

February 25, 2026

Rutgers University Senate
c/o Lucille Foster, Chair
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
335 George Street, Suite 1250
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Dear Members of the University Senate:

As calls for reform in American higher education across the political spectrum continue to intensify, an important question becomes: what is reality versus what is ruckus?

At the February Board of Governors meeting, a nationally recognized public research leader shared [statewide survey results](#) showing that 77% of residents and 94% of business owners and executives view Rutgers University favorably. More than 8 in 10 state residents say that providing students with skills needed to get a good job and helping students become critical thinkers are extremely or very important for the mission of Rutgers. Large majorities of New Jerseyans believe it is important to have strong faculty across all disciplines.

Our strong and well-earned reputation reflects the extraordinary work of our world-class faculty, dedicated staff, and valued partnerships across the state.

That is why, especially as a long-time professor, I found distressing an article this week in [Forbes](#) outlining efforts that are “picking up steam” in state legislatures to end, curtail, or substantially reform tenure. I reject such efforts. This also comes in the wake of elected officials raising concerns about the impact of unionized faculty on the overall cost of higher education. I have also [written recently](#) about attacks on free speech, academic freedom, and our obligation to stand up against such attacks.

Our efforts to fight for everything that makes Rutgers University great remain strong and unwavering. Attacks on university faculty are deeply misguided—especially when considered alongside the strong belief New Jerseyans place in the university’s mission to educate, the impact they see in our graduates, and their appreciation for our broad community engagement efforts.

Yet our efforts to protect Rutgers against unfair attacks cannot be construed as an invitation to overlook our obligations under federal and state anti-discrimination laws. Since the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Students for Fair Admissions vs. Harvard* decision in 2023, Rutgers has been engaged in an exercise to ensure that the university is complying with all federal and state anti-discrimination laws. This means that our University should not—cannot—have programs,

policies, or procedures that discriminate based on sex, race, ethnicity, or other protected characteristics.

Federal anti-discrimination laws and executive orders prohibiting universities from allocating resources exclusively for students of any particular sex, race, or ethnicity, or even creating a perception of segregation that could foster a hostile environment, remain in effect. This is evidenced by a [federal court of appeals court decision](#) earlier this month that allowed certain executive orders related to DEI to take effect after a lower court had temporarily blocked them.

Rutgers' compliance review has necessarily led to changes to ensure that admissions practices, scholarships, partnerships, programs, and offices are open to all—and suggest as much. A new Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity at Rutgers will also help oversee our compliance, handle complaints, and serve as an incubator of practices that support operating as an institution where opportunity abounds in a legal fashion.

Our review has, and will continue to, identify changes that ensure our doors remain open to all without compromising our commitment to social mobility, a hallmark for which Rutgers is nationally regarded.

I have read faculty concerns on “anticipatory compliance with federal anti-DEI pressure.” These concerns are reinforced as we watch universities close or merge academic departments with intellectual roots associated with history, culture, and the study of social stratification.

Rutgers remains committed to honoring its longstanding tradition of shared governance in matters related to academic department configuration. Our efforts to comply with all applicable federal and state anti-discrimination laws and executive orders are guided by a clear principle: to protect faculty members' scholarly work and to preserve the university's ability to determine the nature and configuration of its academic departments. This principle remains viable if we operate in accordance with anti-discrimination laws.

I ask that we work together, not apart, to protect and defend the core values of our university—including support for all members of our community and our commitment to non-discrimination. As I noted in [November](#), institutions that thrive and withstand the test of time, as Rutgers has done for nearly 260 years, must adapt and evolve. Our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and public should expect nothing less.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.F. Tate IV', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William F. Tate IV