

CAMDEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
January 22, 2025

A meeting of the Camden Board of Directors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 22, 2025.

Present and constituting a quorum were Anthony J. Covington, Mary I. DiMartino, James F. Dougherty, Walter B. MacDonald, and Jose A. Piazza. Dr. Dougherty presided as Chair.

Attending for the university administration were Antonio D. Tillis, Michael Sepanic, and George Loeser.

Also present were Samuel Rabinowitz, faculty representative to the Board of Directors; Gaylene Gordon, graduate student representative to the Board of Directors; and Kimberly Lugo, undergraduate student representative to the Board of Directors.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Dougherty called the meeting to order.

ANNOUNCEMENT PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 231, PUBLIC LAW 1975
(OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT)

Mr. Sepanic, Secretary of the Rutgers–Camden Board of Directors, announced that pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231 (Open Public Meetings Act), public notice of this meeting was filed on January 15, 2025 with the Office of the Secretary of the State of New Jersey and three newspapers, the *Cherry Hill Courier-Post*, the *New Brunswick Home News Tribune & Courier News*, and the *Newark Star-Ledger*. Public notice of the meeting was posted in the following University libraries: the Alexander Library, New Brunswick; the Dana Library, Newark; and the Robeson Library, Camden. In addition, notice of this meeting was posted on the Camden Board of Directors website, under Governing Boards.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Mr. Sepanic asked the Board members if they had reviewed the meeting agenda and supporting documents and if anyone had a possible conflict of interest to disclose. No conflicts were reported.

INDUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

Dr. Dougherty presented Mr. Piazza for induction to the Board of Directors. Mr. Loeser, associate general counsel, administered the oath of office to Mr. Piazza.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 MEETING

Dr. Dougherty called attention to the minutes of the September 25, 2024 meeting that were distributed to the Board and asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes. Receiving no objections, Dr. Dougherty called for a motion, which was seconded, and asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, the minutes were approved.

MATTERS PRESENTED BY THE CHAIR

Dr. Dougherty explained that Ms. Gordon would depart the meeting early to teach a Rutgers University Introduction to Criminal Justice course. Dr. Dougherty also congratulated Chancellor Tillis for being honored at the Samaritan Celebration of Life Gala on February 8, 2025.

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Chancellor Tillis provided his report to the Board regarding the status of the campus, including updates on enrollment; the budget; institutional research; the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan; the Chancellor's "15-in-5" initiatives; diversity, inclusion, and civic engagement; faculty, student, and alumni achievements; *U.S. News & World Report* rankings; the Year of the Arts; and upcoming events.

Expressing appreciation for the opportunity to share some of the latest news from Rutgers University–Camden, Chancellor Tillis began by introducing new members of his team: Sherrie Madia, vice chancellor of marketing and communications, and Melinda Johnson, chief of staff. Halfway through his fourth year as chancellor of Rutgers–Camden, Chancellor Tillis expressed pride in the significant strides the university has made. While acknowledging important areas for growth, he expressed confidence that the university is well-positioned to overcome the evolving demands of higher education and to build upon its many successes.

Chancellor Tillis began his report with an update on new student enrollment. In Fall 2024, transfer student enrollment significantly increased, reflecting success in elevating the university's collaborative partnerships with community colleges. Total enrollment decreased slightly by 1.3%, compared to Fall 2023. Undergraduate enrollment fell slightly with a 1.4% decrease and an 8.6% decline of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. Graduate student enrollment also decreased.

Chancellor Tillis explained that these changes highlight the need to examine factors affecting the FTIC and graduate student numbers while capitalizing on the positive trend in transfer student enrollment. He stressed that Rutgers–Camden will continue to investigate the causes of the decrease in enrollment, particularly emphasizing the ongoing impact of the Common App and market-related trends in South Jersey. More than 320 new students for the Spring 2025 semester have been enrolled, a solid increase over the new enrollments in Spring 2024. These new enrollees were slightly offset by other departures, making the Spring 2025 total enrollment slightly lower than that of Spring 2024.

Chancellor Tillis pointed out that the total number of applications increased significantly, thanks in part to the adoption of the Common App. He explained the goal to convert this increase in applications to a similar rise in yield. He assured that the university's admissions and enrollment offices are laser-focused on ensuring these yield increases are realized through an aggressive push in yield campaign activity.

Rutgers–Camden's four- and six-year graduation rates remain comparable to national averages and continue to increase over time. Rutgers–Camden has received recognition for defying post-pandemic trends through improvements in graduation rates. Chancellor Tillis highlighted that Rutgers–Camden's student success efforts have proven effective in bolstering retention, and his team is determined to guide students through the matriculation process until they have earned their degrees. The university's retention rates for FTIC students continue to stay around 75%, with underrepresented students faring nearly as well as Asian and white students. Retention rates for transfer students are slightly higher, as expected, with underrepresented transfers again retaining at a rate roughly equal to their peers.

