
**Rutgers University Senate
Information Technology Committee (ITC)
Report and Recommendations on Charge S-2319
“Explore mechanisms, methods and processes for senators to communicate
senate work and information to their constituents.”**

March 22, 2024

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The Charge: S-2319:

Title:

Explore mechanisms, methods and processes for senators to communicate senate work and information to their constituents.

Description:

The Senate should explore mechanisms, methods and processes for senators to communicate senate work and information to their constituents.

Part I. Background and Rationale of Charge:

One of the primary responsibilities of Rutgers Senators is to “report on Senate meetings and actions to their constituencies.”

See: <https://senate.rutgers.edu/information-for-senators/>

Currently, there are no formal mechanisms available to senators to enable them to report on the meetings and actions to their constituents.

Part II. Investigation 1 – Senator Survey

The Senate IT Committee (ITC) explored the current methods and processes for senators to communicate senate work out to their constituents (See Appendix A – Survey Results.) Some senators had existing mailing lists within their areas that they were able to use for senate communications (i.e., Libraries, Faculty Council, and several schools.) Staff and students both reported having little to no means of communicating their senate information broadly.

Part III. Investigation 2: Mass Communications - Discovery and Findings:

The Committee explored many different communications methods:

1. General Communications:

Met with Allan Hoffman, Director of IT Communications and Marketing, Office of Information Technology (OIT) – shared communications mechanisms and overall challenges with University Communications

2. RAMS (Rutgers Automated Mass-mailing System):

Met with Aaron Richton, Systems Programmer, Enterprise Applications and Services – explained diverse types of mailing list options. University RAMs Lists - Existing “ALL” lists are monitored and reserved for University Business.

The committee discussed the need for Senators to access their respective RAMS list. To eliminate duplication, access to lists should be granted to constituency chairs only. This list would need to be updated annually by the Senate office and provided to the OIT to add each Chair as a moderator to their respective list.

3. Rutgers Today:

Corresponded with Andrea Alexander, Editor, Rutgers Today, Rutgers University News and Media Relations Rutgers Today:

- a. Rutgers Today was considered to communicate to the University at large by asking to add a link called “Senate business.” However, the ITC reached out to Rutgers Today and was informed that Rutgers Today focuses on featuring news from across the university. While they were unable to provide us with a standing, repeated link to a Senate webpage, they welcomed us to submit news or event items for consideration in newsletter issues.

4. Big Ten Colleague comparison:

Reviewed data from Anna Haley – email sent to BTAA Senate chairs asking how they communicate to constituents (see Appendix B.)

- i. Most cannot email the entire university.
- ii. Some have departmental faculty lists they can access.

5. my.rutgers.edu portal – MyCommunity groups:

Met with Yaw-shing Wang, Assistant Director of Enterprise Business Development, OIT to explore the new MyCommunity groups in the Rutgers portal. This area of communication is in the initial stages of development but could potentially be another means of communicating to constituencies soon.

There are following, prepopulated existing campus groups:

The screenshot displays four campus groups, each with a profile picture, name, status, activity time, and a brief description with a 'View more' link.

- Rutgers-New Brunswick**: Public • Campus • Active 4 minutes ago. As a member of the Association of American Universities and the Big Ten Academic Alliance, Rutgers... [View more](#)
- Rutgers-Newark**: Public • Campus • Active 20 minutes ago. Leveraging its diverse student and faculty population and high-impact scholarship, Rutgers... [View more](#)
- Rutgers-RBHS**: Public • Campus • Active an hour ago. Rutgers University is an academic health leader that is shaping the future of human health, pioneering... [View more](#)
- Rutgers-Camden**: Public • Campus • Active 2 hours ago. Rutgers University is one of the oldest, most respected institutions of higher learning in the country;... [View more](#)

There are two (2) subgroups under the OneSource Group:

The screenshot shows the OneSource group page with a banner image of people, the group name 'OneSource' with an 'Employee' tag, and two subgroups: 'Faculty' and 'Staff'.

