

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

A meeting of the Camden Board of Directors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was held on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 10 a.m. in the Rutgers–Camden Campus Center, Camden, New Jersey. Dr. James Dougherty presided as Chair.

Present and constituting a quorum were Covington, DiMartino, Dougherty, and MacDonald.

Tambussi was absent.

Attending for the university administration were Tillis, Sepanic, and Loeser.

Also present were Rabinowitz, faculty representative to the Board of Directors, Gordon, graduate student representative to the Board of Directors, and Brodsky, undergraduate student representative to the Board of Directors.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Dougherty called the meeting to order and welcomed Mr. George Loeser, associate general counsel, whom Mr. Robert Roesener, deputy general counsel, appointed to serve as the Board’s legal counsel.

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 18, 2024 with the Office of the Secretary of 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 Rutgers–Camden Board of Directors website.

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 SEPTEMBER 14, 2023, MEETING

Dr. Dougherty called attention to the minutes of the September 14, 2023, 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 called on Mr. Matthew Brodsky and Ms. Gaylene Gordon, undergraduate and graduate student representatives, respectively, to address the Board on their experiences as students at Rutgers University–Camden.

A senior majoring in political science and an Eagleton Institute of Politics’ undergraduate associate, Mr. Brodsky highlighted leadership opportunities he has had as an intern for several members of Congress and as president of the Rutgers University–Camden Student Government Association, student leader of the Rutgers University–Camden Votes Coalition, and member of the Civic Scholars Bonner Leadership Team. Mr. Brodsky hopes to build on this foundation in leadership and advocacy by working on Capitol Hill on Washington, DC.

Ms. Gordon, a Ph.D. student in childhood studies, earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in criminal justice at Rutgers University–Camden. A non-traditional student, Ms. Gordon described a “culture of care” at Rutgers University–Camden which fostered her personal and professional development through mentorship and a wealth of opportunity including research, publication, teaching, speaking at conferences and commencement, leadership roles, study abroad, and training in civic engagement as a graduate and faculty fellow. Ms. Gordon said that “the impact of merging a determined mentee with the proper mentors cannot be overstated” and is something she carries forward.

Mr. Brodsky and Ms. Gordon concluded their presentations by answering questions from Board members.

CHANCELLOR’S REPORT

Chancellor Antonio D. Tillis provided his report to the Board regarding the status of the campus, including updates on enrollment, centennial celebration planning, strategic initiatives, the Chancellor’s “15 in 5” initiatives, student success initiatives, research highlights, student achievements, alumni success, recent campus awards, community engagement, and highlights of upcoming events.

Enrollment at Rutgers University–Camden continues to gain momentum after pandemic-related declines. Significant gains occurred in new FTIC, transfers, and graduate student enrollments this fall, with increases continuing across the board in spring, particularly in new transfer students. Graduate student enrollment continues to increase year over year. First-year student applications for Fall 2024 have increased greatly, presumably in part due to implementation of the Common Application. Chancellor Tillis also reviewed graduation and retention rates.

Rutgers University–Camden will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2026. Dr. Margaret Marsh, University Professor, dean emerita, and alumna, and Mr. James Rhodes, alumnus and “founding father” of the Rutgers University Alumni Association, will lead the planning process for this exciting celebration. Early in the Spring 2024 semester, they will announce a call for volunteers to serve on the steering committee for this milestone event.

At an event held on November 29, Chancellor Tillis launched Rutgers University–Camden’s 2023-2028 strategic plan. Chancellor Tillis outlined the ambitious goals of each of the five strategic pillars of focus and action: Academic Excellence, Transformative Student Success, Holistic Student Experience, Beloved Camden Community, and Internationalization.

