



## Rutgers University Senate

### **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 recent selection of Condoleezza Rice as the 2014 Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree Recipient and the ensuing controversy demonstrated that a more open process is needed for the vetting and selection of these recipients. The Executive Committee of the University Senate on its behalf discussed and proposed a plan to President Barchi to provide input from all University constituent groups. The President agreed and the Executive Committee has constituted an ad hoc panel for 2015 and 2016. USGC has been tasked to discuss and recommend a permanent committee 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 makes the following recommendations for a revised policy for selection of honorary degree recipients and commencement speakers:

1. In light of Rutgers' commitment to robust shared governance as presented in the 2014 Rutgers University Strategic Plan, the Rutgers policy should follow a model similar to that of several fellow AAU/CIC institutions by establishing a University Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees. The Senate is the one shared-governance body with university-wide representation of all constituencies (faculty, staff, students, and alumni), and is well suited to address such issues of university-wide importance.
2. The committee roster for the University Senate Committee on Honorary would consist of faculty, administrators, student leaders, staff, at least one alumnus, and the Executive Secretary of the Senate, with the membership being representative of all four



campuses. The committee is best co-chaired by two of the University Senate Executive Committee's faculty members, each from a different campus. Since terms for Senators are limited, we recommend that members' terms are for a period of one academic year, with the possibility of serving an unlimited number of additional terms.

3. Other than the co-chairs, committee members may or may not be selected from among the Senate body, and will be jointly approved for inclusion by the Senate leadership (Senate chair and vice chair) and the administration. University Policies enabling the Senate, and Senate bylaws, will S1405 Procedures for Selecting Commencement Speakers and Honorary Degree Recipients, page 6 of 7 be amended to reflect addition of this committee.
4. The Office of the Secretary of the University will solicit nominations for honorary degree recipients and commencement speaker from the entire University community on an ongoing basis, directing that all nomination packets, regardless of who prepared the nomination, will be sent to the Executive Secretary of the Senate for consideration by the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees. The nomination process, nomination criteria, forms, and links should be posted on the website maintained by the Office of the Secretary of the University. Nominators are free to indicate for which of the campus commencements they believe their nominee would be most appropriate, although this is not required.
5. The Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees will meet twice yearly (mid-spring and mid-fall) to review nomination materials compiled by the University Senate office. Strict confidentiality regarding the names and credentials of nominees shall be observed. Confidentiality agreements will be executed, signed, and maintained.
6. For the New Brunswick/RBHS commencement, the packets of committee-approved candidates will be ranked and submitted in a timely fashion to the New Brunswick and RBHS chancellors who, in consultation with the president, will forward their selection(s) to the Board of Governors' Committee on Alumni and University Relations. As is current practice, the Committee on Alumni and University Relations will forward the names of honorary degree recipients to the Board of Governors for approval.
7. For Camden and Newark campuses, the respective Newark or Camden committee on honorary degrees shall be given an opportunity, through their campus representative(s) on the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees, to select from the list of vetted nominees those honorary degree recipients considered suitable for their campus. As in current practice in Newark and Camden, the campus committee shall



review, rank, and forward names to the campus chancellor, who will then forward the names of nominees to the Rutgers Board of Governors for approval. Strict confidentiality regarding the names and credentials of nominees shall be observed by the campus committees.

8. To ensure a smooth and thorough process, the Committee on Honorary Degrees will prepare a brief report of the nominees for the Senate leadership (Senate chair and vice chair) and the president, and that report will remain confidential, and will require no response or input.

9. Other aspects of the selection process (criteria, confidentiality, exceptions, nomination form, and notice to successful degree recipients by the president) will remain as in the current policy and shall apply to all parties and campuses involved in the process.

10. Currently, commencement speakers are chosen from the pool of honorary degree candidates. As long as these candidate packets are reviewed by a committee that has appropriate constituent representation, this process may continue. However, given that three commencement speakers are needed each year, the University administration should consider the feasibility of decoupling the awarding of honorary degrees from the selection of commencement speakers. Under such a model, the New Brunswick and RBHS campuses combined, and the Newark and Camden campuses individually, may each continue/devise a process for selecting their commencement speaker (for recommendation to the Board of Governors), who may or may not be selected from the pool of honorary degree recipients, as they see fit. These processes should follow certain fundamental guidelines to ensure appropriate input and representation of faculty, students, administrators, staff, and alumni.

11. A charge will be issued to the University Senate's University Structure and Governance Committee to work with the University administration to specify details of the processes, including which parties and offices shall be responsible for each step of the process, how they shall be performed, and on what schedule. The current policy, modified to include greater representation of faculty and students, in place at Rutgers may remain until this process can be evaluated, implemented, and completed.

