

CAMDEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
June 3, 2026

A meeting of the Camden Board of Directors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was held at 10 a.m. Wednesday, June 3, 2026. Dr. James F. Dougherty presided as Chair.

Present and constituting a quorum were Dr. Dougherty, Dr. Walter B. MacDonald, Amy B. Mansue, Jose Piazza, and James P. McCarthy.

Attending for university administration were Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis, Michael Sepanic, and George Loeser. Also present were the following representatives to the Board of Directors: Helena Cabezas, graduate student representative, and Jennifer Levy, undergraduate student representative.

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 – the Open Public Meetings Act – public notice of this meeting was filed on May 26th, 2026, with the Office of the Secretary of the State of New Jersey and three media outlets – the *Courier-Post*, the *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; the Smith Library, Rutgers Health; 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2026 MEETING

Dr. Dougherty called attention to the minutes of the January 28, 2026, 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 noted that this is the last meeting in which Jennifer Levy will serve as the Board's undergraduate student representative. She is transitioning out of the position of president of the Student Government Association but will remain an active student leader as she completes her degree. Dr. Dougherty complimented Ms. Levy on her excellence and thanked her for her service to the Board.

Dr. Dougherty noted that he was chairing his last meeting as a member of the Camden Board of Directors, as his role is coterminous with his appointment to the Rutgers Board of Governors, which expires at the end of this month. He explained that serving on this board has been one of the great honors of his time at Rutgers. He said that Rutgers–Camden is a place of access, of opportunity, and of action and that the faculty, staff, and students are bright, creative, and dedicated to the institution. He thanked everyone for their support. The Board of Governors will announce Dr. Dougherty's replacement as a member of this board shortly. The Board of Directors will elect its officers during the annual meeting in September.

Dr. Dougherty noted an additional transition: the return of Chancellor Tillis to the faculty. He said that the news shared in the chancellor's report directly reflects the impressive strategic direction that Chancellor Tillis and his leadership team have given to Rutgers–Camden. Dr. Dougherty invited Chancellor Tillis to present his report.

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Chancellor Tillis thanked Dr. Dougherty, the members of the Rutgers–Camden Board of Directors, colleagues, and community partners for being present and for their steady leadership and support of Rutgers–Camden. He delivered a campus report that included updates on leadership transitions; enrollment; graduation and retention rates; the FY26 budget; grant funding and institutional advancement; student success; faculty achievements; commencement; alumni impact; community engagement; and innovation and entrepreneurship.

Chancellor Tillis discussed significant leadership transitions taking place at Rutgers–Camden. His own tenure as Chancellor will conclude on June 30, at which point he will embark upon a one-year sabbatical. In addition, Provost Sandra Richtermeyer will leave Rutgers–Camden to assume the presidency of Nevada State University effective August 1, 2026. This opportunity reflects her outstanding leadership and academic accomplishments, and he wished her continued success. He explained that details will be forthcoming regarding an Interim Provost and the search process for the next Provost of Rutgers–Camden. He emphasized that, throughout this transition, the university would remain focused on continuity, academic excellence, and supporting the faculty, staff, and students who anchor the university's mission. Finally, he cited President Tate's announcement that Mr. Dennis Shields will assume the role of Interim Chancellor effective July 1, 2026.

Next, Chancellor Tillis offered an update on student enrollment. Year to date, looking toward Fall 2026, first-time students who have made their deposits (admit-comings) are down slightly by 6.2% (59 students), reflecting a more competitive yield environment. Transfer admit-comings are essentially holding steady, with only a 0.6% decline, indicating continued consistency in this segment despite declining enrollment at area county colleges. Graduate admit-comings are down by 21% (75 students), following periods of growth in earlier cycles. In total, admit-comings are down by 7.6% (161 students), reflecting broader market dynamics while remaining within an expected range. Nursing admit-comings are up significantly by 30%, reinforcing strong demand in high-growth, high-need programs, and Law admit-comings remain stable with a slight decrease of 3%. Chancellor Tillis suggested it is important to note that Rutgers–Camden is a commuter institution when comparing numbers with primarily residential institutions.

