

Shared Governance Pulse Survey REPORT for Senate

NOTE: The survey is part of USGC's work on Senate charge S-2406 'Senate Role in Shared Governance'. USGC will reflect the results of the survey in its ongoing work on this charge.

The survey was issued by the Senate Secretariat on March 13, 2025 to all 245 Senators and closed at noon on April 15, 2025; a reminder email was sent April 7, 2025.

A total of 58 responses was received; a response rate of 23.7%.

In response to the invitation to **'Please give THREE words that capture your understanding of the term 'shared governance', the top five words were:**

- Collaboration
- Transparency
- Respect
- Accountability
- Participation

See Table 1 for full details and Figure 1 Word Cloud.

In response to the question **'Is there a gap between what you expect from effective shared governance and what you observe here at Rutgers?':**

- 82.8% (48/58) replied YES
- 1.6% (4/58) replied NO
- 2.5% (6/58) replied Don't know/unsure

In response to the question **'If you have any other comments to make or resources you want to share',** some key themes emerged:

- **Perceived lack of influence**

Many respondents feel that shared governance structures—particularly the University Senate—are symbolic or ineffective, with concern that recommendations are ignored or not valued.

"We make recommendations, and nothing is approved by the university."

- **Top-down, corporate, or authoritarian decision-making**

There is a recurring sense that Rutgers functions more like a hierarchical, corporate bureaucracy than a participatory academic institution. Respondents report that decisions are imposed from above without consultation, especially by central administration.

"The administration has made it clear that they have no commitment to shared governance."

- **Erosion of trust and professional culture**

Concerns about a toxic or unprofessional culture within governance bodies (e.g., unproductive or hostile communications on Senate listservs) and a lack of collegiality and respect were noted.

“Mass inflammatory emails... detracts from any real work.”

- **Lack of transparency and communication**

Transparency—or the lack thereof—is one of the most frequent themes. Many respondents feel excluded from important decisions and report an absence of timely or accessible information that would enable real participation.

“There is a lack of transparency in admin decision making which reduces morale...”

- **Marginalization of campuses and constituents**

Respondents emphasize the exclusion of certain groups, particularly the Camden and Newark campuses, staff, and students. Some feel this exclusion contradicts the principles of shared governance and threatens community cohesion.

“Must always include Camden, Newark, and all of RU Health.”

See Table 2 for full details of comments received.

Recommendation for University Senate

That the University Senate RECEIVE the Report, NOTE its contents, and APPROVE a repeat of the Survey in March 2026.

TABLE 1 Please give THREE words that capture your understanding of the term ‘shared governance’.

Word/Phrase	Count
collaboration	19
transparency	11
respect	8
accountability	6
participation	5
advisory	3
consultative	3
cooperation	3
equality	3
decision making	2
democracy	2
honesty	2
input	2
participatory	2
planning	2
trust	2
absence	1
academia	1
betterment	1
bilateral	1
collegial	1
collegiality	1
communication	1
compromise	1
consultation	1
constructive	1
deciding	1
dissemination	1
divested responsibilities	1
dialogue	1
empowerment	1
equal	1
equity	1
every voice matters	1
faculty and staff decision-making	1
faculty consultation oversight	1
faculty role decisions	1

Word/Phrase	Count
faculty should lead	1
faculty, staff and students have a voice in how Rutgers is governed	1
fair	1
governance	1
improvement	1
inclusivity	1
inclusiveness	1
informed	1
information	1
interaction	1
leadership	1
leading	1
listening	1
mission	1
multiple equal voices	1
open dialogue	1
open honest dialogue	1
partners in governing	1
parity	1
planning action	1
policies	1
process	1
processes	1
relevance	1
responsible engagement	1
seat at table	1
shared responsibility	1
staff	1
structure	1
students	1
subsidiarity	1
synergistic responsible engagement	1
together	1
transparent	1
understanding	1
voice	1
voting	1

FIGURE 1 Word Clouds generated from words Table 1



TABLE 2 Other Comments on Shared Governance

I feel like the senate is in name only. We make recommendations and nothing is approved by the university. So much time and effort is spent on charges to no avail. I think even an advisory committees have higher value than the senate at this point. A lot more work needs to be done so that the senate membership feels valued and we are making a difference in the lives of the RU community.

Shared governance at Rutgers has cost too many people their jobs at Rutgers-Camden. What we see in Washington today has been the Rutgers-Camden experience for the past two years. You disagree? You have other thoughts? You're laid off. And your name gets run through the mud after you're gone.

Rutgers is a very hierarchical, "corporate" (and therefore authoritarian) entity. In Rutgers terms, "shared governance" is Central making decisions about almost every aspect of university life but absolving itself of all responsibility in carrying out those decisions, requiring lower levels of governance to execute them. In this way, Central insulates itself from the obvious consequences of its decision making and obliges those lower levels of governance, which do not really govern in any meaningful sense, to take the fall for those decisions. There is no obvious mechanism for the lower levels of this hierarchy to participate in these decisions and "shared governance" organs like the Senate or the NBFC are basically glorified debate clubs driven by the whims of a few outspoken showboats, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

(1) Must always include Camden, Newark, and all of RU Health; (2) Must continue to include staff and students; (3) Must be respectful, civil, and collegial in all forms of discourse.

Shared governance refers to a collaborative decision-making process that involves the participation of various stakeholders within Rutgers community, i.e., faculty, staff, administrators, and students. This approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in institutional policies and practices. Anything short of this constitutes a defective shared governance process.