OneSource Employee
Active 7 weeks ago
University Human Resources and Payroll Services have partnered to plan, design, and operate a service...
Organizer:

Subgroups 2 Members 6,133 Feed Discussions Photos Videos Albums Documents

- Faculty**: Private • Employee • Active an hour ago. [Request Access](#)
- Staff**: Private • Employee • Active an hour ago. [Member](#)

It should be noted that only users who have acknowledged the terms of service for the Rutgers MyCommunity will be added to their respective group. Groups are updated regularly.

Part IV. Improvements to Other Communication Methods:

Communications from Constituents to Senators:

As the discussion and exploration of communications progressed, the committee noted there was not a straightforward way for constituents to find their Senate representatives. The committee recommends the following enhancements to the Senate website:

1. Add a “lookup” by constituency that will return the senators for that constituency.

2. Add each senator's email address next to their senator information.

Communications from Senators to Senators:

This requirement was explored with the Executive Secretary of the University Senate who worked with Adrienne Esposito from OIT (Office of Information Technology) to develop a mailing list, subscribing all active senators to the list and is in use.

This was completed in January 2024 and the message below notifying all senate members was emailed on 1/11/2024:

From: Vicki Hewitt <vickih@senate.rutgers.edu>
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2024 1:41 PM
To: Vicki Hewitt <vickih@senate.rutgers.edu>
Subject: Senate Discussion Mailing List



2023-2024 Rutgers University Senate Members,

An email mailing list has been created to enable senators to communicate with each other. You will soon receive an automated email notifying you that you have been added to the list. This list includes [all Rutgers University Senators](#).

Senators may unsubscribe from this list at any time. This list will not be used by the Senate office, so if you unsubscribe you will still receive Senate meeting notices and other communications from us.

When using this mailing list, please share documents using links instead of attachments. You can share links from your personal SharePoint/Google docs/Box folder, or you can use the All-Senators Box folder to upload documents and share the links. To access the All-Senators Box folder, click <https://rutgers.box.com/s/6goke94jftiy494hgg5qwg4l238ptfed>

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Vicki

PART V. RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are several challenges with communications at Rutgers due to our size and complexity:

- Email overload
- Changing preferences and needs
- Substantial number of constituencies and overlap
- Ongoing maintenance for individual lists (limited resources)
- Moderation to ensure security, accountability, and compliance with acceptable use

There are various applications available for communications, but each application is used for different purposes, and the university reserves its mass mailing system (RAMS - <https://rams.rutgers.edu/index.php>) for official university business. Senators are performing university business and should have access to their respective constituency lists. To simplify this process and prevent duplicate efforts, constituency chairs would be the designated representatives for their respective list. This could be accomplished by the Senate office providing OIT the list of chairs to be added as moderators to their respective constituency lists, or simply by each list moderator being notified to approve any emails sent by the respective chair.

A survey of current senators solicited feedback from senators as to what they want to communicate to their constituents. In summary, the results indicated that senators want to be able to email constituents, combined with timely updates on the senate website. While 46% of respondents preferred an “push” email service (not an “opt in” service), the mechanisms for doing so are typically restricted for official university business. The general types of information senators want to communicate are active charges and committee information, meeting highlights, and feedback requests.

The Senate office provides notes for each Senate meeting, as well as posting open charges and senate resolutions. The Senate office has also offered to provide additional information as requested on the website, such as meeting highlights.

Beyond mass email lists, there are other existing mechanisms that can be used for senator/senate outward communications:

- Faculty Council email lists
- Personal or departmental email lists
- Rutgers Communicators Network email list
- my.rutgers.edu - MyCommunity channels for Senate constituencies
- Social media options (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

A combination of these mechanisms could be targeted as part of a broader communications strategy for the Senate.

RESOLUTION

Be it Resolved that the Rutgers University Senate recommends that:

- Senate Website enhancements by the Senate office:
 - Add a “lookup” by constituency feature to the Senate website that will return the senators for that constituency.
 - Add each senator’s email address next to their senator information on the Senate website.
- Senate Mailing List by the Senate office:
 - Create a listserv list for anyone to subscribe to for Senate information, making it available as a link on the senate webpage to “opt in” for email messaging.
 - Work with UCM (University Communications and Marketing) to provide an article (1 to 2 times a year) in “Rutgers Today” that would include a link to the Senate webpage (for information about the Rutgers Senate and email subscription link.)
- The senate office work with UCM and OIT to explore using a MyCommunity group and potential subgroups for the Senate.
- Access to RAMS lists:
 - The Senate office will provide a list of chairs (annually) per constituency to the appropriate parties.
 - Senators should have access to their respective RAMS list or newly created constituency RAMS lists.
- Best practices for use of RAMS lists should be developed collaboratively between the Senate and list administrators

