

**Rutgers University Senate  
Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee  
Response to Charge A-1610  
April 2017**

*Charge A-1610 - Change in Graduation Date for Students Completing Degrees in Summer: At the request of Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara Lee, consider a proposal to move the official graduation date from October to August for students who complete degree requirements in the summer, which ensures that official reporting of summer degrees falls within the parameters of federal reporting regulations and better reflects when students actually complete their degrees.*

**Background and Committee Discussions**

This charge was issued to the Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee (ASRAC) at the request of Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara Lee, acting at the behest of Vice President Robert J. Heffernan, Head of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning (OIRAP). OIRAP would like the October 31 graduation date to be changed to August 31 in order to ensure that official reporting of degrees completed in the summer falls within federal reporting guidelines. Vice President Lee also informed ASRAC that the proposal had been shared with the Council of Deans and no objections were heard.

ASRAC discussed this charge right after it was issued and quickly agreed that the proposed change of graduation date would offer a number of advantages. In addition to making our reporting of degrees fall within federal guidelines and making the graduation date on the diploma more accurately reflect when the student actually completed the degree requirements, the proposed change would enable a student who completes degree requirements over the summer to start graduate studies or a new job in September having officially received his or her degree and would save decanal staff members from writing a number of letters to employers, graduate and professional schools, etc. stating that a student completed all degree requirements although they will not officially graduate until October. Everyone agreed that the change of graduation date should be made provided that it would not cause major problems for the staff members in Rutgers schools and colleges who would have to certify students for August graduation in a very tight time frame. To see if the change could be made without causing major problems, we invited Lenore Neigeborn, Associate Dean for Academic Services at SAS, New Brunswick to come to an ASRAC meeting to discuss what the proposed change of graduation date would mean for SAS, the largest Rutgers school.

Dr. Neigeborn came to the October ASRAC meeting. ASRAC member Lynn Kuzma, Associate Dean for Academic Services at FAS Newark, was also present, so we had input from two of the units most likely to have problems with the proposed change of date. Everyone at the meeting agreed that the proposed change of graduation date would not be practical if it would require that every student who completes degree requirements over the summer, including those who do so in the third summer session, would have to be certified by August 31. On the other hand, everyone agreed that the change would be doable and a good idea if the certification could be completed in September and students then receive a diploma with a graduation date of August 31. The latter scenario is analogous to what is done for May graduation; i.e., students receive a degree dated commencement day but the certification of students continues for several weeks after commencement and diplomas are mailed out in June.. After the meeting, ASRAC Co-chair

Martha Cotter checked with Vice President Lee, who was told by Dr. Heffernan that the latter scenario would satisfy the needs of OIRAP.

Somewhat later, ASRAC Co-Chair Matt Winkler mentioned the proposed change of graduation date at a meeting of academic staff members from New Brunswick graduate schools and received a very negative response from the representative from the Graduate School – New Brunswick, who argued that it is very difficult for many doctoral students, particularly in the Humanities, to schedule a thesis defense over the summer because many faculty members are away doing research in libraries, museums, archives, etc. If the October date were changed to August 31<sup>st</sup>, such students would be unable to meet the August deadline and would therefore receive a January degree and be required to register for the fall semester. ASRAC members found this argument persuasive.

Based on the above considerations, ASRAC agreed to recommend Senate approval of the proposed change of graduation date but also to recommend that the Graduate School – New Brunswick and any other graduate schools with major problems with the August date be permitted to use October 31 as a 4<sup>th</sup> graduation date,

### **Resolution**

*Be it resolved that* the Rutgers University Senate approves the move of the October 31 graduation date to August 31; and

*Be it further resolved that* the Senate recommends that the Graduate School – New Brunswick, the soon-to-be School of Graduate Studies, and any other Rutgers graduate school that so requests be permitted to use October 31 as a 4<sup>th</sup> graduation date.

### ***2016 -17 ASRAC Members***

***Cotter, Martha, At-Large NB (F), Co-Chair***

***Winkler, Matt, NB Staff, Co-Chair***

Artun, Tuna, SAS-NB (F)

Bhuyan, Sanjib, SEBS (F)

Boikess, Robert, At-Large NB (F)

Chayko, Mary, SCI (F)

Covington, Anthony, Student Charter Trustee

Dasari, Babu, UC-C (F)

Drachtman, Richard, RWJMS (F)

Feldman, Cecile, RSDM Dean (A)

Flores, Nathaniel, GS-NB (S)

Goh, Chon, SB-C (F)

Gursoy, Melike, Engineering (F)

Haddon, Pheobe, Camden Chancellor (A)

Lindenmeyer, Kriste, FAS-C Dean (A)

Marchetta, Josephine, Alumni Association

Markosian, Christopher, SAS-NB (S)

Moseray, Millicent, SON (S)

Parmar, Veenat, SPH (S)

Potter, Cathryn, SSW Dean (A)

Salmond, Susan, Nursing Dean (A)

Samant, Asha, RSDM (F)

Santana, Engelbert, Newark Staff

Schwartz, Robert, NJMS (F)

Shapses, Sue, SEBS (F)

Singh, Gurpreet, PTL-N (F)

Szatrowski, Ted, At-Large (F)

Thornton, Suzanne, GS-NB (S)