

CAMDEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
June 12, 2025

A meeting of the Camden Board of Directors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was held at 1 p.m. on Thursday, June 12, 2025.

Present and constituting a quorum were Anthony J. Covington, 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 was Gaylene Gordon, graduate 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 June 5, 2025 with the Office of the Secretary of the State of New Jersey and three media outlets: the *Cherry Hill Courier-Post*, the *New Brunswick Home News Tribune & Courier News*, and New Jersey Advance Media. 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 has been 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 22, 2025 MEETING

Dr. Dougherty called attention to the minutes of the January 22, 2025 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 (Mr. Covington), which was

seconded (Mr. MacDonald), and asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, the minutes were approved.

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Chancellor Tillis provided his report to the Board regarding the status of the campus, including updates on enrollment; the budget; grant funding and institutional advancement; the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan; *U.S. News & World Report* rankings; diversity, inclusion, and civic engagement; faculty, student, and alumni achievements; commencement; athletics; and the Year of the Arts.

He reflected on some of Rutgers–Camden's recent achievements and previewed future activities, observing that the upcoming academic year is significant for Rutgers–Camden with the continuation of Year of the Arts, the beginning of the campus' centennial celebration in 2026, and the arrival of Rutgers' new president, Dr. William Tate.

Chancellor Tillis began his report with an update on new student enrollment. At the time of the last update to this Board, spring 2025 enrollment was slightly down compared to spring 2024. Chancellor Tillis was pleased to report that Rutgers–Camden achieved a positive year-over-year trend, both in new students and in overall enrollment. The campus maintained steady total enrollment for spring 2025, ensuring continued strength and stability. Chancellor Tillis noted the clear impact of the second year that Rutgers–Camden has been a part of the Common App system. An alteration was made to the narrative of Rutgers–Camden in the Common App, and the positive effects of this change have become apparent.

For fall 2025, Chancellor Tillis reported a 13% increase in applications compared to the previous academic year, with a significant increase in admit-coming students for fall 2025. So far, more than 2,000 new students committed to Rutgers–Camden, with a 104.5% positive change for FTIC (first time in college) and a 46.3% positive change for year-to-date overall students. Chancellor Tillis thanked the enrollment management team for all they have done to get the campus to these positive numbers.

Rutgers–Camden's four- and six-year graduation rates remained comparable to national averages and continued to increase over time. Chancellor Tillis noted the outstanding work of the student success team at Rutgers–Camden in making sure that students have the support they need to graduate while maximizing the unique opportunities that only the college experience can afford. He shared that Vice Chancellor for Student Academic Success Marsha Lowery is implementing a new initiative, calling the incoming class the "Class of 2029" and giving them an identity that aims to positively impact graduation rates. Likewise, retention rates were strong across various demographics, including the campus' underrepresented students (73%), who continued to keep pace with the overall student population (75% for FTIC first-year overall). The campus's retention rates for transfer students were slightly higher, with underrepresented transfers (84%) once again retaining at a rate roughly equal to their peers as a whole.

At the close of the fiscal year, Chancellor Tillis explained that, in these unprecedented times for higher education, the university closely monitors the landscape for federal and state funding. He noted that a recent state budget proposal included approximately \$12 million in cuts to Rutgers–

Camden's funding. He assured that his finance and government affairs teams are working diligently to advocate for the university, and he is confident in Rutgers–Camden's financial future, independent of developments at the federal and state levels. He acknowledged Vice Chancellor for Governmental and External Affairs Mike Sepanic for working with state and federal officials carrying the banner for Rutgers–Camden.

Next, Chancellor Tillis addressed grant funding and institutional advancement, expressing his delight to report that Rutgers–Camden has received close to \$21 million in grant funding for FY25. While down slightly from the previous year, the figure is Rutgers–Camden's second-highest total since 2020 and is especially strong given that federal grants have slowed down considerably since the start of the calendar year. The Chancellor emphasized the positive upward trend in Rutgers–Camden's grant funding since 2020 and credited Vice Chancellor for Research Tom Risch's focus on quality over quantity of grant funding and efforts to enhance the granting culture on the campus.

