

CAMDEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
September 25, 2024

A meeting of the Camden Board of Directors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was held at 10 a.m. on September 25, 2024.

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

Attending for the university administration were Antonio D. Tillis, Robert Roesener, and Michael Sepanic.

Also present were 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 September 16, 2024, 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 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.

Mr. Sepanic reminded members to review and sign the confidentiality and conflict of interest policies and return them to the Office of the University Secretary.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE RUTGERS–CAMDEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Covington asked Dr. Dougherty to leave the room and presented him for the position of Board of Directors Chair for the term September 2024 – September 2025. Mr. Covington called for a motion, which was seconded. The motion carried, and Dr. Dougherty returned to the room.

Dr. Dougherty asked Mr. Covington to mute the meeting on Zoom and presented him for the position of Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the term September 2024 – September 2025. Dr. Dougherty called for a motion, which was seconded. The motion carried, and Mr. Covington unmuted the meeting on Zoom.

Dr. Dougherty asked Mr. Sepanic to leave and presented him for the position of Secretary and J. Michael Gower for the position of Treasurer for the term September 2024 – September 2025. Dr. Dougherty called for a motion, which was seconded. The motion carried, and Mr. Sepanic returned to the room.

ELECTION OF APPOINTEE TO THE ROWAN UNIVERSITY/RUTGERS–CAMDEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr. Dougherty suggested that Ms. DiMartino fill the vacant position of representative of this board on the Rowan University/Rutgers–Camden Board of Governors. Mr. Dougherty called for a motion, which was seconded. The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MAY 6, 2024 MEETING

Dr. Dougherty called attention to the minutes of the May 6, 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 introduced the incoming undergraduate student representative, Kimberly Lugo. She is a fourth-year nursing student and a Rutgers–Camden Bonner Civic Scholar who has won awards for her work. Ms. Lugo expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Board and that she is looking forward to the coming year.

Dr. Dougherty introduced returning graduate student representative, Gaylene Gordon. He pointed out that Ms. Gordon had shared some of her work with the Board last year and welcomed her to do so this year as well.

Dr. Dougherty recognized that, while the faculty representative, Samuel Rabinowitz, was absent from the meeting, he will continue to serve the Board for the 2024-2025 term.

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Chancellor Tillis provided his report to the Board regarding the status of the campus, including updates on enrollment; the budget; the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan; the Chancellor's "15-in-5" initiatives; centennial celebration planning; internationalization initiatives; faculty, student, and alumni achievements; and *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

Beginning his fourth year as chancellor of Rutgers–Camden, Chancellor Tillis gave an overview of the institution. It is home to 5,780 students and 1,100 faculty and staff. It has five academic units – arts and sciences, business, graduate school, law, and nursing, and offers 38 undergraduate majors and 29 graduate programs, including five doctoral programs.

Chancellor Tillis began his report with an update on new student enrollment for Fall 2024. The university's total enrollment decreased by 114 students or 1.9%, compared to Fall 2023. Undergraduate enrollment fell slightly by 57 students, a 1.4% drop, with a decline of 65 first time-in-college (FTIC) students, marking a 10.5% decrease. However, transfer student enrollment significantly increased, reflecting the success in Rutgers–Camden's collaborative premier partnerships with county colleges. Graduate student enrollment also saw a decrease of 57 students (3.0%). These changes highlight the need to examine factors affecting FTIC and graduate student numbers while capitalizing on the positive trend in transfer student enrollment. He explained that the enrollment management team will continue to do a deep dive into the causes for the decrease in enrollment placing particular emphasis on the Common App and market-related trends in southern New Jersey.

Chancellor Tillis stressed fiscal responsibility's critical role in university operations and expressed his confidence in Rutgers–Camden's financial well-being. He discussed how the FY25 budgeted revenue is projected to be higher than the FY24 actuals. The largest portion of revenue continues to come from tuition and fees, followed by New Jersey state appropriation and state fringe benefit revenue. He explained that the university would continue exploring innovative new revenue streams to better assist faculty, staff, and students.

After a brief review of the five strategic pillars that frame the Rutgers–Camden 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, Chancellor Tillis presented key achievements for each pillar completed during 2023-2024, encompassing faculty, staff, and student contributions. The university secured approximately \$2 million from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and a \$2.5 million Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant. The Paul Robeson Library Undergraduate Research Award recipients were selected. Rutgers University–Camden was honored with the Campus Compact Richard Guarasci Award for Institutional Transformation, a recognition achieved by only 40 institutions nationwide. The university is strengthening global connections and advancing international research and welcomed new international students from Paraguay, Nigeria, Ghana, and India, among others.

