at another institution. In either event, continuing their membership on the Board of Trustees (BOT) for four additional years while employed full-time or studying outside of Rutgers can be difficult or impossible.

Duties: SCTs are voting members of the BOT and at least one of the board's committees. The board meets four times per year, and the committees approximately six times per year. The board meets once in Camden, once in Newark, and twice in New Brunswick each year. Extra board or committee meetings may be scheduled ad hoc. Additionally, each SCT also becomes a voting member of the University Senate, as well as one of the Senate's standing committees, for the full six years of the SCT term (which is six times longer than the usual student senator's term, and twice as long as alumni senators' terms). The Senate and its committees meet approximately once each month during term, and additional meetings may be scheduled, particularly of the committees. Therefore, a Student Charter Trustee, in the current structure, would be committing to responsibilities in four groups, and to attending and participating in 168 meetings, 112 of which would likely be after graduating from Rutgers and entering the workforce.

Representation and Constituencies: SCTs are expected to represent the views and issues of the students of Rutgers University. At least one of the three SCTs must be from the Newark or Camden campus. The University Senate also elects one undergraduate and one graduate student to the BOT each year, but unlike student senators (whose numbers in the Senate are far greater than the number of student BOT members), SCTs are charged with representing all students from their campus. Representing all of the students on any of Rutgers' three main geographic campuses is a formidable responsibility, and even more so if one student must represent two campuses. The high level of shared governance embodied in the BOT amplifies those responsibilities for all SCTs.

Recommendations:

- *Change the term of Student Charter Trustees to two years.*
- *In recognition of the distinct and unique cultures of Rutgers' three main geographic campuses and their student bodies, the Board of Trustees should mandate that, of the three Student Charter Trustees, if suitable candidates can be identified, one shall be from Camden, one shall be from Newark, and one shall be from New Brunswick/Piscataway.*

Eligibility, Nomination, and Election Processes:

Nominations: Concerns have been raised regarding the SCT nomination and election processes' effectiveness, flexibility, timing, and openness. Under the current process, the Secretary of the Boards notifies the Executive Secretary of the University Senate of the need to elect SCTs resulting from term expirations or mid-term resignations. Following an established procedure,

the Senate secretary then notifies all student governing associations and all current student senators of the SGAs' right to nominate candidates. Each SGA may submit only one nomination per vacant position by a specific deadline. [See [Attachment A: 2006 Nomination Solicitation Memo](#)] SGAs are encouraged to publicize the nomination process through various media.

Nominations received by the Senate secretary by the deadline are confirmed for eligibility (class year and length of study at Rutgers), and are then forwarded to the Senate Student Affairs Committee (SAC) for evidence of public service to Rutgers and the community. Subsequently, the SAC selects at least three candidates (if possible) whose nominations are advanced to the Board of Trustees. This nomination process has been criticized for lacking follow up measures to assure that SGAs respond appropriately by the deadline. There has also been discussion about the restrictive requirement that nominations can emerge only from SGAs.

Recommendations:

- *The Secretary of the Boards/University will notify the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, the central student affairs office on the Camden and Newark campus (as appropriate, depending on the campus for which the vacancy exists), and the Executive Secretary of the University Senate of the need to nominate Student Charter Trustees.*
- *The Senate secretary and appropriate central and campus student affairs personnel, in consultation with the Secretary of the Boards, will establish an optimum timeline for the nomination process.*
- *The office of the Vice President for Student Affairs will publicize, through various media, the availability of the open Student Charter Trustee position(s).*
- *The nomination eligibility will be expanded to enable self-nominations from any student who will be entering the junior year at Rutgers (at the time the SCT term begins), following at least two full years of study at Rutgers, and who is in good academic standing.*
- *E-mailed reminders will be sent to all students before the submission deadline for nominations.*

Preliminary Selection Processes: The Senate Student Affairs Committee serves as a filtering and vetting venue for the initial slate of nominees from the SGAs. The SAC is asked to advance only those nominations exhibiting evidence of service to Rutgers and the community. The goal is to advance at least three such nominations. While reasonable, this vetting process can be complicated by a scarcity of volunteer candidates, particularly from the Newark or Camden campuses, where the total, eligible student population is not as large as that of New Brunswick/Piscataway.

Recommendations:

- *The senior student affairs officer on each geographic campus will establish a search committee to encourage, collect, and confirm minimum eligibility of, nominations. These committees will be composed primarily of, but not limited to, members of student governing associations on the respective campuses.*
- *No criteria other than class year and length of study at Rutgers shall be applied to the initial nominations by the search committees.*
- *Once initial eligibility is established, the search committees shall forward to the Vice President for Student Affairs the names and credentials of all eligible nominees. The Vice President for Student Affairs will then forward to the Executive Secretary of the*

University Senate a list of nominees for each available Student Charter Trustee position.