At the request of the Board Chair, Chancellor Tillis shared information regarding the effect of recent executive orders on federal grant funding. Among Rutgers–Camden's total number of federal grants, five were terminated as a result of executive orders, with an estimated loss of \$1.9 million for FY25, and close to \$600,000 for FY26. Specifically, two awards were canceled from AmeriCorps, along with an NIH training grant to diversify the STEM workforce, and two subawards on gun violence, resulting in a loss of some salary or resources for approximately 13 faculty and one staff member, along with the loss of four undergraduate fellowships per year. To mitigate these impacts, internal funds have been allocated to four undergraduate student fellows for next year, and a call to faculty was distributed seeking proposals from researchers impacted by terminations. A terminated AmeriCorps project out of the School of Nursing is being considered for additional funding.

In more positive financial news, Chancellor Tillis noted that Rutgers–Camden exceeded its development goal for FY25 by nearly \$500,000 to date. This includes a generous gift of \$2.5 million from James and Sharon Maida to Rutgers Law School in Camden as well as an anonymous gift of \$350,000 from a 1997 graduate of the Camden College of Arts and Sciences. He attributed this fundraising success to the excellent work of Vice Chancellor for Advancement Chuck Wright, the Rutgers University Foundation, and the entire development team at Rutgers–Camden. Chancellor Tillis noted that Mr. Wright has been elevated to another role in the Foundation and would remain until his role at Rutgers–Camden is filled.

Checking in on the Rutgers–Camden strategic initiatives, Chancellor Tillis highlighted some projects and programs that have helped advance the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. As part of the Year of the Arts, Rutgers–Camden faculty are teaching a series of courses that consider the impact of artistic expression through the lens of various disciplines. In one such course, Psychology Professor Sean Duffy challenged his students to learn about Camden and Philadelphia through the murals and street art in the cities.

In the area of transformative student success, Rutgers–Camden has seen an unprecedented number of students applying for – and winning – prestigious scholarships, grants, and awards. Nyree Oliver, an undergraduate in the School of Business, received an Ivory Bridges Award, a

highly selective scholarship specifically for first-generation college students. Sophia Westfall, who was first presented to the Board as a Fulbright semi-finalist, was named a Fulbright finalist and will travel to Wales to pursue a graduate degree. Additionally, a record seven Rutgers–Camden students were announced as recipients of Gilman Scholarships. The Gilman Program provides funding for students to take classes and conduct research abroad. This year’s Rutgers–Camden cohort will have the opportunity to enrich their education in countries such as Italy, Ghana, and Ireland.

Chancellor Tillis discussed how international opportunities are vital to a holistic experience as they provide students with the opportunity to extend their education beyond the classroom. Students of Kimberlee Moran, director of forensics, used their spring break to travel to Greece and study ancient artifacts. Meanwhile, students in the law school spent time in South Africa, engaging with attorneys, judges, activists, and communities to understand the nation’s history, justice system, and society.

Chancellor Tillis highlighted three students who received Critical Language Scholarships from the U.S. State Department to improve their command of languages critical to national economic and security interests. Amy Glasser will study Swahili in Tanzania, Jonathan Pamel will travel to Latvia to study Russian, and Aubrey Blake will learn Korean through an immersive virtual course while remaining in the United States.

University faculty and leadership also are heavily engaged with international opportunities. School of Business Dean Monica Adya and Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Enrollment Jimmy Jung were part of a larger Rutgers delegation to India, where a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon, and the Rutgers School of Business–Camden. This activity underscores Rutgers–Camden’s commitment to fostering global academic partnerships and expanding collaborative opportunities in business education.

Chancellor Tillis reported that Rutgers–Camden is home to approximately 230 international students hailing from countries including Ghana, Nigeria, China, Ethiopia, Nepal, Paraguay, Turkey, and many more. Chancellor Tillis expressed excitement for these ranks to grow along with Rutgers–Camden’s international community.

Turning to the Beloved Camden Community strategic pillar, Chancellor Tillis announced that the transformation of the Cooper Street and Lawrence Street segments of the Rutgers–Camden campus is well underway, and that the Cooper Street Gateway will continue to take shape in the coming months. He assured that any impact on commuting to or parking on campus will be well worth the inconvenience as this new facility will have a transformational impact on academic programs and campus life.