Chancellor Tillis stressed fiscal responsibility's critical role in university operations and explained that Rutgers–Camden continues to make strides in this area. He extended gratitude to Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Bob McKee and his team for ensuring budgetary adherence to better serve students, faculty, and staff. He discussed how the university's projected FY25 revenue from tuition and fees and state appropriations are slightly above its FY24 actuals and, therefore, the FY25 budget exceeds the actual spend from FY24. He reminded the board that the largest portion of Rutgers–Camden's revenue continues to come from tuition and fees, followed by state appropriations and fringe benefit revenue, and that the university continues to explore and pursue innovative new revenue streams. The mandatory merit increases, he explained, help to ensure that Rutgers–Camden can retain its existing workforce and remain competitive in bringing new faculty and staff to campus.

Next, Chancellor Tillis shared updates on grant funding and institutional advancement. He reported that Rutgers–Camden received over \$24 million in grant funding for FY2024, a 14% increase over FY2023. Describing a bright outlook for FY2025, the Chancellor explained that the university has already earned about two-thirds the amount of grant funding it did in FY2024. Fiscal year to date, the Rutgers–Camden Office of Advancement raised nearly \$1.9 million, aiming to again exceed the annual fundraising goal. Chancellor Tillis expressed gratitude to Vice Chancellor for Advancement Chuck Wright and his team for helping exceed the goal every year. He highlighted some major gifts, including a \$25,000 contribution from the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust to the Camden Food Pantry and a \$125,000 gift from Archer and Greiner, a Voorhees-based law firm, to the Rutgers Law School Minority Student Support Fund. The Chancellor expressed his gratitude to both institutions for their generosity.

Chancellor Tillis reported on the impacts of the Rutgers–Camden Strategic Plan's five major pillars and gave examples of recent achievements that align with these pillars. He described how a cohort of faculty and students benefitting from the Urban Innovation Fund has created a medical database designed to ensure Camden residents no longer have to contend with the very serious consequences of incomplete or inaccurate health history information.

Chancellor Tillis then discussed transformative student success and provided the example of political science major Adam Colgate, who earned his bachelor's degree in December despite receiving a cancer diagnosis during his time as a student. Thanks to supportive classmates, faculty, and staff at Rutgers–Camden, Mr. Colgate achieved his goal, and his treatment and recovery are going extremely well. Chancellor Tillis also offered the exciting news that Rutgers–Camden now has its first-ever Schwarzman Scholar. Tania Martinez, who graduated in the Class of 2022, was selected for one of the most competitive and prestigious graduate fellowships in the world and will travel to Tsinghua University in Beijing for a one-year master's program in global affairs.

Next, Chancellor Tillis discussed the Holistic Student Experience at Rutgers–Camden, exemplified by the opportunity to study abroad. Through the Chancellor's Experiential Learning Fund, Rutgers–Camden students have had the opportunity to travel to South Africa, the United Kingdom, Tokyo, and many more destinations. He shared how one student, Alexis Winters, had the opportunity to study wildlife in the Galapagos Islands.

Describing the transformation that the Beloved Camden Community has begun to undergo with the Cooper Street Gateway Project, which is officially in progress, Chancellor Tillis reported that Rutgers–Camden now owns the entirety of the 400 block of Cooper Street.

Addressing the pillar of Internationalism, Chancellor Tillis shared that the Rutgers–Camden community hosted the first-ever Chancellor's International Student Luncheon, where Scarlet Raptors from more than 20 countries came together to speak about their experiences and enjoy a multicultural meal. Rutgers–Camden is home to 230 international students from such countries as China, Ethiopia, Nepal, Paraguay, and Turkey.

Taking a moment to highlight Rutgers–Camden's partnership with LEAP Academy University Charter School, Chancellor Tillis proudly reported that the university will welcome 78 of its hometown students to Rutgers–Camden in the fall, along with 10 more from San Juan.

Chancellor Tillis reminded the Board of Rutgers–Camden's *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. This year, the university reached the top 100 for national universities and the top 50 for public universities. For comparison, back in 2020, Rutgers–Camden ranked #166 in national universities and was unranked in other categories.

All of the Chancellor's 15-in-5 initiatives have launched, making funding available to faculty, staff, and students for a host of transformative opportunities, Chancellor Tillis reported. Since the launch of the first 15-in-5 initiative in Spring 2022, the university has committed nearly \$1.7 million to these programs. Through the Chancellor's Experiential Learning Fund and other sources, 30 students have received \$60,000 to study abroad this semester in such courses as Archaeology of Ancient Greece, Geopolitics in Asia, and Travelogue Filmmaking in Scotland.