Chancellor Tillis presented an update on the continued rollout and success of his “15-in-5” initiatives, announcing that all 15 have formally been launched within three-and-a-half years and reporting that, so far, these initiatives amount to \$3,391,138 in funding to faculty, staff, and students from the Chancellor’s strategic funds.

This past spring, the Chancellor appointed Margaret Marsh and Jim Rhodes as the chairpersons for the Centennial Celebration to lead a diverse group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni in the development of a year-long celebration of Rutgers University–Camden. The committee was charged with several distinct outcomes, including producing a high-end yearbook, commissioning a new piece of art for the campus center, creating the story of Rutgers–Camden through the decades, and establishing a theme that captures the years of the university’s excellence.

Chancellor Tillis updated the Board on internationalism – the fifth and final pillar of the Strategic Plan, explaining that Rutgers–Camden’s attention has been on the continent of Africa, specifically South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Malawi. The university’s engagement in these select African nations ranges from opportunities to advance research, increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment, and international experiential learning for students. The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that, in terms of the next generation of international students matriculating at US institutions, Ghana and Nigeria are the new China and India. Rutgers–Camden is working closely with Rick Garfunkel and Rutgers Global to maximize its efforts in Africa.

Chancellor Tillis presented the university’s expanding work in Asia, specifically Korea. Seoul is the starting point as Rutgers–Camden begins to explore university partnerships and other opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. During its initial visit, university administrators are meeting with several prominent universities in Korea, including the Universities of Woosong, Sejong, Korea, and Hankuk. Each university offers a unique academic experience that will be of great benefit to Rutgers faculty and students.

Chancellor Tillis expressed his great pride in the achievements of faculty at Rutgers University–Camden, who are performing cutting-edge research. He spotlighted the accomplishments of faculty that were recognized as the Class of 2024, 30 under 40 top young Latino Leaders of South Jersey. Maria Solesio is an assistant professor of biology, trained in Spain where she earned her Pharm.D. and neural pharmacology degrees. Her area of focus is on the effects of Parkinson’s and Huntington diseases. Julio Angel Alicea is an assistant professor of sociology. His area of study is race in urban areas. He plans to finalize a book examining the organizational challenges of Black and Latinx in urban schools following the killing of George Floyd.

A first-generation college graduate in her final year at Rutgers Law School in Camden, Kate Isidro, was selected as part of the Class of 2024, 30 Under 40 Top Young Latino Leaders of South Jersey. She has conducted clinic work in the areas of immigration, domestic violence, and family advocacy cases. She is president of the Latin American Law Student Alliance and is a true leader on campus.

Chancellor Tillis highlighted a few other students who exemplify Rutgers excellence. LaRodge Johnson-Miller is the 2024-2025 Newman Civic Fellowship recipient. This fellowship recognizes and supports the next generation of public problem solvers. Since being nominated, Ms. Johnson-Miller has used her fellowship to bring about social change in Camden. Ojobo Agbo Eje, a Nigerian national, was one of 300 delegates invited to Washington, DC, by the World Bank for digital transformation. Additionally, he served as a Community First Fellow for the Center for Urban Research and Education. Ethan Dreyer was selected as captain of the men's soccer team after his sophomore season. Mr. Dreyer received a National Science Foundation grant to work on organic and polymer chemistry, focusing on polymer synthesis and characterization.

Chancellor Tillis reported that graduation rates indicate strong student performance: 47.9% of our students graduate within four years, and 66.5% graduate within six years. In comparison, the four-year graduation rates are 49.1% at the state level and 45.3% nationally, while the six-year rates are 64.6% at the state level and 63.5% nationally.

Chancellor Tillis expressed his pride in Rutgers–Camden alumni. According to internal Rutgers–Camden data, 67% of alumni are employed in New Jersey just six months after graduation. Additionally, the U.S. College Scorecard reports that Rutgers–Camden graduates earn an average salary of \$58,991 at the six-month post-graduation mark. These figures underscore the success and economic impact of our alumni.

A few distinguished alumni were highlighted by Chancellor Tillis. Sam Romeo RLAW'23, is working on behalf of Rutgers Law Associates. He won a jury trial for an 80-year-old client who had been deceived into signing over his home's deed. Emily Winters CCAS'21 and GSC'23 serves as the Operations Manager and Development Associate at Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, the site of the First Continental Congress in 1774. Sheldon Morris CCAS'21 works in feasibility, needs assessment, and spatial planning consulting in Paris, France.

