

RESOLUTION ON RESPONSIBLE UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION OF THE FULL RUTGERS COMMUNITY IN COMMENCEMENT EVENTS

May 12, 2026

WHEREAS Rami Elghandour (ENG'01) was publicly announced by the School of Engineering (SOE), Rutgers University-New Brunswick (RU-NB) as its Convocation Speaker for the Class of 2026; and

WHEREAS Mr. Rami Elghandour has a publicly documented record as a champion of diversity, gender equity, and humanitarian causes, including recognition as an EY Entrepreneur of the Year, the Bill Campbell Award from Watermark, the Diversity Woman Magazine Game Changer Award, the BLOC 100 Champion Award, a TEDx talk on unconscious bias, and executive producer credits on *The Voice of Hind Rajab* and *American Doctor*; and

WHEREAS SOE has repeatedly engaged Mr. Elghandour with full institutional endorsement, including a 2021 Engineering Spotlight lecture, an alumni profile published on the School's official website on March 31, 2026, and a fireside chat hosted by Dean Alberto Cuitiño on March 5, 2026; and

WHEREAS Mr. Elghandour has maintained an active relationship with Rutgers beyond formal engagements, including hosting students annually through the Road to Silicon Valley Program, including many Rutgers engineering students; and

WHEREAS on April 14, 2026, in announcing Mr. Elghandour's selection, Dean Cuitiño stated that Mr. Elghandour's "personal and professional actions embody the values and vision of the School of Engineering"; and

WHEREAS on April 30, 2026 – 16 days after publicly endorsing Mr. Elghandour and sixteen days before Convocation – Dean Cuitiño informed him that the invitation was withdrawn because some students "no longer felt comfortable attending the convocation ceremony with him as the speaker"; and

WHEREAS Mr. Elghandour asked Dean Cuitiño to identify the specific concerns at issue and the Dean was unable to do so, later confirming the cancellation without further explanation; and

WHEREAS when asked about students who wished to hear Mr. Elghandour speak, Dean Alberto Cuitiño indicated those students could simply choose not to attend Convocation if no speaker were present; and

WHEREAS no commencement or convocation decision will satisfy every member of a university community, making it especially important that consequential decisions

regarding invited speakers – including the cancellation of Mr. Rami Elghandour – be informed by meaningful consultation with affected constituencies and guided by transparent, consistent, and inclusive decision-making processes rather than ad hoc responses to pressure from any particular group; and

WHEREAS following widespread criticism of both the cancellation decision and the process by which it was reached, Dean Cuitiño has sought retrospective validation of his actions through fragmented faculty engagement rather than transparent, collective dialogue; and

WHEREAS these actions have caused harm to graduating students, faculty, alumni relationships, and the broader reputation of Rutgers University, while undermining confidence in the institution’s commitment to fairness, transparency, and meaningful representation of its diverse communities;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Rutgers University Senate affirms that administrative authority over commencement and convocation programming must be exercised in ways consistent with Rutgers’ commitments to fairness, transparency, and meaningful representation of its diverse communities, and that University leaders must engage affected constituencies in meaningful ways when making decisions with broad community impact; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that President Tate must publicly reaffirm Rutgers University’s commitment to free expression on all sides of issues, and in the matter of Commencement speakers, to the tempering of administrative powers by a commitment to democratic community engagement and expression of diverse viewpoints free from internal or external pressures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rutgers University Senate finds Dean Alberto Cuitiño’s handling of this matter to have been one-sided, opaque, and harmful to students, faculty, alumni, and the reputation of Rutgers University; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rutgers University Senate formally censures Dean Alberto Cuitiño and calls for a formal review of Dean Alberto Cuitiño’s leadership in this matter through appropriate shared governance processes involving central administration, the Office of Chancellor Francine Conway, and the faculty of the School of Engineering.¹

¹ [https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/2026-04/Process for the Evaluation of Academic Deans and the Vice President for University Libraries and University Librarian.pdf](https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/2026-04/Process%20for%20the%20Evaluation%20of%20Academic%20Deans%20and%20the%20Vice%20President%20for%20University%20Libraries%20and%20University%20Librarian.pdf).