Chancellor Tillis reported that Rutgers–Camden’s national rankings remain strong (National Universities #98; Public Schools #46; Social Mobility #15; Colleges for Veterans #63). Newly released graduate rankings now include Top 100 placements for Rutgers–Camden’s doctor of nursing practice (#52) and master of public affairs programs (#72). He noted that this is the first time all three chancellor-led units of Rutgers University are in the top 50 of public universities

and top 100 of national universities. He explained his vision for Rutgers–Camden to be designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), at which point the campus will have all three U.S. Department of Education designations: Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and HSI.

Chancellor Tillis explained that the efforts of the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE) have proceeded full steam ahead despite a challenging climate. In February, the DICE team moved into its new offices at First and Market Streets, marking the first time the full team has been together in one place. The DICE team recently held a progress summit and provided an update on the progress that has been made in executing the Rutgers–Camden Diversity Strategic Plan. The summit featured remarks from Rutgers University’s Senior Vice President for Equity Anna Branch and Rutgers Law Professor Stacy Hawkins. Chancellor Tillis thanked and commended Senior Vice Chancellor for Strategy, Diversity, and Community Engagement Nyeema Watson for her leadership in this space, as Rutgers–Camden’s work to foster a welcoming and engaged campus community remains at the heart of its mission.

Next, Chancellor Tillis turned to the faculty and how their groundbreaking research and achievements continue to be at the center of everything that is accomplished at Rutgers–Camden by driving innovation, shaping academic excellence, and advancing knowledge that strengthens the university and beyond. Chancellor Tillis highlighted one example from among the many accomplishments: Chemistry Professor Jinglin Fu and his lab recently received a National Institutes of Health grant totaling close to \$500,000 for research into treating blood disorders.

Chancellor Tillis then shared some of the amazing stories that emerged from Commencement 2025 at Rutgers–Camden. The graduating class included 1,661 students, the youngest of whom, Tim Pan, earned his degree in criminal justice last fall just 11 days after his 19th birthday. Meanwhile, Darlene Lindsay earned her bachelor of arts in psychology in January at the age of 73. Mickalene Thomas – a Camden native, internationally acclaimed visual artist, and one of TIME’s 100 Most Influential People for 2025 – served as the keynote speaker at commencement and was awarded an honorary degree. Chancellor Tillis shared a few exceptional members of the graduating class. Cheska Santos, a nursing graduate known for her consistently upbeat attitude and 4.0 GPA, graduated Rutgers–Camden with a new role in hand at Jefferson Cherry Hill Hospital as a medical-surgical nurse. Gabriel Minasian was determined to continue his college education at the School of Business–Camden, pursuing a master’s degree in accounting amid a decades-long, highly successful corporate career. Sara Zizak earned her law degree after serving as president of her class. She has become known as an advocate for the mental health of law students, organizing support groups and promoting resources for legal scholars at Rutgers and beyond. Touba Marrie concluded his time at the Graduate School–Camden by earning a master of business and science in industrial and applied mathematics. Having previously studied in the Gambia, Abu Dhabi, and the United Kingdom, he aims to launch his own data science consulting firm. Lastly, Chancellor Tillis observed that Shaan Mody “embodies Scarlet Raptor spirit.” Graduating from Rutgers–Camden after just three years, Mr. Mody was active in numerous student organizations, was elected to student government, published research, and won multiple awards for his academic excellence. He will continue on to medical school at Rowan University through the combined bachelor of science/doctor of osteopathic medicine program.

Chancellor Tillis spoke about the outstanding alumni of Rutgers–Camden, who now number nearly 60,000, provide a shining example of what students can achieve. Michael Deagler, a graduate of the MFA in creative writing program, recently earned the O. Henry Prize and a PEN Award for his debut novel *Early Sobrieties*. Anetha Perry, who received her MPA and Ph.D. from Rutgers–Camden, is part of the Black Settlement Movement, working to develop her former family home into a resource for community development.