Information Technology Committee (ITC): 2023-2024

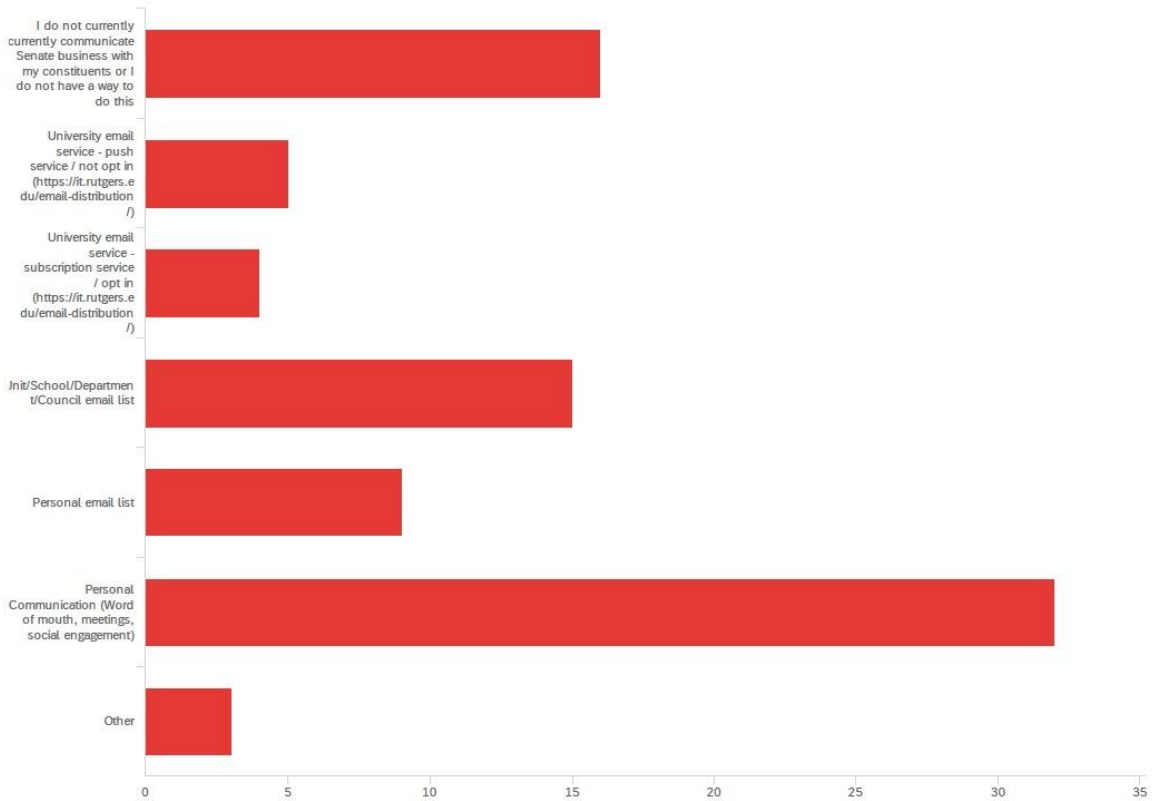
Senator	Constituency
Katie Anderson, Co-Chair	Libraries, Faculty
Adrienne Esposito, Co-Chair	New Brunswick Staff
Warren Allen, Member	School of Communication and Information, Faculty
Liza Barbarello Andrews, Member	Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Faculty
Sabrina Charles, Member	School of Nursing, Student
Charlie Collick, Member	New Brunswick Staff
Wei Fang, Member	Rutgers Law School in Newark, Faculty
Daniel Habeb, Member	Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate Newark, Student
Galathara Kahanda, Member	Newark College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty
Joshua Kaplan, Member	New Jersey Medical School, Faculty
Timothy Knievel, Member	Faculty of Arts and Sciences-Camden, Faculty
Periklis Papakonstantinou, Member	Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate NB, Faculty
Wendy Purcell, Member	School of Public Health, Faculty
Bharat Sarath, Member	Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate NB, Faculty
Martin Siederer, Member	Alumni Association
Frank Sonnenberg, Member	Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Faculty
Wojtek Wolfe, Member	Faculty of Arts and Sciences-Camden, Faculty