Chancellor Tillis was happy to announce that Rutgers University–Camden has risen in *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. The university is now at #46 in Top Public Schools, #15 in Social Mobility, and #63 in Best for Veterans. Our National University ranking remains at #98. Of note, several of our undergraduate programs are nationally ranked: nursing at #74, undergraduate business at #147, psychology at #180, and undergraduate computer science at #240. All of these are only possible with the tremendous work of the Rutgers–Camden faculty and staff.

Chancellor Tillis concluded by sharing some of the campus's upcoming events: Friends & Family Homecoming (Saturday, October 5), Camden County Awards Ceremony for Campus Veterans (Wednesday, October 16), Chancellor's Fall Address and Reception (Wednesday, October 24), International Student Luncheon (Thursday, October 30), and the Alonzo Adams Exhibition (September 3–November 22).

Chancellor Tillis concluded his presentation by thanking the members of the Board of Directors, welcoming them to visit the campus, and offering to address questions. Mr. MacDonald asked the Chancellor why he thought there was still an enrollment decline despite

the increase in applications with the Common App. Chancellor Tillis explained that the administration is still considering whether Common App had a favorable impact on Rutgers–Camden. He pointed out that it increased the workload for staff but did not yield the results they thought it would. Chancellor Tillis said that the financial aid debacle greatly impacted enrollment. An important factor, he said, is that many Rutgers–Camden applicants are first-generation students. How Rutgers–Camden’s financial aid package compares to that of its competitors is also being considered. The enrollment management team will be examining the issue very closely. Chancellor Tillis is also concerned about how the Common App narrativized Rutgers–Camden relative to other campuses. It did not paint the university as a research-intensive institution. Chancellor Tillis has asked this to be addressed.

Mr. MacDonald also wanted to know whether the financial aid information was released simultaneously to all universities. Senior Vice Chancellor Jung answered that, to his knowledge, all of Rutgers University got it simultaneously, and the federal government is closely examining what went wrong and how to fix it. Chancellor Tillis added that Rutgers–Camden will need to make sure its financial aid packages are competitive in the marketplace.

Ms. DiMartino shared her appreciation for the Chancellor’s report. She was particularly happy to hear about the university’s social mobility ranking because higher education aims to move the needle for individuals and help them get ahead. Chancellor Tillis agreed, making the point that Rutgers–Camden students change the trajectory of their families.

Dr. Dougherty asked for the Chancellor’s thoughts on improving the graduation rates. Chancellor Tillis answered by describing the work that the Student Academic Success team, under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Marsha Lowery, is doing to ensure students are on track to graduate. The Division of Student Academic Success produces an annual report, and Chancellor Tillis will make this available to the Board of Directors.

Ms. Gordon asked about the Chancellor’s plans to recruit and retain graduate students in the 21st century. Chancellor Tillis explained that the university works to service *all* students, including undergraduate, academic graduate, and professional students. He offered some examples of initiatives, including the mayoral internship program, and explained that they aim to develop opportunities that are in line with the 21st century’s changing world. Senior Vice Chancellor Jung noted that the enrollment management division provides support for graduate student recruitment, which happens at the department level. He suggested that this year’s slight reduction in graduate student enrollment can be understood as a market correction, given that graduate enrollment had grown in the previous couple of years. He also highlighted the success of graduate students, with almost 90% of graduate students graduating on time. He agreed with the need to focus on it because our graduate students are not traditional students, with a vast majority working full-time. Ms. Gordon pointed out that graduate students have unique needs and said that she was happy to hear about the measures being taken to recruit and maintain them.

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. Mr. Sepanic advised that any comments or questions from public attendees would be limited to items discussed during the meeting and to two minutes in length.

Sarah Joslin, president of Church Women United, commented on the average salary of graduates and wanted to know what Rutgers–Camden is doing to address student debt levels. Chancellor Tillis agreed that we have a responsibility to the community in which the university sits. He explained that the social mobility ranking of the *U.S. News & World Report* takes debt level into account. He proposed that Senior Vice Chancellor Jung and his enrollment management team prepare information regarding student debt to present at the next Board of Directors meeting.

Jessica Toft, Rutgers–Camden Student Government Association treasurer, introduced herself as a senior, transfer, nontraditional student in her seventh year of college. She asked that graduation plans be addressed, explaining that the schedule of course offerings affects students' graduation plans. Chancellor Tillis explained that course schedules and rotations are department-based, so it is important for students to work with their advisors to make plans to access the necessary courses. He pointed out that deans and department chairs have the flexibility to support students' needs.

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