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

## Recommendations:

1. Representatives from the University Senate will serve as members of the Honorary Degree and Commencement Speaker Committee submitting nominees to the Board of Governors for selection. The Committee will be composed of the following:
  - a. Eight faculty members (TT, NTT, or PTL): one faculty Senator designated by the Executive Committee and one from each of the seven standing Senate committees, to be chosen through volunteering or by ballot.
  - b. Four staff: one staff Senator designated by the Executive Committee, the Executive Secretary of the Senate, and two staff Senators chosen by the staff caucus through volunteering or by ballot.
  - c. Four students: one student Senator designated by the Executive Committee and three student Senators chosen by the student caucus through volunteering or by ballot.
  - d. Two alumni: one alumni Senator designated by the Executive Committee and one alumni Senator chosen by the alumni caucus through volunteering or by ballot.
  - e. The Executive Committee will designate two “at large” Senators from any of the following groups: faculty, staff, students and alumni.
2. Honorary Degree recipients and Commencement speakers will be de-coupled. The committees for each part of the university system may choose to invite Commencement speakers that will not be designated as Honorary Degree recipients. Thus each committee should separate nominees into categories of those candidates who should be considered for one or another of those two designations.
3. The Honorary Degree and Commencement Speaker Committee will ensure adequate representation from all four parts of the Rutgers system. Committee members may serve agree to serve one or two one-year terms. The Chair and Vice-chair of the University Senate will serve *ex-officio*.
4. The Executive Secretary of the Senate shall receive nomination packets from the Secretary of the University and shall forward them to the committee for consideration. The committee will evaluate the nomination packets and will compile a list of those candidates suitable to receive an honorary degree as well as those suitable as Commencement speakers.

5. Each part of the university system shall convene the Honorary Degree and Commencement speaker Committee with the same composition as that defined in recommendation 1. The representatives of each constituency will be pulled from the campus upon which the recipient is to be chosen for.
6. For the New Brunswick/RBHS Commencement, the packets of approved candidates will be ranked by the committee and submitted in a timely fashion to the New Brunswick and RBHS chancellors who, in consultation with the president, will forward their selection(s) to the Board of Governors' Committee on Alumni and University Relations. As is current practice, the Committee on Alumni and University Relations will forward the names of honorary degree recipients to the Board of Governors for approval. The President may recommend a commencement speaker from among the honorary degree recipients or may select a speaker not chosen to receive an honorary degree.
7. For the Camden and Newark campuses, the respective Newark or Camden committee on honorary degrees shall be given an opportunity, through their campus representative(s) on the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees, to select an honorary degree recipient they deem suitable for their campus from the list of all vetted nominees. As in current practice in Newark and Camden, the honorary degree committees in place at each campus shall review, rank, and forward names to the campus chancellor, who will then forward the names of nominees to the Rutgers Board of Governors for approval. Strict confidentiality regarding the names and credentials of nominees shall be observed by the campus committees. The Chancellors may recommend a Commencement speaker from among the honorary degree recipients or may choose a speaker not chosen to receive an honorary degree.



## **University Structure and Governance Committee:**

Oliver, Jon, NB Staff, Co-Chair  
Puhak, Robert, FAS-N (F), Co-Chair  
Admani, Saad, RBS-N (S)  
Ahmed, Sultan, NJMS (F)  
Anderson, Ellen Zambo, SHRP (F)  
Aubry, Marie-Pierre, SAS-NB (F)  
Delnevo, Christine, Alumni Association  
DiVito, Timothy, Camden Staff  
Eastman, Wayne, At-Large N (F)  
Edward, David, Newark Staff  
Ganesh, Jaishankar, SB-C Dean (A)  
Gomes, Richard, PTL-N (F)  
Holzer, Marc, SPAA Dean (A)  
Hughes, James, EJBSPPP Dean (A)  
Janniger, Edmund, SPAA (S)  
Karamichael, Kenneth, NB Staff  
Kocak, Jordan, EJBSPPP (S)  
Krishnamurthi, Bharath, Engineering (S)  
Mitra, Akash, SEBS (S)  
Mitchell, Sean, FAS-N (F)  
Moran, Elizabeth, RBHS At-Large (F)  
Oberdiek, John, Law-C (A)  
O'Connell, Claire, SHRP (F)  
Schulberg, Justin, SAS-NB (S)  
Settles, Alex, RBS:N/NB (F)  
Shulman, Jacob, SAS-NB (S)  
Swalagin, Kenneth, Senate Executive Secretary (Non-Senator)  
Svasti, Luke, SAS-NB (S)  
Triner, Gail, GS-NB (F)