

Report of the University Structure and Governance Committee on Charge S-0908: Proposal to Increase Staff Membership on the Senate

Charge: Review the Proposal to Increase Staff Representation on the University Senate from the Union of Rutgers Administrators - American Federation of Teachers Local 1766, which proposes the following: "We recommend that the University Senate double the number of seats for staff from 10 to 20 by January 1, 2011." Respond to Senate Executive Committee by January 2010.

Background: This charge was issued by the Executive Committee following receipt of the Proposal to Increase Staff Representation on the University Senate from the Union of Rutgers Administrators - American Federation of Teachers Local 1766, which recommended that the university senate double the number of seats for staff from 10 to 20 by January 1, 2011, as currently the ratio of Staff senators to Staff is 1:700, compared to 1:3 for Senior Management, 1:45 for Faculty, and 1:370 for PTLs.

Considerations: It is understandable that the Union of Rutgers Administrators - American Federation of Teachers Local 1766 advocate for increased Staff representation on Senate, and that they point to the current ratios of senators in the various groupings in support of their claims. Nevertheless, this by itself does not constitute an argument for change. The Senate Enabling Regulations have never adopted a principle that the different groups should be represented in equal proportions; nor would such a principle be tenable in practice – it would lead to the Senate consisting largely of Alumni, for example. The proposed increase from 10 to 20 Staff senators would not remove the differences in proportions; there would be no stronger rational justification for 20 than for the current 10. In addition, changing the number of Staff senators would not address larger differences in the proportions among other groups, and would itself be an additional step in recent changes to the constitution of the Senate that have altered the balance between the various groups. Further, recent changes have been in the direction of increasing the size of Senate, and concern has been expressed that the Senate may be becoming unmanageably large. In addition, the Committee considered the dilution of the voting strength of other groups that inevitably follows from increasing the representation of any particular group, or the addition of any new group of senators.

The Committee considered what arguments for change in the number of Staff senators might be salient; in particular, it considered whether the views of Staff members are able to be properly represented at Senate meetings, whether there are sufficient Staff senators to ensure that proper consideration is given to matters affecting staff directly, whether the special knowledge and skills relevant to the success of the University that Staff members can contribute are available when they are needed, and whether Staff senators are able to participate fully in the work of the Senate, which is largely conducted by Committees.

Staff senators are elected to represent each of the University Campuses. To the extent that staff views on Senate business are largely homogeneous, a contingent of 10 senators appears large enough to represent them properly in Senate debates; to the extent that staff views are, like those of other groups, disparate, it is not clear that increasing the number to 20 would be sufficient to ensure that every minority opinion will be represented during debates.

Considering also the size of other contingents, and the numbers of people whose views senators need to represent, the Committee did not conclude that this was a convincing argument for change. Nor did it conclude that 10 was too small a number to ensure that matters affecting staff members directly were properly considered.

Staff, many of whom work directly with students, have their own unique perspectives on University affairs, and contribute knowledge and skills different from other Senate groups; increasing the number of Staff senators might well make these skills and knowledge more

widely available, although in practice this would depend very much on the individual Staff senators elected and the diversity of the Staff senators as a group. More would appear to be better in this instance; on the other hand, Senate business is largely conducted by its Committees, and these Committees can co-opt the assistance of as many staff members as are willing and able to participate, without their needing to be elected senators.

In considering the work of Senate Committees, it appears that there are sufficient Staff senators to permit every committee to include a Staff Senator – though there can be no guarantee that the expressed interests of Staff senators will in fact lead to this outcome. Nevertheless, it is not always possible for senators to attend every Committee meeting, and the University Structure and Governance Committee concluded that there would be merit in increasing the number of Staff senators to 14, so that at least in principle each Senate Committee (other than the Executive Committee which already has a defined constitution) could include two Staff Senator. Staff senators would be elected to represent the campuses as follows:
Camden – 3; Newark – 4; New Brunswick – 7.

Recommendation: The University Structure and Governance Committee recommends adoption of the following resolution by Senate:

Be it resolved that the Senate request the Board of Governors to modify the Senate Enabling Regulations as follows:

1. In paragraph 50.2.1. B (1), change “ten representatives from among the staff” to “fourteen representatives from among the staff”
2. In paragraph 50.2.1. B (14), change “The ten staff representatives will be elected at-large from their respective campuses, with five senators representing New Brunswick, three Senators representing Newark, and two Senators representing Camden.” to “The fourteen staff representatives will be elected at-large from their respective campuses, with seven senators representing New Brunswick, four senators representing Newark, and three senators representing Camden.”

University Structure and Governance Committee, 2009-2010

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