Default Report

Survey: Senate Communications

February 16, 2024 9:18 AM EST

Q1 - How do you currently communicate Senate business with your constituents? (Select all that apply)



#	Field	Choice Count
1	I do not currently communicate Senate business with my constituents or I do not have a way to do this	19.05% 16
2	University email service - push service / not opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	5.95% 5
3	University email service - subscription service / opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	4.76% 4
4	Unit/School/Department/Council email list	17.86% 15
5	Personal email list	10.71% 9
6	Personal Communication (Word of mouth, meetings, social engagement)	38.10% 32

#	Field	Choice Count
7	Other	3.57% 3
		84

Showing rows 1 - 8 of 8

Q1_7_TEXT - Other

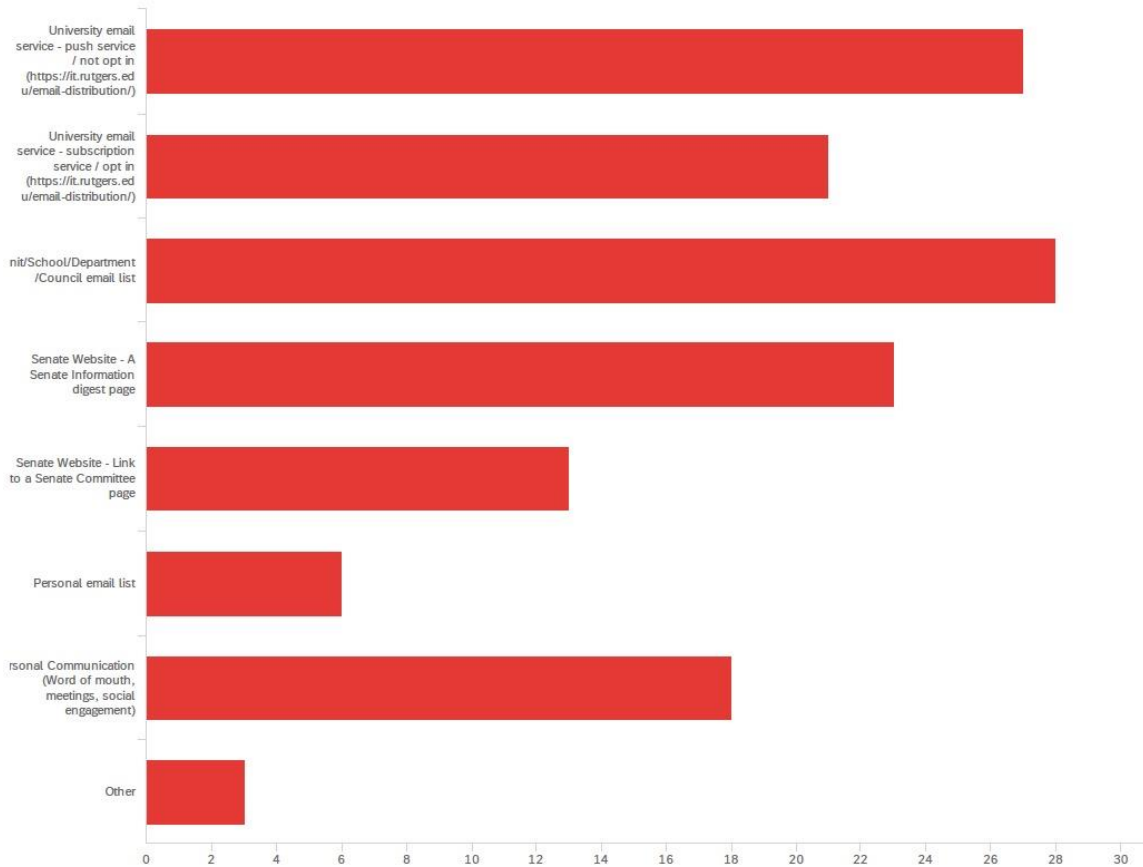
Other

Occasionally provide a report at school meetings

Written report submitted with faculty meeting agenda.

