



Robert L. Barchi, President

February 6, 2018

Mr. Kenneth Swalagin
University Senate
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza, Suite 1200
335 George St.
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-2036

Dear Mr. Swalagin:

I am writing in response to the University Senate's January 2018 report and recommendations on Charge S-1702, Increasing Student Voter Turnout. The members of the Student Affairs Committee have my thanks for their thoughtful recommendations, and I agree that Rutgers should provide students with information about voting, how to register, and the mechanics of voting.

I believe that most of the committee's recommendations would need to be implemented at the campus level—particularly those involving new student orientation, establishing polling places on our various campuses, and voter education programs in the residence halls. With the exception of recommendations 9 and 13, the rest of your recommendations apply to actions taken at the campus level. Therefore, by copy of this letter, I am asking the four chancellors to work with their vice chancellors for student affairs to implement the recommendations in your report that are appropriate for their students.

With respect to recommendation 9, each fall the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs sends out information on registering to vote and a second e-mail encouraging students to vote; this could be moved to the President's office for distribution.

In recommendation 13, you suggest amending University Policy 10.2.7 to include a parenthetical statement to provide examples of reasons why a student's desire to be excused from class would be "recognized as valid" (section D.3 of the policy), suggesting that "voting" and "family emergencies" be added as examples. While I agree that voting is a civic obligation of all U.S. citizens, there are numerous ways that a student can vote without missing class—for example, by registering to vote on the student's local campus or by obtaining a vote-by-mail ballot. Furthermore, if a student asks a faculty member to be excused from class in order to vote, the faculty member may accede to or deny the student's request, and adding parentheticals to the language of Policy 10.2.7 does not remove that discretion from the professor.

Again, I am grateful to the Student Affairs Committee for its helpful recommendations.

Sincerely,

Robert Barchi

c: Barbara A. Lee, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Nancy Cantor, Chancellor, Rutgers University–Newark
Deba Dutta, Chancellor, Rutgers University–New Brunswick
Phoebe Haddon, Chancellor, Rutgers University–Camden
Brian Strom, Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences