



## **Rutgers University Senate**

**D R A F T** as of 10/29/15

**Charge S-1410: Honorary Degree and Commencement Speaker Selection Processes and Related Senate Committee:** Formulate details of processes to be used to facilitate the proposal submitted to President Barchi on Charge S-1405 on Procedures for Selecting Commencement Speakers and Honorary Degree Recipients. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by February 2015.

**Background:** The University has had multiple mechanisms for selecting honorary-degree recipients and commencement speakers over the last several years. The selection of Condoleezza Rice as the 2014 commencement speaker and honorary-degree recipient, and the ensuing controversy, demonstrated the need for a more open process to vet and select recipients.

The Executive Committee of the University Senate, on the Senate's behalf, discussed and proposed a plan to President Barchi to provide input from all Rutgers constituent groups. President Barchi agreed, and the Executive Committee constituted ad hoc committees for each of the University's four campuses to select honorary-degree recipients and commencement speakers for 2015 and 2016. Each of those ad hoc committees has worked with the University Secretary's Office through the Office of the Senate to ensure that all nominations have been vetted and researched prior to making recommendations to respective campus Chancellors and the President.

In the current process for 2015 and 2016, nominations can be made through a university-wide, computer-based system. Those nominations and corresponding documentation are uploaded by the University Secretary's Office and provided to the Executive Secretary of the University Senate, who then provides those materials to the ad hoc committees for each of the University's four campuses. (New Brunswick and RBHS currently hold a joint commencement ceremony and so have one joint sub-committee.) Each committee then meets to discuss the nominees for their campus, before submitting their selection(s) to their campus' Chancellor for approval.

In the meantime, for the purposes of the 2017 commencement and beyond, the University Structure and Governance Committee (USGC) has been tasked to discuss, develop, and recommend a process and committee structure that will meet each year to discuss and rank nominees.

**Considerations:** Senate Executive Committee Report S-1405 states:

*“It is clear that, given recent changes in University structure and the replacement of a university-wide commencement by three separate campus-based commencements, a new policy inclusive of adequate representation of faculty, students, staff, and alumni is needed. In keeping with the desire for free and open discourse within the Rutgers community, the Executive Committee on behalf of the Senate made recommendations for a revised policy for selection of honorary degree recipients and commencement speakers.”*

The full report by the Executive Committee can be found in Appendix A of this report.

### **Whereas**

1. The University Senate is the one body that encompasses all of our communities
2. University Commencement is a time to celebrate the achievements of the undergraduate and graduate students and the faculty.
3. Honorary-Degree Recipients and Commencement Speakers bring attention to the role and impact of the University in Society.
4. Awarding Honorary Degrees and inviting Commencement Speakers honors those who are selected by the University and reflects on the vibrancy and mission of the University within the State of New Jersey, the United States and globally.

**Be it resolved** that The Senate recommends that the University adopt the following guidelines to select Honorary-Degree recipients and Commencement Speakers:

1. Create a permanent standing committee to the University Senate, named “Honorary Degree and Commencement Speaker Committee” (HDCSC), for the commencement ceremonies of each part of the University System, i.e., Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, and Rutgers Biological and Health Science (RBHS). (New Brunswick and RBHS currently hold a joint commencement ceremony.)
2. Once a year, the University Senate’s Executive Committee will solicit volunteers from the University Senate body for the composition of the HDCSC.
3. The HDCSC will be composed of:
  - i) The Secretary of the Senate (ex officio)
  - ii) The Chair OR Vice Chair of the Senate

- iii) Four Faculty Senators (at least one from each of TT, NTT, PTL) with each of the 4 campuses being represented
  - iv) One Staff Senator
  - v) One Alumni Senator
  - vi) Two Student Senators
4. The HDCSC will be responsible to:
- i) Convene at least twice per year
  - ii) Solicit volunteers for 'campus committees', defined below
  - iii) Select, from among the volunteers for each campus committee, three faculty members and two students
  - iv) Convene those campus committees in a timely manner
5. Campus Committees will
- i) research and consider those individuals nominated for
    - a. an Honorary Degree from their campus (or campuses in the case of the RBHS-New Brunswick commencement)
    - b. invitation to speak at their commencement
  - ii) be comprised of
    - a. four designees from the campus, chosen by that campus Chancellor (in the case of the combined RBHS-New Brunswick commencement, both Chancellors will make those appointments from among the New Brunswick and RBHS campuses)
    - b. five Senators from that campus, consisting of three faculty and two students (in the case of the combined RBHS-New Brunswick commencement, those appointments should include faculty and students from both the New Brunswick and RBHS campuses)
  - iii) select a chairman from among the members of the campus committee
6. Each year, the Executive Secretary of the Senate i) will be provided all nomination packets from the Secretary of the University via secure web site and ii) then provide each campus committee with packets for their respective campus (the RBHS-New Brunswick campus committee will receive the packets for each of those two campuses). Strict confidentiality regarding the names and credentials of nominees shall be observed by the campus committees.
7. Each committee will evaluate their nomination packets and will compile a list of those candidates whom they find suitable to receive an honorary degree and/or suitable as a commencement speaker. Note that a nominee could potentially be selected for both (i.e., honorary degree and commencement speaker). The packets of approved candidates will be ranked by the committee, and submitted in a timely fashion to the respective campus Chancellor, with an additional 'courtesy copy' sent to the Secretary of the University.

8. From the campus committee selections, and in consultation with the President, each of the Chancellors will select honorary-degree recipients and commencement speaker(s) for their campus, and will forward their selection(s) to the Board of Governors' Committee on Alumni and University Relations, who, in line with current practice, will forward the names of honorary-degree recipients to the Board of Governors for approval.

### **University Structure and Governance Committee 2015 - 2016:**

Oliver, Jon, NB Staff, Co-Chair  
Puhak, Robert, FAS-N (F), Co-Chair  
Ahmed, Sultan, NJMS (F)  
Anderson, Ellen Zambo, SHRP (F)  
Delnevo, Christine, Alumni Association  
DiVito, Timothy, Camden Staff  
Eastman, Wayne, At-Large N (F)  
Edward, David, Newark Staff  
Esposito, Adrienne, NB Staff  
Ganesh, Jaishankar, SB-C Dean (A)  
Holzer, Marc, SPAA Dean (A)  
Hughes, James, EJBSPPP Dean (A)  
Janniger, Edmund, SPAA (S)  
Mahon, Gwendolyn, SHRP Dean (A)  
Maruna, Shadd, SCJ Dean (A)  
Moran, Elizabeth, RBHS At-Large (F)  
Oberdiek, John, Law-C Dean (A)  
O'Connell, Claire, SHRP (F)  
Palmer, Daniel, Law-N, (S)  
Parisi, Nicholas, SAS-NB (S)  
Pusukur, Bharani, Engineering (S)  
Scott, Kathleen, SAS-NB (F)  
Settles, Alex, RBS:N/NB (F)  
Sharp, Jane, GS-NB (F)  
Shinbrot, Troy, Engineering (F)  
Swalagin, Kenneth, Senate Executive Secretary (Non-Senator)  
Thomas, Andrew, NJMS (F)  
Williams, Alexandra, SAS-NB, (S)