Chancellor Tillis highlighted opportunities for students in Camden, including the inaugural cohort of Philadelphia 76ers interns. He was happy to report that their tenure with the team was extended past the fall and is continuing through the spring semester. He offered congratulations

to the three exemplary interns: Daveigh Villanueva, an English and communication major working in content marketing; Anderson Guaman, a computer science major working in information technology, and Khamani Wade, a business student in the Sixers' finance department.

Providing updates from the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement, Chancellor Tillis reported that, in 2024, Rutgers–Camden's civic engagement programs received \$2.5 million in state appropriations. This is both a testament to the impact they have already made on the community and the good they will continue to do moving forward, he explained. The university's strength in community engagement was also recognized by ALL IN, a voter participation organization that recognized Rutgers–Camden students late last year for their robust participation in the 2022 midterm elections and the 2024 election cycle. He thanked SGA President Lugo for getting students involved.

Discussing the exceptional work and dedication of the Rutgers–Camden faculty, Chancellor Tillis described the accomplishments of a few of the many individuals who have recently been recognized for their impact. He congratulated Rachel Derr of the School of Nursing for receiving the 2024 Rutgers Torchbearer Award and the 2024 Social Learning Innovator Award for Health Sciences. Kristie McAlpine and David Dwertmann of the School of Business were recognized for their innovation and thought leadership via the New Jersey Bright Ideas Award. Stacy Hawkins of the law school received a one-year fellowship with the prestigious Brookings Institute. Gloria Bonillia-Santiago, of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, received a Lifetime Contribution Award as part of the university-wide Presidential Employee Excellence Recognition Program.

Next, Chancellor Tillis shared some accomplishments of Rutgers–Camden students, whose success drives the university's mission. Fourteen students were inducted into Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing. Five students traveled to Deloitte University in Texas to participate in the Deloitte MADE (Make Accounting Diverse and Equitable) Leadership Summit.

He then discussed some alumni who represent Rutgers–Camden with distinction. Shannon Cronin Patel, an alumna of the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, received the 2024 Nurse Recognition Award from the New Jersey League for Nursing. Cal Maradonna, a dedicated alumnus and staff member, was honored as a Presidential Employee Excellence Recognition Program recipient. In December 2024, Chad Kaplow became the first student to complete the degree requirements for the master in finance in wealth management offered in the School of Business.

Reviewing alumni engagement opportunities, Chancellor Tillis described October's Friends and Family Homecoming – held for the first time since the pandemic – as an absolute success, uniting hundreds of alumni, faculty, staff, students, and their families for a beautiful Saturday afternoon of outdoor activities, giveaways, food, and much more. He also reported that Rutgers–Camden was once again victorious in the Raptors vs. Raiders food drive, a friendly but fiercely competitive rivalry that pits Rutgers–Camden against Rutgers–Newark for the worthy cause of meeting the ever-growing need of food insecurity.

Chancellor Tillis concluded by sharing some of the campus's upcoming events of note: the third annual Raptor Rally (January 22), the Festival Mahogany (February 28 to March 2), and the Ranky Tanky performance at the historic Scottish Rite Auditorium in Collingswood. He expressed his gratitude to Vanessa Cubano and Kristin Walker for their efforts related to the Year of the Arts events. Other upcoming events included: Student Governing Association General Body Meeting (January 23), NJ Poetry Out Loud (February 3), February Master Class: Black History Month (February 20), Chancellor's Spring Address (March 6), March Master Class: Women's History Month (March 27), and Raptor Rising Awards (April 16).

Chancellor Tillis concluded his presentation by thanking the members of the Board of Directors and offering to address questions. Ms. DiMartino commented that she thought pursuing legal internships with the 76ers was a good idea. Regarding enrollment, she asked if Rutgers–Camden administration had insight into the challenges for students to get to 100% completion. Chancellor Tillis pointed out that the question is being considered nationally and observed that many students are non-traditional and have financial issues. He explained that Rutgers–Camden is looking at funding sources to support students. He pointed out that, relative to national trends, Rutgers–Camden is doing well but emphasized the need and desire to do better. Vice Chancellor for Student Academic Success Marsha Lowery described her team's anecdotal research into why students leave. The reasons appear to be mostly financial – e.g., students have familial responsibilities that make them work full time, home-life balance issues, and scheduling conflicts. Mr. Covington asked how Rutgers–Camden compares with its peers in terms of retention. Senior Vice Chancellor of Student Success and Enrollment Management Jimmy Jung explained that, as a commuter institution within a city, the university is doing well relative to its peers. Compared to traditional campuses, he explained, Rutgers–Camden is average. The university's 60% graduation rate is comparatively good. Things that increase students' likelihood to stay, complete their course of study, and graduate include the Chancellor's 15-in-15 initiatives and opportunities to earn money and/or experience while on campus, like the 76ers internship. Chancellor Tillis highlighted some other internship opportunities, including those at City Hall and local hospitals as well as those through the business school. Dr. Lowery also highlighted two internship fairs and the work her team is doing to increase the number of students who have jobs when they graduate, specifically jobs in their field.

