

Report of the University Structure and Governance Committee (USGC) on Charge S-2008-1

Charge S-2008-1: How Staff Senators are Elected: Investigate and report on how staff not aligned with any Chancellor are elected to the Senate and make recommendations.

Background

The Rutgers University Senate in 2006 accepted the first class of Staff Senators. The inclusion of staff brought a different mechanism for Senate elections. Faculty and students are elected using formulae based on the numbers of total faculty and students per unit. Staff elections are based on a static number per campus. As more staff are hired, no increase in Staff Senators or entitlements ensues. There are currently 20 Staff senators compared to almost 200 faculty and student Senators. PTL and Alumni Senators are also elected similarly to staff on the basis of a fixed eligibility. University Policy currently provides for 7 staff Senators from New Brunswick, 6 from RBHS, 4 from Newark and 3 from Camden. Each of these Senators is elected via their staff peers in campus-based elections.

At this time, there are 20,758 staff members throughout all of the Rutgers campuses: 10,578 at Rutgers-New Brunswick, 6228 at RBHS, 3384 at Rutgers-Newark, and 568 at Rutgers-Camden. While most of these staff do report to a Chancellor, those that report to members of the central administration instead may not be “allocated” to the campus with which they personally feel most engaged.

Thus, Staff members of the Rutgers central administration reached out to the Senate Staff Caucus to ask that the Senate consider how staff members not reporting through a chancellor-led unit might participate in the election process for senators.

Candidates for Staff Senator positions are elected by the campus of their physical location (Rutgers–Newark, RHBS, Rutgers–New Brunswick, Rutgers–Camden). However, the system at present does not provide a mechanism for potential candidates reporting to the central administration to choose the campus election they would like to participate in, nor are they necessarily sufficiently familiar with campus-based staff members to participate effectively as voters in the campus-based elections. The USGC was approached by staff working for the central administration who felt that they and their colleagues were not well represented in this election process.

The issue arose close to the end of the USGC’s discussions of charge S-1907: Composition of the Senate, and the administration was consulted about the situation, and about the detailed names and numbers provided each year to the Senate Office, which runs the various Staff Senator elections. No resolution was reached.

Considerations

Initial efforts focused on trying to find ways in which central administration staff members might each be “allocated” to a campus under the current system, perhaps on the basis of the physical location of an office, or a location where the preponderance of their time is spent. It transpired that the Rutgers Central Administration is unable to provide the Senate with data on which such an allocation might reasonably be made. Other recommendations arising in response to charge S-1907 were thus presented to the Senate for approval, and a second resolution was added that was voted on and passed through the Senate at its regular meeting on January 24, 2020. It read:

Be It Resolved that:

The University Structure and Governance Committee be charged to investigate and report on how staff not aligned with any chancellor are elected to the Senate and make recommendations based on this investigation.

The current charge was accordingly issued by the Executive Committee.

USGC considered whether the current structure of staff representation remains the best model. Given the fundamental role of representation in governance, USGC was tasked to look at various alternatives for electing staff senators. Central administration staff currently remain allocated according to the campus of their physical affiliation, which means that they are structured as if they report to the respective Chancellor. In fact, their reporting structure is not to that Chancellor but to various VPs who ultimately report to the President.

SVP Fernandez indicated that coding for campus or central administration staff members in other ways would be easy, but aligning the election with their preferred campus or campuses could potentially pose problems. One issue is who is to decide what campus each candidate should be a part of? Would we allocate that staff election based on the individual’s preference or some other protocol or standard set by the Senate?

An example of these issues might include a staff member physically located on the Newark RBHS campus, who might have RBHS staff members vote for them but still neither be based in RBHS nor represent the interests of RBHS. Similarly, another staff member might be located principally in New Brunswick, but despite their working at both Rutgers New Brunswick and RBHS New Brunswick and Newark, could only have the Rutgers New Brunswick staff vote for them, but not staff located across the Raritan River at Liberty Plaza who are associated with RBHS.

USGC turned its attention to alternative solutions not based on “allocating” staff to a particular campus. Essentially, this means identifying “central administration” staff as a separate constituency, with its own pool of voters, and an entitlement to elect one or more senators, either as part of the existing pool of 20, or in addition to them.

Our research reveals that there are at this time 4210 faculty and staff working for the central location: 3379 in NB (including RBHS), 676 in Newark, and 155 in Camden. Of these, 4089 are staff members. Such a central pool would clearly still include many staff members who are unfamiliar to each other, and it is not clear that forming them into a separate pool would be an improvement over the current situation. Each of these staff members is currently allocated to one of the existing pools as regards Senate eligibility and voting. Only a small number of these staff members have more than one office, and face the possibility that they are allocated to one pool while being more familiar with and to other staff in a different pool. It is not possible at this time for central administration to advise us on exactly how many there are. A separate voting pool for central administration staff would involve reallocation of many staff, and significant reductions in the staff numbers—and senators allocated—for the four current pools of staff. For these reasons, USGC concluded this was not at present a viable option.

After substantial discussion of alternatives it was determined that the best approach is to inform central administration staff members that prior to a Staff Senator election (beginning next Spring) they should ascertain on which campus their election would be conducted and if that does not align with the campus that they most work with, alert the Senate office to determine whether there is an equitable way for them to be re-coded for a different campus. This discretion will reside with the Senate office, which currently conducts these elections, and will be available only to staff not associated with a chancellor-based unit.

Recommendations

At this time, USGC recommends no changes to the numbers or categories of staff Senators. We ask the Senate office to ensure that any central administration staff wishing to run for a seat on the Senate be made aware that a special request can be made to the Senate Office if they wish to run on a campus other than that on which their primary office is located. For now we believe this to be a reasonable and simple mechanism to ensure equity. At this time, no action by the Senate is recommended.

Should the numbers of staff requesting reallocation be greater than anticipated, the Senate Office will ask the Executive Committee to require USGC to reconsider this charge in light of the newly obtained data.



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