First-time-in-college (FTIC), full-time student retention stands at 74%, reflecting solid first-year persistence with some opportunity for continued improvement, explained Chancellor Tillis. Transfer student retention is notably stronger at 85%, making this a clear institutional strength. The institution demonstrates a meaningful equity advantage, as underrepresented minority FTIC students are retained at 74%. Transfer retention remains consistently high across all demographic groups, with only minimal variation. Overall, the university is succeeding in supporting early student persistence, while maintaining an opportunity to further strengthen FTIC retention.

Chancellor Tillis pointed out that graduation outcomes highlight a gap between retention and completion. The FTIC six-year graduation rate is 54%, which trails national benchmarks, while the four-year graduation rate stands at 42%. Transfer students show stronger completion outcomes, with a four-year graduation rate of 70% and a two-year rate of 44%, reinforcing the effectiveness of this pathway. Chancellor Tillis suggested that while students are being retained at solid rates, there is a need to translate that persistence into more timely degree completion. Strategic focus will center on strengthening second-year retention, improving credit momentum, and scaling the student support practices that are already working, particularly those benefiting underrepresented students and transfer populations.

Further discussing retention and student success, Chancellor Tillis described how the university is expanding high-touch re-enrollment efforts to bring stopped-out students back through coordinated outreach via phone, email, text, and social media, focusing on first-time, full-time students who entered Rutgers–Camden in fall terms from 2021 through 2026 and have since paused their studies. Survey data consistently shows that attrition is driven primarily by personal (69%), financial (42%), and academic (37%) factors; these insights guide both retention strategies for current students and targeted “return to learn” efforts for those who have stopped out. To strengthen retention, Rutgers–Camden is launching a pilot First-Year Experience in summer 2026 that aligns support from enrollment through the start of classes, including targeted programming to address personal and academic barriers by ensuring students are aware of campus resources, develop academic and career goals, build a sense of belonging, and strengthen self-efficacy. Rutgers–Camden is also enhancing orientation and student support networks through online modules for parents and families while expanding summer academic pathways – including Success in Science, Summer Bridge, and the EOF Institute – to better prepare students, particularly those in STEM fields and those at higher risk for attrition. Throughout the first year,

students will engage in structured pathways that integrate career exploration, experiential learning, and identity development, paired with individual and group coaching to improve persistence and overall student success.

Next, Chancellor Tillis discussed how Rutgers–Camden’s fiscal responsibility is sustaining momentum. For FY27, tuition and fees remain the primary revenue source – reinforcing the importance of enrollment growth and retention. He explained that strategic allocation and careful budgeting allow the campus to invest in priorities while maintaining long-term stability, supported by external funding and philanthropy.

Chancellor Tillis noted that Rutgers–Camden continues to demonstrate strength and stability. To date in FY26, Rutgers–Camden has secured \$22.6 million in grant funding—already surpassing FY25’s \$20.4 million total. This ensures FY26 will be the second-largest grant funding year in campus history, reflecting faculty excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strong external confidence in our research enterprise. Complementing this growth, institutional advancement has reached \$6,607,086, surpassing the FY26 goal by almost \$1 million, underscoring sustained philanthropic investment and alumni engagement.

Institutional metrics matter, Chancellor Tillis explained, and are best understood through the experiences of students whose lives are shaped by this university. Chancellor Tillis shared the powerful example of Jacob Dinerman, a liberal studies major who returned to college with renewed purpose and has excelled in cross country and track and field. Since enrolling at Rutgers–Camden, Mr. Dinerman has set school records, earned conference recognition across multiple sports, and represented the university at the NCAA Cross Country National Championships. His story is a testament to resilience, maturity, and the transformational power of education. Chancellor Tillis thanked Athletic Director Tom Thomasson for his role in supporting students like Mr. Dinerman.

