



**Rutgers University Senate
University Structure and Governance Committee
Response to Charge S-1404, on Revisions to University Policy Library
February 2017**

Charge S-1404 Revisions to University Policy Library: Investigate the procedure for disseminating revisions to University Regulations in the University Policy Library, and make recommendations for improved communication within the University community. Consider to what extent the Senate, students, academic units, and other affected constituencies are informed of changes made to the University Policy Library. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by February 2017.

Background:

The Rutgers University Senate investigates, legislates, and recommends policies for the entire university community as well as its operations. These include policies such as the academic integrity policy, veteran issues, and the merging of schools, to name a few. These advisory and legislative responsibilities include generating recommendations and reports. The recommendations ultimately go to the President of the University and often times also to the Board of Governors (BOG) and/or the Board of Trustees (BOT) for final disposition. They often impact the Senate's enabling regulations, as well as much of the University Policy Library. Once a policy is approved by the appropriate governing boards of the university, the responsibility to comply with and regulate the policy belongs to the responsible executive associated with that policy.

At times, in the course of Senate business, recommendations adopted by the full Senate become 'lost in the system'. This naturally raises concern over the process regarding what happens after reports and recommendations leave the Senate,

e.g. process steps and ultimate outcomes. Per Senate policy, those reports and/or recommendations are submitted to the President, who will typically respond by either endorsing or rejecting the Senate's recommendations. For those recommendations that are rejected, no further communication may be needed. However, for those adopted by the President, it may be necessary that those recommendations go to the BOG and/or BOT for their approval, and then for the appropriate changes to be made to university policy and codified in the University Policy Library.

This charge is the result of often not knowing the final disposition of our adopted recommendations. The University Structure and Governance Committee was asked to investigate and recommend best practices for communicating with the University Secretary's Office to ensure that appropriate 'follow up' (e.g. action and responses) occurs regarding Senate reports and recommendations, and that related lines of communication are open and active.

Considerations:

The University Secretary's office is responsible for managing all documentation, policies, and regulations discussed and decided upon by the governing board(s) of the university, i.e., BOG and/or BOT. The University Secretary submits proposed policies and policy changes to the respective committees of the governing board(s). Those committees discuss and may recommend new policies and/or policy changes. The governing board(s) vote on such recommendations and, if passed, the changes become official university policies. The University Secretary is then responsible for informing the university community of those new policies or policy changes.

One of the fundamental underpinnings of a robust shared governance environment is an open and transparent sharing of information. Disseminating University Senate decisions, embodied in Senate reports and recommendations, enables an appropriate flow of that information. Thus it is important that, and would be beneficial if, the University Secretary's Office also i) disseminate the Senate's reports and recommendations, ii) determine the President's and Board's

responses and decisions, as well as the execution of those policies by the responsible office, and iii) subsequently report back to the university community.

In considering this charge, USGC invited University Secretary, Kim Pastva to attend one of our meetings to discuss best practices for disseminating our reports, as well as to hear any concerns or questions from her office. Ms. Pastva was very open to working with the Senate to determine the best methods of communication to ensure that all communications are two-way and well documented. She indicated that all changes to policy are announced publicly through the weekly e-mailed "Faculty/Staff Bulletin". The publication contains a link to a mark-up copy that highlights the changes and a clean copy containing the incorporated changes. It was also noted that some changes or policies proposed by the University Senate do not need governing board approval. For those recommendations or policy changes that only require approval by the President, and that then ultimately receive the President's approval, the University Secretary informs the responsible executive of those changes and further disseminates that information as well. Ultimately, the information is added to the policy library at www.policies.rutgers.edu.

Ms. Pastva indicated that she does not often know what policies and reports originate from the Senate. She has agreed that if she can learn of the Senate's activities, it will assist her in monitoring the progress of the respective boards in making related decisions. Therefore collaboration between the University Secretary and Senate Secretary would facilitate the dissemination of related information to the university community.

Further USGC discussion noted that

- While the policies and changes disseminated by the University Secretary's office go out to all faculty and staff, i) student leaders still need to provide that information to their constituencies and ii) groups that include research centers, institutes, and any research intensive areas should also receive that information
- The Senate Chair normally reports on all Senate activity at BOG meeting, which should also help lay a foundation for future board consideration and actions

- It would be helpful to have a database which contained all policy revisions, clearly designating which copies were now out of date; that archive would facilitate understanding regarding the evolution of current policies

Resolution and Recommendations:

Whereas the Rutgers University Senate embraces transparency and open robust communication to strengthen shared governance.

Be it resolved that the Rutgers University Senate recommends to the President and Boards of the University that they adopt this formalized process of communication and dissemination of Senate reports and subsequent actions by the administration, including related Boards, as follows:

Recommendation 1: Representatives from the University Secretary's office and University Senate office i) meet at least once per semester to determine all reports that are still pending decision and ii) catalog and determine timelines for dispensation by the Boards, i.e., Rutgers University's Board of Governors and/or Board of Trustees.

Recommendation 2: The University Senate Office creates an annotated document repository of all submitted reports and their status regarding disposition. The Senate office will maintain a public list of all items pending action. The list will capture all relevant data and timelines. The table should include the report, president's response, and board decision.

Recommendation 3: The University Secretary's Office and the University Senate Office jointly create and utilize a university file sharing space to maintain current records of submitted reports, accessible by responsible Senate and University Secretary staff.

Recommendation 4: The University Secretary's Office disseminate links to all Senate reports i) via the "Faculty/Staff Bulletin" and ii) to groups affected beyond faculty and staff (e.g. all student government leadership, research groups,

extension groups, and so forth), to ensure that the entire university community is informed of the activity and reports submitted by the Senate.

Recommendation 5: The University Secretary's Office will prospectively create an archive of superseded versions of each university policy from the University Policy Library, to act as a tracking mechanism for the evolution of each university policy; each document within the archive will also clearly designate that it is now out of date.

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