I do not have access to email lists, so I cannot communicate that way. Currently being done by word of mouth. Your survey does not permit checking more than 1 box.

Q2 - How would you like to communicate with your constituents as the elected representative?



#	Field	Choice Count
1	University email service - push service / not opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	19.42% 27
2	University email service - subscription service / opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	15.11% 21
3	Unit/School/Department/Council email list	20.14% 28
4	Senate Website - A Senate Information digest page	16.55% 23
5	Senate Website - Link to a Senate Committee page	9.35% 13
6	Personal email list	4.32% 6
7	Personal Communication (Word of mouth, meetings, social engagement)	12.95% 18
8	Other	2.16% 3

Field

Choice Count

139

Showing rows 1 - 9 of 9

Q2_8_TEXT - Other

Other

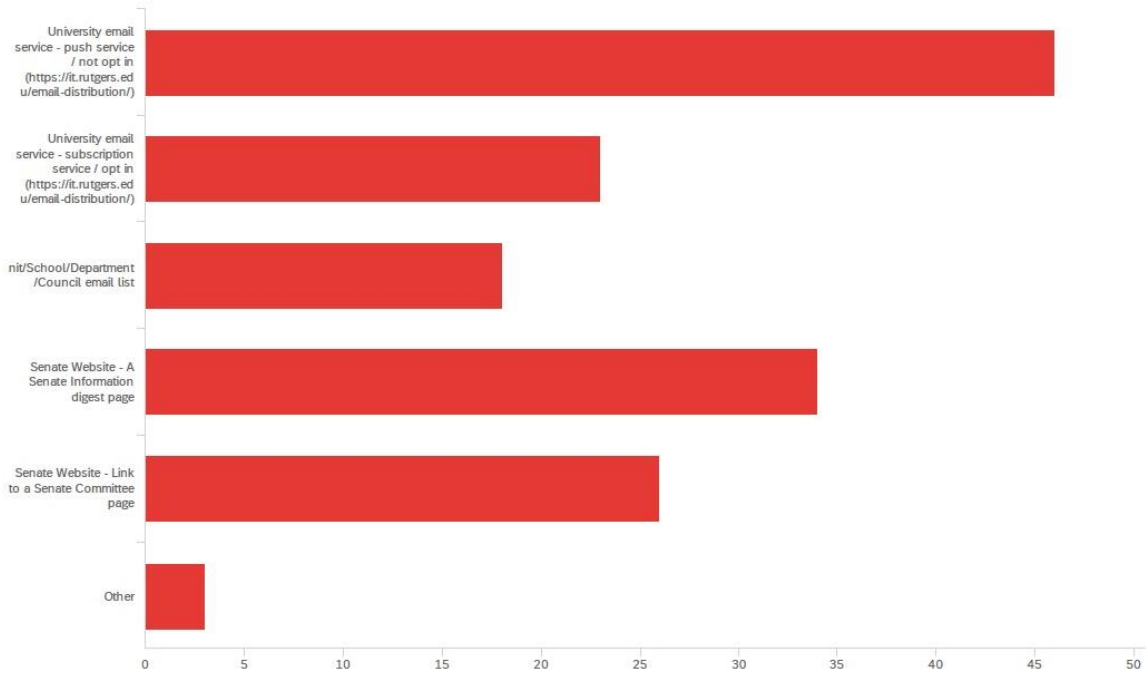
Periodic verbal reports at school meetings

A concern is that I don't have access to a list of all SoE constituents - and I'm not sure they'd appreciate (more) emails

Microsoft Teams

Q3 - How would you like the University Senate to communicate to the Rutgers

Community (Select all that ap



#	Field	Choice Count
1	University email service - push service / not opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	30.67% 46
2	University email service - subscription service / opt in (https://it.rutgers.edu/email-distribution/)	15.33% 23
3	Unit/School/Department/Council email list	12.00% 18
4	Senate Website - A Senate Information digest page	22.67% 34
5	Senate Website - Link to a Senate Committee page	17.33% 26
6	Other	2.00% 3

