

**Charge 0608: Report on Proposed University Merger**  
**Committee on University Structure and Governance**  
**March 4, 2007**

In his comments to the Joint Assembly-Senate Task Force on Higher Education on November 9, 2006, President McCormick gave five guiding principles for any merger or restructuring of higher education involving Rutgers:

1. Any changes to the structure of public higher education in New Jersey can only be justified if they improve the quality of education and research in the state.
2. Institutional governance, no matter what the structure, must preserve academic integrity and intellectual freedom.
3. Any decisions about structural changes to higher education in New Jersey, or to Rutgers in particular, must be made with great care and deliberation.
4. Adequate and stable state funding must be provided to higher education, no matter what its structure.
5. The public colleges and universities of the State of New Jersey must be held accountable to the people of New Jersey.

The University Structure and Governance (USG) Committee heartily agrees with these points and supports the President and the Board of Governors in their efforts to see that they are adhered to in any restructuring of higher education in New Jersey.

As the President notes, our paramount concern, in accord with our land-grant status, is the quality of teaching, research, and other services provided to the people of the state. Rutgers is a major national institution of higher learning, an indication of which is our membership in the American Association of Universities. Rutgers is a critical asset to the State of New Jersey in our ability to provide the benefits of teaching, research, and service to the state's citizens, and in our role as an engine of economic development statewide.

The USG Committee believes there are many potential advantages to merging existing institutions in order to create a comprehensive university. A university with schools of arts and sciences, law, business, medicine, dentistry, engineering, architecture, nursing, criminal justice, and public administration, among others, would have the elements of a major research university. With strong leadership and thoughtful planning, Rutgers and the regional campuses could be better, and better known around the world.

The USG Committee has additional comments to add to those made by President McCormick. They are as follows:

- The recent Constituency Research Project (2004) confirms that the Rutgers name is widely recognized nationally and throughout the state as a mark of excellence. That name must be maintained in any restructuring.
- In order to continue to flourish in the future, as we have in the past, Rutgers needs to retain a strong and independent governing structure.
  - The Higher Education Act of 1956 established a Board of Governors, some of whose members were to be appointed by the Governor, with others being appointed by the Rutgers Board of Trustees.
  - The autonomy of this structure must not be compromised.
- Any changes in the structure of public higher education in New Jersey should be done in phases, learning as we go, so that the net result is an improved environment for teaching, learning, and research.

- Restructuring must be carefully planned and then gradually implemented over a period of several years.
- Budgetary issues, governance, reorganization of academic and administrative units, information technology compatibility, debt service, allocation of endowments, tenure, union contracts, and the status of the university hospital must be studied carefully before restructuring can move forward.
- If it is decided that an expanded research university in Newark is in the state's interest, we urge that all components eventually be part of Rutgers University. Rather than merge all three extant Newark universities at once, however, we suggest that UMDNJ in Newark stand on its own for a time as a state school, with strong state oversight and financial support. University Hospital in Newark is in crisis and needs to be supported directly by the state at this junctur, and Rutgers must be protected from the kinds of cost increases and possible litigation that inevitably arise in a health care institution. No matter how this is done, however, the University must be protected from the kinds of cost increases and possible litigation that inevitably arise in a health care institution.
- We strongly support the merger of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJ) with Rutgers-New Brunswick, as part of the first phase of the restructuring of public higher education in New Jersey.
  - Rutgers-New Brunswick and RWJ already run extensive joint graduate programs and several research institutes and there are many research collaborations among faculty at the two institutions.
  - Merging RWJ into Rutgers presents clear and obvious synergies for teaching, research, and service to the state, with relatively few risks.
- We believe that Rutgers-Camden should remain part of the university system and that it should merge only with other institutions that share the Rutgers mission as a research university. Additional resources should be provided to the Camden Campus to build upon the value of programs and other assets already in place there.
- We do not support the establishment of a research university in Newark separate from Rutgers University.
  - UMDNJ, NJIT, and Rutgers-Newark already have considerable collaborations and joint programs.
  - Their combined strength and competitiveness in the biological sciences would be greatly enhanced by bringing together in one institution the medical and dental schools, bioengineering and computational sciences, and the basic sciences of the current three research universities.
  - Splitting Rutgers University, by creating a separate comprehensive research university in Newark, however, would not result in two strong institutions of public higher education, but instead would create two weakened one.
- Such a split would be inefficient in terms of incurring needless costs, including the following:
  - The Rutgers Business School, College of Nursing, and program in Social Work have students, faculty, and offices on multiple campuses. Locating them in one place only would weaken them for a considerable time and lead to major increases in costs as programs were rebuilt or created completely anew.
  - The School of Law in Newark has many links to faculty and programs on the Rutgers-New Brunswick Campus. Splitting it away would hurt these programs and the School of Law itself.

- The University Libraries have their collections distributed across the entire university. Splitting the Rutgers library system would cause serious costly disruption to research and learning.
- None of the current proposals for restructuring of public higher education would result in reduced costs. Considerable costs of transition would be required no matter which plan is implemented.
  - It is clear that any restructuring that would involve complete separation of the Newark and/or Camden campuses from Rutgers would require very large onetime and substantial continuing expenditures to provide first-rate library and computing resources in Newark and Camden.
  - We also must face the fact that public higher education in New Jersey is inadequately funded and has been for a long time. Before any merger or restructuring is to go forward, the state must commit adequate one-time funds to make the transition smooth and efficient.
  - To achieve the paramount goal of excellence in our public research universities, the state government must commit and sustain stable long-term funding for public higher education in New Jersey.
- The state's commitment to stable and adequate long-term funding of public higher education adequately must be met by accountability of public higher education to the citizens of the state.
  - This does not imply micro-management of the institutions of higher education by the state government.
  - It requires that all public institutions of higher education make their educational goals clear and work visibly to succeed in meeting all of them.

**Recommendation:** *The USG Committee proposes that the Senate endorse both the points made by the President before the Joint Legislative Task Force on November 9, 2006, and the points raised in this report about the importance of:*

- a. *retaining the Rutgers name,*
- b. *retaining Rutgers' autonomy of governance,*
- c. *the phased nature of any potential restructuring,*
- d. *a delayed merger of Rutgers-Newark and UMDNJ,*
- e. *a more immediate merger of Rutgers-New Brunswick and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School,*
- f. *having Rutgers-Camden play an integral role in any merger plans,*
- g. *rejecting, owing to monumental costs and inefficiencies, the creation of a separate research university in Newark,*
- h. *recognizing nonetheless the significant costs entailed in any restructuring,*
- i. *recognizing the underfunded status of higher education in New Jersey, and*
- j. *reaffirming the importance of accountability, vision, and leadership in an undertaking of this magnitude.*