Turning to Scarlet Raptor athletics, Chancellor Tillis announced the appointment of Tom Thomasson as director of athletics and recreation after serving in that role in an interim capacity. Chancellor Tillis cited Mr. Thomasson’s vision to keep student-athletes winning both on and off the playing fields. Speaking of winning, Rutgers–Camden baseball took home the NJAC championship this season, appearing in the Division III National Championship and earning a win in a hard-fought opening round of play. Chancellor Tillis congratulated the baseball team for an outstanding season, which they finished with a 30-17 record.

Chancellor Tillis then announced two important new members of the campus team: Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Vaughn Calhoun and Senior Program Coordinator for the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs Christian Cintron.

Despite the approaching summer season, Chancellor Tillis reported on sustained activity on campus, with even more to look forward to in the fall. Commencement speaker Mickalene Thomas served as an advisor to the *Reframing the Narrative* art exhibition, which featured the works of Rutgers–Camden students and influential local artists. The Chancellor encouraged everyone to stop by the Campus Gallery to see the tremendous talent on display as part of the ongoing series of Year of the Arts events, which includes an Arturo Sandoval performance on September 27.

Chancellor Tillis concluded his presentation by thanking the members of the Board and offering to address questions. Mr. MacDonald asked whether the administration anticipated any international visa issues for the 238 international students. Chancellor Tillis explained that he has instructed his teams to prepare for such challenges by developing flexible onboarding programs in which international students could attend virtually until they can join in-person.

Mr. Covington offered his congratulations to all and to the institutional advancement team in particular for raising funds during challenging times. This funding is fundamental for the university’s success, he said. Chancellor Tillis thanked Mr. Covington and acknowledged the work that the Rutgers–Camden deans and faculty members are doing to create success in fundraising, emphasizing that it is a university-wide effort.

FOCUS ON MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Chancellor Tillis introduced Vice Chancellor for Marketing and Communications Sherrie Madia. He asked her to share with the Board of Directors her plans for elevating the profile of Rutgers–Camden.

Dr. Madia thanked the Chancellor and the Board. She explained that she and her team have been reimagining marketing and communications’ mission to serve as a resource for the campus community to inspire and engage our diverse audiences by promoting and optimizing the unique programs, initiatives, and achievements of Rutgers University–Camden. In so doing, she emphasized that they “elevate the Rutgers–Camden brand, the city of Camden, and our place as a leading research university.”

Dr. Madia went on to describe top-funnel marketing efforts, including billboards at the Cooper University Hospital Garage, digital ads, retargeting on landing pages, search engine optimization (SEO), and website optimization. She has hired a social media manager, making this the first time the role has been filled in three years. Dr. Madia has implemented a number of initiatives to enhance internal communications, including the Chancellor’s monthly update and podcast, a faculty blog, and other opportunities to highlight the work of faculty, staff, and students. In the fall, they will begin internal weekly newsletters for both faculty and students. She has spearheaded a much-needed backend workflow process for staff to request marketing and communications services. Dr. Madia concluded her presentation by thanking the members of the Board of Directors and offering to address questions. There were no questions.

FOCUS ON CAMPUS ATHLETICS

Chancellor Tillis introduced Director of Athletics and Recreational Services Tom Thomasson, who shared his plans to infuse the Department of Athletics and Recreational Services at Rutgers–Camden into the fabric of the campus. He explained that the primary focus is the student-athlete experience and that he wants to make Rutgers–Camden the top choice for student-athletes. His team has been partnering with the marketing and communications team to rebrand athletics with new spirit images and recruitment material.

At Rutgers–Camden, there are 250 student-athletes on campus in 16 different sports, who are high-achieving both on the field and in the classroom, with a 3.15 cumulative GPA. Mr. Thomasson highlighted a number of achievements, including the recent Rutgers–Camden Baseball New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship – a first for the program. He described the importance of the community presence of Rutgers–Camden Athletics, including their participation in the Salvation Army Kroc Center toy drive, for which they will be recognized as that organization’s 2025 Christmas Partner of the Year. Mr. Thomasson then went on to discuss the importance of high-quality athletic facilities for both competitiveness and the recruitment of student-athletes. He pointed out that the Athletic and Fitness Center was renovated in 2009, the Rutgers–Camden Community Park was renovated in 2012, and the Camden Athletic Complex was completed in 2022.