Chancellor Tillis pointed out that this commitment is reflected among the university’s doctoral students. This year, Rutgers–Camden launched a Dissertation Boot Camp, providing post-qualifying Ph.D. candidates with dedicated time, structure, and community. The program strengthened momentum toward degree completion and reinforced the critical importance of academic belonging – particularly at the most demanding stages of graduate education.

Chancellor Tillis described how global opportunity continues to expand for students with financial need. This spring, three Rutgers–Camden students – Christien Nicole Brown, Eva Chen, and Tia Franco – were selected as Gilman Scholars, all first-generation college students representing different undergraduate schools and committed to expanding their global perspectives through study abroad. Collectively, they aim to use international experiences to advance their academic interests and future careers while promoting access and opportunity for others. These awards reflect both student excellence and the impact of intentional mentorship.

Chancellor Tillis pointed out that student success of this caliber is inseparable from faculty leadership – scholarship that is rigorous, engaged, and forward-looking. This year, Rutgers–Camden launched the AI Campus Initiative, positioning the university as the Philadelphia region’s only partner in the National AI Campus network. The initiative, led by Vice Chancellor

for Research Tom Risch, along with Senior Program Coordinator Ojobu Agbo Eje, emphasizes ethical, applied AI literacy and interdisciplinary engagement, preparing students to navigate one of the most transformative innovations of our time.

Turning to faculty achievements, Chancellor Tillis shared examples of Rutgers–Camden faculty who earned continued national distinction, including:

- Dr. Oscar Holmes IV, of the School of Business, inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Collegium of Scholars at Morehouse College for leadership and community impact.
- Prof. Patrick Rosal, of the School of Arts and Sciences, named Guggenheim Poet in Residence, connecting public engagement and the arts on a national stage.
- Dr. Jamille Nagtalon Ramos, of the School of Nursing, expanded global learning through a new nursing program in the Philippines supported by a formal international partnership.

Next, Chancellor Tillis highlighted some of Rutgers–Camden’s points of pride among its alumni. Graduating earlier this month from Rutgers Law School, Maida Public Interest Fellow Kerry Robinson is leveraging his degree to expand access to affordable housing, providing legal support in areas like eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and community housing development. Through public interest work, he is helping underserved communities secure stable housing while addressing broader systemic housing challenges. Other alumni have been recognized for advancing STEM innovation, shaping higher education policy, and serving in leadership roles across sectors. One such example is special education teacher, Tiffanie Thrbak CCAS ’93, who earned Teacher of the Year for Cumberland County.

Chancellor Tillis pointed to Commencement as the most visible affirmation of the university’s mission – a celebration of perseverance, mentorship, and families whose belief carries students across the stage and into their futures. This year, Rutgers University–Camden conferred 1,713 degrees during its historic Centennial year, including 1,070 undergraduate and 643 graduate and professional degrees – an achievement that reflects both the institution’s academic strength and its expanding impact. Notably, the graduating class spans generations, with the youngest graduate at just 19 years old and the oldest at 73, underscoring Rutgers–Camden’s enduring relevance and accessibility.

Rutgers–Camden’s mission is inseparable from Camden and the broader region the university serves, explained Chancellor Tillis. Rutgers–Camden’s engagement is rooted in partnership, public leadership, and shared progress. This spring, Rutgers–Camden student athletes participated in Governor Mikie Sherrill’s announcement of New Jersey’s World Cup Community Initiative, highlighting our university’s presence in statewide civic and cultural moments tied to the FIFA World Cup 2026. Rutgers–Camden also welcomed Governor Thomas H. Kean for a Centennial Lecture on Inclusive Politics and Civic Dialogue, reinforcing the university’s role as a convener of thoughtful, respectful public discourse. Rutgers–Camden recently marked the topping off of the \$60 million Cooper Street Gateway Project, a milestone in transforming historic properties into a 25,000-square-foot academic and community hub. The project is on track for completion in 2027 and represents a long-term investment in students and the City of Camden. Chancellor Tillis described how, resulting from an NJEDA investment partnership, Rutgers–Camden is exploring a focused collaboration with Tale Venture Capital through the proposed IMPACT Hub.

