RUTGERS

Robert L. Barchi, President

April 25, 2017

Mr. Kenneth Swalagin
University Senate
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
ASB III, Suite 110
Cook/Douglass Campus

Dear Mr. Swalagin: Ken

I am writing in response to the University Senate's October 2015 report and recommendations on Charge S-1413, Selection Process for Software Packages or Services of Significant Instructional Impact. I thank the members of the Senate's Instruction, Curricula and Advising Committee for bringing their concern over the process used to select instructional software to my attention.

Since you submitted this report and recommendations, there has been considerable activity with respect to instructional software. As you are probably aware, Rutgers faculty and students currently use five major learning management systems (LMSs): Moodle, Blackboard, Sakai, Canvas, and Pearson/eCollege. An advisory committee, made up of program directors, a majority of whom are faculty, meets regularly related to the Pearson Managed Program.

Currently there is no University-wide, standard LMS. As you know, a university-wide Working Group, chaired by Professor Doug Blair (SAS-NB) and including faculty, staff and students from all four chancellor units, is looking into the possibility of selecting one LMS that would be supported university-wide. That group's work is ongoing, and I prefer to let the working group complete its work before creating additional committees to consider the same or closely related issues.

I concur with your concerns about the transparency of the selection process, and expect that whatever recommendations are made by the LMS Committee will be widely shared and discussed by the University community.

You also are aware that I commissioned a Committee on the Near- and Long-Term Impact of Instructional Technology. That committee is finalizing its report, whose draft title is "Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age." I anticipate that this report will be submitted by the end of the spring 2017 semester. An earlier draft of the report recommended Teaching and Learning Advisory Committees for each of the four chancellor units, as well as a University-wide advisory committee with membership from the four campus committees. These committees would include faculty and staff, and possibly students as well.

In sum, I believe it is premature to create another committee to review issues and initiatives relating to instructional technology. After the two committees have completed their work, we should be in a position to consider how faculty advice can be incorporated into the selection of learning management systems and the implementation of technology into more of our courses.

Sincerely,

Robert Barchi

c: Barbara A. Lee, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
       Michele Norin, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer
       Douglas Blair, Chair, Working Group on Learning Management Systems
       Susan Albin, Co-Chair, Committee on the Near- and Long-Term Impact of
           Instructional Technology
       Darrin York, Co-Chair, Committee on the Near- and Long-Term Impact of
           Instructional Technology