Next, Mr. Thomasson made the case that the Rutgers–Camden Athletics Department is not only a critical driver of campus engagement and school spirit, but also a key financial asset, strengthening tuition, housing, and fee-based revenue streams across multiple academic units. A comprehensive analysis of student-athlete financial data for FY24 and FY25, he suggested, reveals the increasing contributions of student-athletes to both enrollment figures and institutional revenue. He described the impact on enrollment (a 10% increase in student-athletes from FY24 to FY25), residential influence (a 33% growth in housing participation of student-

athletes from FY24 to FY25), and financial contributions (a combined \$12.16 million over the two-year period of FY24 and FY25).

Mr. Thomasson concluded his presentation by thanking the members of the Board and offering to address questions. Mr. Covington thanked and welcomed Mr. Thomasson and asked about the cause of the increase in the financial contributions of athletics. Mr. Thomasson explained that the contributions are based on enrollment – the dollar amounts presented are a total of the student-athletes’ tuition, housing, and meal plan dollars. Mr. Dougherty wanted to know why there is no women’s golf team. Mr. Thomasson explained that they currently operate the golf team as co-ed and that they do have a woman competing on the team, and she is recognized in the field.

UPDATE ON THE ROWAN UNIVERSITY/RUTGERS–CAMDEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Dr. Dougherty invited Jeffrey Nash, CEO of the Rowan University/Rutgers–Camden Board of Governors (RURCBOG), to provide an update on the activities of that organization. He reminded his fellow board members that he and Mary DiMartino represent Rutgers–Camden on that board. Mr. Nash explained that the RURCBOG is the product of a state effort to partner Rutgers–Camden and Rowan to leverage and expand Camden’s significant medical, research, and education assets. He spoke to the RURCBOG’s involvement in many projects in Camden aimed at growing the region’s healthcare capacity and contributing to the vibrant health sciences corridor in downtown Camden. With the help of Dr. Dougherty and Ms. DiMartino, the RURCBOG has developed a program called Camden Pathways, a food co-op, a maternal health plan, an early childhood intervention program, and a non-profit South Jersey Institute for Population Health. Mr. Nash went on to describe a list of Camden development projects that are in the works.

In the Broadway corridor, Mr. Nash pointed out that the goal is to house life science start-up companies. He noted that the area needs market-rate housing, and that the RURCBOG is working with the city to buy up properties to build market-rate housing. For Downton Camden, Mr. Nash explained that the state has given \$250 million to develop a new Walter Rand Transportation Center. The Beacon Tower will be a 20- or 25-story building. For the Cooper Grant and Cooper Poynt neighborhoods, Mr. Nash highlighted the Victor Talking Machine Museum/Residential Development Project, a bridge into North Camden, and the Cooper Street Gateway Project at Rutgers–Camden.

Mr. Nash concluded by thanking the members of the Board and offering to address questions. Mr. MacDonald asked if there would be collaboration with Rutgers–Camden in the life sciences development in the area. Mr. Nash answered by explaining that the RURCBOG is working directly with Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Bob McKee and discussing opportunities for collaboration. Mr. Covington expressed his support for the projects that Mr. Nash presented and asked about their stages of funding. Mr. Nash explained that each is a separate project at a different stage of development. He stated that the RURCBOG has promised residents that there would be no eminent domain of residential properties. He pointed out that the Beacon Tower involves a process of aspired tax credits and that 80% of the development will be

paid back in tax credits. He explained that the return on investment is not as high in Camden as in other local cities, so they have to work to close the gap. Some projects are in the beginning stages. The RURCB OG meets with community leaders twice monthly to discuss these projects. He emphasized that they are moving on all of the projects.

OLD BUSINESS

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

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Dougherty directed the Board's attention to new business.

Dr. Dougherty thanked the members of the Board whose terms conclude June 30: Vice Chair Anthony Covington (present at the meeting), Mary DiMartino (not present), and Kimberly Lugo, undergraduate student representative who received her degree in May (not present).

ADJOURNMENT

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