

President Tate and Chancellor Conway

CC: Provost Geary, Dean Wade

Dear President Tate and Chancellor Conway,

This letter is to inform you that the standstill budget you announced will force many SAS departments to cut back on essential instruction, undermining a significant part of our core mission. As chairs who oversee these courses and instructors who teach them, we are concerned that the ultimate harm will fall on our students.

In response to the proposed standstill framework and uncertainty regarding funding for potential negotiated salary increases, SAS departments have been asked to model additional reductions to their operating budgets. These reductions follow multiple rounds of prior cuts, and many departments are already operating with limited resources. At this point, further reductions will have substantial negative impacts on our ability to meet instructional needs and maintain the standards expected of Rutgers.

In recent years, SAS was asked to address an approximately \$19 million structural deficit. Through significant and often difficult cuts, that deficit has been eliminated, and the school is now projected to generate a surplus for FY27. These measures required meaningful sacrifices across departments. At the same time, the projected surplus is not available for reinvestment in infrastructure, faculty and advisor hiring, graduate student support, and other academic priorities. These are precisely the areas in which our Big Ten peer institutions continue to invest and where Rutgers risks falling further behind.

In your recent op-ed outlining Rutgers' trajectory within the Big Ten, you emphasized advancing our national profile, strengthening the academic mission, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, and ultimately positioning the university to "win." We share those goals. However, reductions to essential instruction and constraints on reinvestment in academic capacity work directly against the competitive positioning required to achieve them. If Rutgers is to succeed at the level you describe, sustained investment in its academic core—particularly within its largest school—is indispensable.

SAS department chairs and program directors met on Feb. 19th to discuss the projected impacts of operating under a standstill budget that requires schools to absorb anticipated cost increases. The projected impacts are significant and far-reaching:

- A substantial number of high-demand classes may be canceled
- Students may face increased difficulty registering for required courses
- Lecturer reappointments may not be made, resulting in loss of experienced instructors
- Time to graduation may increase, along with advising demands
- Class sizes may rise beyond current capacity constraints

- Efforts to provide predictable course offerings may be disrupted
- Instructor and TA workload may increase, reducing individual student attention
- Progress in several research programs may be impeded
- Implementation of a new revenue-generating master's program in FinTech, recently approved by the Board of Governors, may be delayed
- The public (potential students and parents) will see Rutgers as a university in decline. This perception is already growing on social media as rumours about these cuts spread.

The standstill modeling process has required deans, chairs, and program directors to redirect substantial time toward budget exercises, disrupting academic planning and administrative work. Fall schedules have already been submitted and they must be published to students in less than a month. This urgency is compounded by the fact that many lecturer appointments are governed by contractual reappointment timelines negotiated and signed by the university. Departments must make reappointment decisions within the next several weeks. These contractual deadlines limit the ability to delay action while broader budget questions remain unresolved and increase the risk that decisions made now will have lasting instructional consequences. Being required to make these cuts is demoralizing and destabilizing for our departments and academic units.

We would welcome the opportunity for chairs and school leadership from Rutgers–New Brunswick’s largest academic unit to meet with you to discuss directly the instructional, research, and student implications of a standstill budget in which schools are expected to absorb projected costs from contract negotiations. Our goal is to work collaboratively to ensure that operational realities and the university’s strategic aspirations remain aligned.

We remain committed to advancing Rutgers’ academic mission and to working constructively toward solutions that strengthen the institution. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Tara Matise, Distinguished Professor and Chair - Genetics
 Jeffrey Dowd, Assistant Teaching Professor and Undergraduate Director - Sociology
 James Wright, Professor and Chair - Earth and Planetary Science

Signatories

Brandon Alderman, Associate Professor and Chair - Kinesiology and Health
 Ulla Berg, Associate Professor and Chair - Latino and Caribbean Studies
 Kevin St. Martin, Professor and Chair - Geography
 Carla Yanni, Distinguished Professor and Chair - Art History
 Samah Selim, Professor and Chair - AMESALL
 K. Sebastian Leon, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director - Criminal Justice
 Jawid Mojadeddi, Professor and Chair - Religion
 John Hughes, Distinguished Professor and Chair - Physics and Astronomy
 Paul McLean, Professor and Chair - Sociology
 Samantha Kelly, Distinguished Professor and Chair - History
 Gabriella D’Arcangelo, Professor and Chair - Cell Biology and Neuroscience

Sylvia Chan-Malik, Associate Professor and Chair - American Studies
Omar Dewachi, Associate Professor and Chair - Anthropology
Brad Evans, Professor and Chair - English
Alex Zamalin, Professor and Chair - Africana Studies
Chris Woodward, Distinguished Professor and Chair - Mathematics
Uli Kremer, Professor and Chair - Computer Science
Gary A. Heiman, Professor and UGD - Genetics
Lorraine Piroux, Associate Professor and Chair - French
Michael G. Levine, Distinguished Professor and Chair, GREELL
Susan Martin-Márquez, Professor, Spanish and Portuguese; and Director–Cinema Studies Program
Kenneth G. Miller, Board of Governors Professor and Graduate Program Director, Earth and Planetary Sciences
Nicola Behrmann, Associate Professor and GPD, Germanic, Russian, and East European Lang and Lit
Deniz Türker, Associate Professor and GPD- History of Art
Martha Haviland, Teaching Professor and Program Director, Biological Sciences
Laura Schneider, Professor and GPD, Geography
Steven Buyske, Professor and Undergraduate Co-Director - Statistics and Data Science
James Wright, Professor and Chair, Earth and Planetary Sciences
Camilla Stevens, Professor and Chair, Spanish and Portuguese
Carole Allamand, Professor and Undergraduate Director, French
Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director, Anthropology
Barth Grant, Distinguished Professor and Chair - Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Regina Karl, Associate Professor, GREELL and Director, Center for European Studies
Rong Chen, Distinguished Professor and Chair, Statistics
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Wendy Swartz, Professor and Chair, Asian Languages and Cultures
Brian Daniels, Associate Professor, Vice Chair, and Undergraduate Director - Cell Biology & Neuroscience
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Santosh Nagarakatte, Professor and Undergraduate Program Director, Computer Science
Ed Cohen, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Ethel Brooks, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
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