Mr. MacDonald inquired about updates on how the financial aid process is going this year. Chancellor Tillis said that it was on schedule and possibly a little early. Dr. Jung said he is cautiously optimistic that the FAFSA process is fixed and will be better than last year, barring any challenges.

Mr. Covington had questions about the numbers shared regarding mandatory merit increases, specifically whether the numbers were per year and if they were built into contracts. Mr. McKee explained that the first increase was over a three-year period, followed by an additional 3.5% increase in 2025. These unfunded increases needed to be self-funded by the university.

Mr. MacDonald then wanted to know if there are other dual enrollment programs with high schools. Dr. Jung answered that, in addition to LEAP, other local Camden partnerships are being

explored. There are also great opportunities for students who do not qualify for Rutgers to start at local community colleges and then transfer to Rutgers–Camden.

Ms. DiMartino expressed her appreciation for the university’s recruitment work. Regarding the waitlist, she wanted to know whether students receive notice and what messaging they receive. Chancellor Tillis explained that they are dealing with this issue at the presidential level, and he is pushing for students on the waitlist in New Brunswick to get the message that they can also apply at Newark or Camden. In the meantime, Dr. Jung and his team have been doing a lot of work reaching out to families.

Ms. Lugo praised Chancellor Tillis for the experiential learning grant and pointed out that she would benefit personally. As a nursing student, she wanted to discuss the decrease in new students and total enrollment in the nursing school. She asked why there was such a decline and what strategies the administration is considering to increase enrollment. Chancellor Tillis explained that they are working with the deans and the provost, and that one factor was that the first cohort of nursing students at Rowan. He described how enrollment of nursing students has begun to plateau after being in a steady rise for years. He also discussed how it is a matter of assisting students even before they become first-year nursing students (e.g., tightening up math skills, etc.) and that, while Rutgers–Camden commits to educating New Jersey students, there is room for recruiting outside the state.

Mr. MacDonald pointed out that last year Chancellor Tillis described the Common App description of Rutgers–Camden as deficient and wanted to know if that had been fixed. Chancellor Tillis confirmed that the situation had been addressed.

PRESENTATION ON STUDENT DEBT AND FINANCIAL AID

Dr. Jung presented an update on student debt and financial aid. He explained that the enrollment team is still working with a new financial aid system. Since they were working on a current report at the time of this meeting, he stressed that the numbers shared are trends, not final numbers, looking across 2022-2024. In Fall 2024, over \$10 million in student aid was given. The State of New Jersey gave out approximately \$7 million. Federal grants were \$7.5 million, and federal loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) were \$6.8 million. Dr. Jung explained that these are good numbers, trending up. Rutgers aid has offset tuition increases. New Jersey aid has increased. Federal aid increased. Federal need-based loans have been even, so students are not taking out more. The average in non-need-based loans increased. Considering inflation, Dr. Jung explained, this is good..

Dr. Jung concluded his presentation by thanking the members of the Board of Directors and offering to address questions. Mr. Covington asked if he could compare other numbers with the ones Dr. Jung discussed. Dr. Jung explained that it was not advisable to do so at this time since they are still waiting for the final numbers. Ms. DiMartino expressed her appreciation for Dr. Jung’s presentation, saying that it was a great start to understanding the student debt and financial aid situation. She said this was good information that could inform their work.

OLD BUSINESS

Dr. Dougherty directed the Board's attention to old business. Mr. Covington addressed Donna Nickitas, dean of the School of Nursing, about the total increase of 28 students in that school. When students do not graduate, he wanted to know whether the university considers if they might go into another degree program at Rutgers. Dean Nickitas explained that she has data about the students who graduate in four years versus six years and to demonstrate that some who are not successful in nursing transfer to the College of Arts and Sciences and complete their undergraduate degree in health sciences. Some come back to nursing and complete the accelerated nursing program. The numbers are moving, she assured. She also pointed out that they are beginning to see an increase in online undergraduate BS to RN. While they did see a decrease in enrollment in 2024 because of Rowan's program, they have made some aggressive efforts, working with LEAP and the Cherry Hill school district. For example, they offered 78 LEAP students early admittance.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Dougherty directed the Board's attention to new business. There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Dougherty asked if there was any further business. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting.

Minutes prepared and submitted by,

Katharine Travaline
Rutgers University–Camden Chancellor's Office