150

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q3_6_TEXT - Other

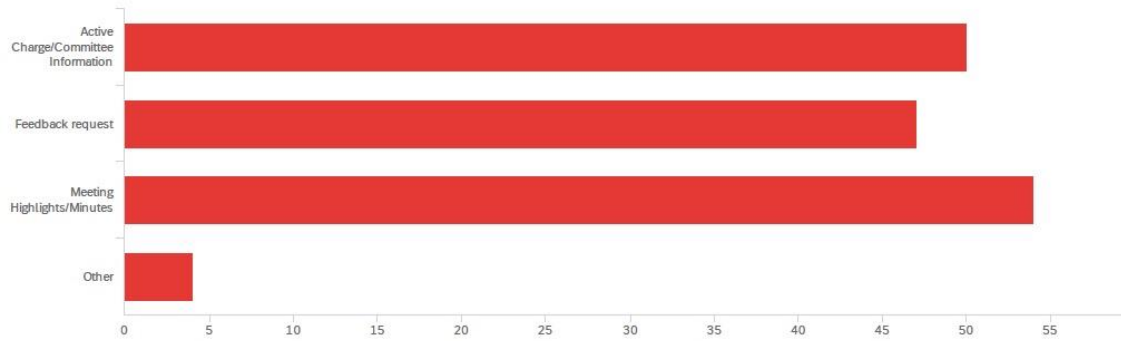
Other

variety of methods including email - push service / not opt in, social media, senate website

Other
In person communication

Townhalls?

Q4 - What type of information do you want to communicate to constituents and/or the University?



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Active Charge/Committee Information	32.26% 50
2	Feedback request	30.32% 47
3	Meeting Highlights/Minutes	34.84% 54
4	Other	2.58% 4

155

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

Q4_4_TEXT - Other

Other

Anything relevant/important at the discretion of the Senate

Actions taken

Select commentary as filtered by committees

Passed resolutions! Research done by committees; upcoming relevant events

Q5 - Please include any additional comments or feedback here: (optional)

Please include any additional comments or feedback here: (optional)

I believe there is a simple (as in non-complex) solution: We have specific senate constituencies that rarely change. Create one RAMS email broadcast list for each constituency (NOT each senator) and allow anyone to subscribe to those lists. Each term, the list is (re-)configured to give senator(s) representing each constituency access to send mail out through that list. It's a one-way/broadcast mechanism only so people cannot contact their senator that way, but that is a feature not a bug because each senator can use that list to communicate how they want to engage (or how they want to decide how to engage with) their constituency.

We need a channel to communicate campus-wide the senate resolutions

It is important to have the work of the Senate communicated to both the departments of which faculty senators are members but also the whole faculty in order for faculty to understand both the importance of the Senate as the only body representing faculty, students and staff and the administration's ongoing policy of ignoring and disrespecting the Senate

My impression is that few people at the university are aware/care for the activities of the senate. e-mail messages to all providing a summary of the decisions reached at meetings may be a step towards awareness

Thank you for taking the time to survey and gather additional data

It is often difficult to know even what to pass on to my unit. I don't know how to do an effective job representing my unit.

The Senate is generally an advisory body. Its strength in this role in Faculty Governance lies in two areas: (1) Advising the Administration with recommendations that include resolutions that discuss both the pros and cons considered while formulating the recommendations; (2) Effectively communicating what is happening with their constituents in a timely manner, and inviting suggestions about issues they are considering, as well about issues that perhaps they should be looking at. I would give grades of C and D respectively on their current performance, although in fairness, these grades would have been the same for past performance also. I guess the good news is that there is so much room for improvement in these areas, that major progress could be made without much effort. Agendas are posted ahead of time. Minutes, even if only drafts, should be made available to constituents soon after meetings have concluded. Depending upon the Administration to give access to email to constituents is a mistake. The Senate should figure out how to communicate with their constituents before there is a need to do so, realizing that depending on a listserv from the Administration means that in a critical time, the Administration could withdraw this communication vehicle.

The administration should not be able to censor communications between Senators and their constituents or between the Senate and the Academic Community.

One of the questions above says select all that apply but it doesn't allow for this kind of response.