- *The Executive Secretary of the University Senate shall provide the Senate's Student Affairs Committee with the list of minimally eligible nominees, and the Student Affairs Committee will then establish a final slate of candidates by applying the criteria of evidence of Rutgers and community service.*
- *The Senate Student Affairs Committee's list of no fewer than three candidates (when at least three eligible nominations are received) for each available charter trustee position will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees through the Senate secretary.*

Election by the Board of Trustees: The process by which the BOT elects one of the candidates to the SCT position is neither clear nor consistent. We believe that a committee is formed by the board, and that committee reviews the nominations, ultimately presenting their selected candidate to the full board, which then approves the appointment at the board's June meeting. (It should be noted that there have been instances in the past in which only one eligible nominee volunteered and agreed to stand for election to a given SCT position.)

Recommendations:

- *As soon as the final slate of candidates is forwarded to the Board of Trustees by the Senate secretary, a subcommittee or panel of the Board of Trustees should review the qualifications of, and interview, each nominee individually.*
- *After all reviews and interviews are completed, the Board of Trustees subcommittee or panel will then deliberate privately and subsequently present to the full board their candidate of choice for appointment to the two-year term as Student Charter Trustee.*

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEMBERSHIP:

- *Mirroring the recommendation that the Board of Trustees acknowledge the uniqueness of Rutgers' three main geographic campuses and their student bodies, we recommend that Rutgers' Board of Governors also increase its membership to include three student members: one from Camden, one from Newark, and one from New Brunswick.*
- *These three student members of the Board of Governors shall be elected by the University Senate, through the same process as the current student and faculty members of the boards are elected.*

FINAL COMMENTS

The University Senate's Student Affairs Committee, on behalf of the full Senate, acknowledges the significant and unusual opportunities Rutgers affords its students by making available access to, and membership on, its Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, and the University Senate itself. We welcome this opportunity to thank these bodies for validating the importance of students' viewpoints and participation in discussions and policy formation which shape the Rutgers University experience.

We also recognize that some of what we have proposed in the recommendations set forth in this report will require changes to University Policies, and may extent even to legislation which establishes composition of Rutgers' governing boards. It is our sincere hope that both the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors will accept our recommendations and work toward implementation of what we have proposed so that the collective voice of all Rutgers University students can be best heard.

Rutgers University Senate

2007-2008 Student Affairs Committee Members:

Kind, Max, GS-C (S), Co-Chair

Rabinowitz, Samuel, SB-Camden (F), Co-Chair, Executive Committee Liaison

Blimling, Gregory, VP for Student Affairs (A) – *Administrative Liaison*

Bodnar, Raymond, Alumni Federation (Alumnus)

Bumby, Richard, SAS-NB (F)

Chann, Kenneth, SB-C (S)

Cohick, Wendie, GS-NB (F)

Diamond, Elin, GS-NB (F)

Gliserman, Martin, At-Large NB (F)

Greaux, Candice, SAS-NB (S)

Greene, Bryan, GS-N (S)

Guo, Li, UC-N (F)

Gutierrez, Daniel, SAS-NB (S)

James, Sybil, Ombudsperson for Students (*non-senator*)

Johnson-Scott, Ky, SAS-NB (S)

Kapoor, Devika, RBS-NB (S)

Kerkhof, Lee, GS-NB (F)

Khan, Murium, SAS-NB (S)

Maddison, Jonathan, CCAS (S)

Marsh, Diana, MGSA (S)

McCoy-Carter, Betty, NB Staff

Messer, Stanley, GSAPP Dean (A)

Meyer, Jon'a, CCAS (F)

Mistry, Hetal, SAS-NB (S)

Muse, Jonathan, Camden Staff

Nakhaie, Arian, NCAS (S)

Nangle, Thomas, Engineering (S)

Niederman, Robert, GS-NB (F)

Patel, Asmi, SAS-NB (S)

Puniello, Orin, EJBSPPP (S)

Sanigiamo, Luke, NCAS (S)

Smith, Derrick, Nursing (S)

Tony, Fabiola, SAS-NB (S)

Vitello, Stanley, GSE (F)

Wagner, Ross, Pharmacy (S)

Wild, Kevin, UC-N (S)

Yeagle, Philip, FAS-N Dean (A)