I have been at Rutgers since 1971 when I began at Livingston College in the old federated system and a member of the Senate for many terms since 1981. I have seen shared governance deteriorate. First the administration in the Bloustein years took the Senate's resolutions seriously. Over the last 34 years subsequent administrations for the most part did not take Senate decisions seriously. In recent years, the University President, who in the past always attended all Senate meetings, stopped attending meetings as did Deans and other officials and simply ignored Senate resolutions

I don't understand what this very limited survey is meant to learn?

joining the senate has been largely extremely disappointing and unsettling. The mass inflammatory emails back and forth between senate members using the list serve is unprofessional, massively unproductive, and detracts from any real work, not to mention upsetting personally occasionally. The persistent discussion emphasizing that shared governance is not actually occurring (whether true or untrue) has created a divisive culture between the administration and senators. The committee I serve on approaches all tasks from a hostile perspective to work against the administration assuming they've done wrong despite not having transparency to know that. Improving the culture, eliminating the list serve, and holding people accountable to maintain professionalism both in meetings and via email is the true way forward to being able to work toward achieving initiatives or buying a meaningful seat at the table w admin. I would not recommend being a senator to any other faculty at this institution given the lack of progress I see, lack of professionalism, and lack of senate leadership in improving these things over the past 2 years.

Administration has made it clear that they have no commitment to Shared Governance. The most recent example was the decision to merge the medical schools over the objections of many of the faculty, and after a request from the Senate to delay decisions on the matter until numerous questions were answered.

Transparency may be demanded for certain aspects of governance for which administration has collected and analyzed. However, it is not appropriate to assume non-transparency in ALL cases of governance, including but not limited to budgetary concerns.

I need to gain a better understanding of the policies, including shared governance and compare them to what I see in my areas and the culture. Thank you.

My experience is mainly with the dean's office in the School of Arts and Sciences at Newark, where the deans and associate deans do not reply to emails, do not hold in-person faculty meetings, and develop rules and regulations without any input from the faculty members they affect. They seem often contemptuous of faculty. Additionally, the development of new travel policies, new bureaucratic structures, etc. seem to never happen with the input or feedback from the actual users. You don't even know who to talk to ask questions.

The dwindling of hard-working staff at the Camden campus should be alarming to the rest of the campuses. There is never communication about what is happening, why, and most importantly, what the future plans are for support.

Rutgers has evolved into a classic kleptocracy in which a group of academic programs are dragged along in the wake of a more dynamic enterprise devoted to rent-seeking by various oligarchic factions.

share governance is ideal when a bunch of very smart professor are willing to help out and provide counseling

Rather than working with the Senate, President Holloway has positioned himself as an enemy of the Senate.

Overall, the admin seems to simply work top down rather than being inclusive and respecting shared governance.

more and more often critical issues are decided without input from faculty (selection of vice chancellors, vice dean, associate dean etc.) and community members critical to the mission are not allowed to vote in important matters (e.g., NTT voting for dep chair)

The central administration and Deans offices have allowed themselves to change and set curricula more and more; they fail to consult the faculty on the ground who are actually qualified to determine content and delivery that best serves both the discipline and the students. While there needs to be a real and substantial conversation about resources and the distribution of requirements across the University, administrators too often make decisions in which they fail to recognize the limits of their knowledge and skills.

Shared governance in my mind relates to all constituents in an organization having the ability to give input on governance decisions before they are made whenever possible (what's "possible" should always be interrogated - "impossible" gets used far too easily). And the ability to give input depends on transparency and timeliness of information sharing, and supports for giving input - intentional, systematic efforts involving everyone, or representatives selected by the constituents; and dedication to correcting problematic processes of transparency/info sharing and representation when issues with them arise. This is the case, also, for how a shared governance entity (like the Senate) should itself operate internally, as well as in relation to the rest of Rutgers.

Like the children's game of telephone, there appears to be a disconnect between what is said, what is done, and what is appreciated. Also, need to get rid of we/they language and attitudes.

Our school has very little shared governance

In my many years at RU, it has evolved in a kleptocracy in which favored individuals (among the boards, political cohorts, and administrators) have sought personal aggrandizement to the detriments of the real stakeholders in higher education. If this malversation of public funds were not sufficiently damaging in itself, it has been sustained by the compliance of individuals in authority who have been rewarded by administrators with a blind eye toward their improprieties and illegalities, which are themselves born out of self-aggrandizement and self-therapy, and ethno-racist and class prejudices. Rutgers is now an authoritarian, crony capitalistic apparatus in which educational activities are tolerated as a front.

- (1) Many (most) decisions made the RU admin (Central as well as at the Unit levels) are made w/o any consultation or input from the faculty who actually bears the brunt of such decision making.
- (2) There is a lack of transparency in admin decision making which reduces morale and job satisfaction.
- (3) RU is a higher-ed institution, so while the financial bottom line is important, it is equally or if not more important figure out how to work collaboratively and in a trusting way with faculty (requires transparency) for the betterment of the University as a whole.

Remember that not all Senators are NOT Democrats!!!! Some are republicans, some conservatives and some just are Senators with no affiliation except to effect change at Rutgers. Keep the rhetoric out of conversations. The American people actually voted for this President! Let's keep to Rutgers business.

While I feel some shared governance probably exists, it's hard to know how and where as the rank and file. I think part of bridging this is communication of what is going on, something that we all know is very challenging at a big place like this.

[Typos corrected]