It's a bit of an issue: there are so many organizations and offices that send so many announcements that it's difficult to communicate relevant information. It might be best to provide a "Senate News" blurb in an existing Rutgers newsletter

In person Senate meetings will help

Every charge needn't go to a mass listserv, but anyone affected may want to have their voice heard. It may also be helpful for the senators to report regularly back to their constituents. This may be at the unit level, and those in the same unit can collaborate or alternate.

The Senate website is great, but only Senators go to it. It would also be great if the schools pushes highlight some of the Senate actions. Be proud of what was done for electronic notebooks! Everyone needs to know this. Why does PR just push garbage like renaming RBHS to Rutgers Health, which has no meaning. Let us know important content.

Thank you for asking these questions!

Communications should be brief, summaries, and to the point with a link for additional information in case people are interested.

Please include any additional comments or feedback here: (optional)
section in Rutgers Today

End of Report

Appendix B – Big 10 Inquiry

Breakdown:

From Anna Haley Data	
Method of Emailing Constituents	Count of "Big 10" institution
☐ No	1
University of Illinois	1
☐ Senators Internal	2
Purdue University	1
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	1
☐ Personal Lists	1
University of Maryland - College Park	1
☐ Faculty Lists	5
Indiana University-South Bend	1
Northwestern University	1
Ohio State University	1
University of Iowa	1
University of Illinois-Chicago	1
☐ Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	5
Michigan State University	1
Pennsylvania State University	1
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities (aka UM- the main campus)	1
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	1
University of Nebraska- Omaha	1
Grand Total	14

Detailed Responses:

"Big 10" institution	Senate Chair	Process for Senate to communicate with constituents	Senate Type	Email Access	Access to All University	Social Media, Other
University of Illinois	Jeffrey Eric Jenkins, Chair, Senate EC	As for reaching the full university (or system) community, we have a "massmail" process that goes through approvals at the upper administration level. We have discussed sending a massmail in the past but decided against it. To my knowledge, we have not been denied access to the system, but the system and the university try to limit the number of those communications due to the sheer volume of emails we process.	Faculty, Students, Academic Professionals	No	No	
University of Illinois-Chicago	Sandra De Groot	Our senate does have an email list for all faculty that we maintain – that we are able to email through. It is certainly not very active. Communication occurs more directly through members of the senate. There are official announcement venues that potentially we might be able to go through, but I have not tried.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
Indiana University-South Bend	Carolyn Schult, President	I receive a list of all faculty and their emails from our Academic Affairs office every semester. I seldom send out a direct email, but can do so if I need to. For normal Senate business, we post to the Senate blog and our daily electronic bulletin board. Faculty and staff get a daily email digest of posts.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
University of Iowa	Edward Gillan, President	The Faculty Senate at Iowa does have "mailto:approval" to send emails directly to all faculty or subset of faculty without prior university approval. We rarely do that (other than to solicit nominations for awards) and I suppose our "approval" could easily be taken away if we overused the direct emails to all faculty.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
University of Maryland - College Park	Christopher Jarzynski, Chair	At UMD, individual Senators are able to send emails to their constituencies. After each Senate meeting, the Senate Office provides a summary of the meeting to Senators, who in turn can send that summary to their constituencies, together with whatever commentary they wish to add (as long as it is made clear that additional commentary represents the Senator's, not the Senate's views). We have a University (not a Faculty) Senate, and the Senate Office does not have access to university-wide email lists.	Faculty, Staff, Students, Administrators	Personal Lists	No	
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Tom Braun, Chair	[The Senator Assembly includes all 3 campuses] At University of Michigan, I am able to directly email all of our faculty senate constituents, although not through a simple email group. The director of our Faculty Senate Office needs to generate the list of constituents on-the-fly (which can change daily based on people's appointments, new hires, etc.). I then craft my email text, give the text to the FSO director, and he sends out the email on my behalf.	Faculty	Senators Internal	N/A	
Michigan State University	Jack Lipton, Chair	At Michigan State University, our office of Academic Governance can email the entire faculty. This is because in our Bylaws, we not only have the faculty senate as a governance body of representatives, we also have the "academic congress" which consists of all voting eligible faculty. We had to fight for this as well, but have had it in place for a few years. It is only one email account that can do this, but we have that ability. I send a monthly video message to all faculty to keep them informed of the activities of the Faculty Senate, the University Council, etc.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities (aka UM- the main campus)	Mark Bee, Rachna Shah, Vice Chair (Chair is the U President)	(From Mark Bee, head of the Senate EC equivalent) Our Senate Office (which is staffed and financed through the President's Office) has the authority to send emails to all constituents on behalf of senate leadership. We have standing communications ("Semester Updates") that go out twice each academic year. Last fall, the Senate Office also sent out this email at my request to all faculty regarding a report my committee issued looking at the competitiveness of faculty compensation relative to peer institutions. The Senate Office was extremely helpful in getting this email sent out. To the best of my knowledge, they did not have to "clear it" with the administration before sending.	?	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Kelli Kopicic, President	At UNL, there is a listserv for all academic faculty. However, because of how the permissions work, our staff senate coordinator manages the listserv and she sends emails on my behalf. Our coordinator is amazing and this works well for us. We also have the ability to survey the full faculty about anything anytime we want. If this wasn't working, I would push for the ability to send communication myself. Our Senate Executive Committee is also going to start sending a monthly newsletter letting people know what has been going on because we are not sure how many people are actually reading the minutes.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Nebraska- Omaha	William Melanson, President	From Kelli (UNL): Their Senate president has the ability to send emails directly and he utilizes it fairly regularly. UNO is under the same system as UNL, but they are unionized and we are not.		Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
Northwestern University	Regan Thompson, President	At Northwestern, we can access the built email system without the need for approval. We use this for quarterly newsletters and important announcements (such as special events).	Faculty	Faculty Lists	No	Announcements, Newsletter
Ohio State University	Ben Givens, Secretary (? Faculty member)	At Ohio State, our senate is comprised of faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The senate office most frequently communicates with the 141 senators who represent the various constituencies. For faculty, we maintain separate listservs for all the faculty in each college, and we encourage the senators who represent those colleges to use the listserv to communicate with their constituents. These range from a listserv of 50 faculty in Optometry to 2800 in Medicine. We also can email all 7500 faculty directly, although, like others, we rarely do this. As for the students, staff or administrators, we do not typically email all of the constituent members of those groups. If we had a good reason to, we would work with the appropriate communications office, who I assume would send the communication on our behalf. The bottom line is that the Office of Academic Affairs provides the senate office annually a spreadsheet that contains the names of all faculty, with columns for college, department, titles, campus, and email addresses. We use the information to construct listservs to communicate with various subgroups of faculty. The senate office has always been very judicious in our use of emails, while some of our faculty senators are more pointed in their communications to their constituents. In either case, we have not received any cautions or restrictions on our communications, or access to faculty emails.	Faculty, Students, staff and administrators	Faculty Lists	No	
Pennsylvania State University	Michele Stine, Chair	At Penn State, I am able to email ALL faculty at the university through our senate office. We fought for some time for the ability to do that and made the same argument that it sounds like you are making, that not allowing direct communication with the faculty as a whole disenfranchises the faculty and inhibits the faculty senate. There are occasionally time sensitive issues where we cannot wait for communication to filter down through the representatives. We use the faculty list developed from our yearly census that helps us determine how many representatives every unit gets. Other than our senate plenary agenda and meeting notice, I don't communicate with all faculty directly often (maybe a few times a year) because I want people to pay attention to those emails when they do see them.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	N/A	
Purdue University	Brian Leung, Chair	I've asked our Secretary of Faculties to write Anna directly if she has a deeper history. At Purdue University, as University Senate Chair I am able to email Senate members at once. I did so today, as a matter of fact. This account is not available for general Senate member use. From Nush (Manushag Powell), Secretary of Faculties: At Purdue, we do not have direct access to the faculty or university-wide listservs (we are technically a university, rather than a Faculty Senate). Our most frequent means of communication is via the Senators to their constituents; we also produce a newsletter and put announcements as needed in the daily university-wide email ("Purdue Today"). In recent years, when we've had a compelling reason to contact the faculty or, as happened sometimes during COVID, the entire university, we have been able to work with the Provost's Office to get access to the web mailer and do so. There was a push last year for the Senate to have more direct access to university-wide communication, but it was not embraced by leadership. One question that was never fully answered: what happens when individual Senators want to have input into Senate messaging?	Faculty	Senators Internal	No	Newsletter