During his final Board of Directors meeting, Chancellor Tillis expressed that serving as Chancellor of Rutgers–Camden has been the privilege of a lifetime. He expressed his thanks for the Board’s trust, counsel, and commitment to this institution, particularly during moments that required steadiness and resolve. He shared his gratitude to the faculty and staff, whose dedication sustains this university every day; to the students, who inspire its purpose; to the alumni, who carry its legacy forward; and to the community partners, whose collaboration makes the university’s mission real. He expressed pride and deep confidence in Rutgers–Camden’s future. This is a strong, mission-anchored institution, said Chancellor Tillis, and it has been his honor to walk this path with the Board.

Chancellor Tillis concluded his presentation by inviting all in attendance to join Senior Vice Chancellor Nyeema Watson for a tour of The Bridge, Rutgers–Camden’s new student space for cultural events, workshops, and performances that celebrate the varied lived experiences of the student body.

ROWAN UNIVERSITY/RUTGERS–CAMDEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS UPDATE

Dr. Dougherty invited Jeffery Nash, CEO of the Rowan University/Rutgers–Camden Board of Governors, to provide an update on the activities of that organization. He reminded his fellow board members that he has represented Rutgers–Camden on that board. Mr. Nash explained that the Board of Governors 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.

Mr. Nash introduced representatives from Hopeworks to discuss a project aimed at advancing the development of the downtown region. Speakers included: John Kissling, Web Director; Angel Rivera, Web Project Specialist; and Dan Krause, Senior Director of Sales and Marketing. Hopeworks is a non-profit social enterprise that has been in Camden for over 25 years. It trains youth in web development, GIS, and professional skills, combining real-world experience with trauma-informed support in a pipeline into living-wage careers. In relation to the Downtown Camden Master Plan, they provided an overview of projects that can realistically come to fruition over the next 10 years..

Mr. Nash gave an overview of some of the Camden development projects that are in the works. He complimented Mr. Kissling and Mr. Rivera for advancing the project and emphasized that the goal is for the City of Camden to be self-sufficient. Chancellor Tillis asked Mr. Nash to speak further about the planned co-op. Mr. Nash explained that 50 community leaders have come together to build a food co-op in Camden. He pointed out that this group believes the co-op is the correct model for providing lasting options for feeding the city. The goal is to have the co-op open in one-to-two years. The person overseeing the initiative is a Rutgers Ph.D. candidate.

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, with a focus on the end of Chancellor Tillis' tenure. Dr. Dougherty explained that he has worked with three different chancellors and that he has been fortunate to have worked with Chancellor Tillis. He described how Chancellor Tillis immersed himself in Rutgers–Camden and did an amazing job.

Mr. Piazza described the great work of Chancellor Tillis, pointing to the improvements in Rutgers–Camden's rankings and funding. He said that Chancellor Tillis strengthened the university in higher education and elevated the awareness of the great things happening in Camden. He thanked Chancellor Tillis for his many contributions. He expressed his appreciation for the Chancellor's words in Spanish and wished him all the best.

Dr. MacDonald said that it made the Board proud to see the foundation that Chancellor Tillis laid. He said that the Chancellor's 15-in-5 initiative was fantastic and that his vision and strategy were excellent. He said that Chancellor Tillis laid a great foundation for the next leaders to build on and described how he led with caring and grace, a special quality that is rare in a leader.

Mr. McCarthy described how the Chancellor's leadership advanced student success, strengthened collaborative partnerships, and left a meaningful legacy. He thanked Chancellor Tillis for his kindness and thoughtfulness, which have made a difference.

A community member described an issue he had and asked for assistance. Vice Chancellor for Governmental and External Affairs Mike Sepanic said he would take responsibility for finding a resolution and pointing this community member in the right direction.

ADJOURNMENT

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