Chancellor Tillis noted the recent launch of his last four “15 in 5” initiatives: the Chancellor’s Distinguished Visiting Scholar Grant; the Chancellor’s Grant for Faculty Development in Administrative Roles; the Chancellor’s Grant for Post-Doctoral Studies; and the Chancellor’s Faculty Book Completion

Grant. Chancellor Tillis paid particular attention to the student-focused initiatives and the opportunities they provide, including funding for study abroad, internships, post-doctoral studies, research, and dissertation completion. To date, 274 members of the Rutgers–Camden community have benefitted from \$879,000 in funding from the Chancellor’s “15 in 5” initiatives.

Under the direction of Dr. Thomas Risch, vice chancellor for research, the Carnegie R2 research enterprise at Rutgers–Camden continues to flourish. On a year-to-date comparison, the value of awards received more than doubled from FY23, with an increasing number of multi-year awards close to or exceeding \$2 million each from funders including the National Institutes of Health, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

In addition to the Board’s undergraduate and graduate representatives, Chancellor Tillis highlighted several other students who are excelling in and out of the classroom: Isabella Choice is considered one of the top players in the New Jersey Athletic Conference, Olivia Ayscue is executive director of the College Democrats of New Jersey, Jacob Kopach advocates for the mental health of fellow Rutgers–Camden veterans, Sharellis Sepulveda received the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship for International Study, and women’s basketball guard Rahzirah Blocker reached 1,000 career points on January 17.

Chancellor Tillis also highlighted several alumni who exemplify Rutgers–Camden’s tradition of excellence and success: Tina Mikes was recognized for a decade of service to fellow veterans, Prentiss Dantzler was awarded the 2023 Jane Addams Best Article Award by the American Sociological Association, Steve Selfridge is serving as the School of Business–Camden’s inaugural executive in residence, and Nimit Kaur is working as a disability services coordinator for Camden County.

Chancellor Tillis shared two special announcements with respect to community engagement efforts which, along with civic engagement, are at the core of Rutgers–Camden’s commitment to partnering with and giving back to the city, region, and state. Illustrative of this strong commitment, Rutgers University–Camden once again received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective designation awarded by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In addition, Rutgers University–Camden has earned a 2024 Richard Guarasci Award for Institutional Transformation from Campus Compact. This award honors colleges and universities anchored by a team that advances civic and community engagement across teaching, research, and practice. Chancellor Tillis also highlighted grant awards from the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection which partially fund the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement’s initiatives to serve local youth.

Chancellor Tillis concluded his presentation by highlighting upcoming events and answering questions from Board members.

FOCUS ON HOWARD HUGHES MEDICAL INSTITUTE (HHMI) GRANT AWARD

Chancellor Tillis introduced Dr. Kwangwon Lee, professor of biology, to make a presentation on the \$2.5 million grant he received from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to advance work on inclusive excellency in STEM education at Rutgers–Camden.

Dr. Lee indicated that the foundation for the HHMI grant was created by several years of grassroots efforts to establish lasting cultural change in STEM education and a one-year self-assessment study funded by HHMI. Based on the results of this study, which identified seven obstacles to students succeeding in STEM programs, Rutgers–Camden was one of only six universities nationwide to receive this prestigious funding.

Dr. Lee explained that the five-year HHMI grant will be used to create the Institute for Empowering Equitable Education in STEM (E3) at Rutgers University–Camden. The institute, which strives to uplift all students to reach their fullest potential, has three key objectives: equitable pedagogy and course design, inclusive curricular and program design, and equitable University policies. In the first two years, the institute will focus on developing faculty/staff leaders through cohort programs, creating a forum on equitable STEM education policy, and developing self-paced pre-courses in foundational science subjects to improve student preparedness for college study.

Dr. Lee also discussed related efforts including working with local teachers to identify academically talented students whose circumstances prevent them from pursuing higher education, working to include experiential learning in all science courses at Rutgers–Camden, and fostering student development from year one to create competitive candidates for admission to doctoral programs in the sciences.

All this work, Dr. Lee suggested, positions Rutgers–Camden to become the foremost national example of equitable STEM excellence in underserved communities.

UPDATE ON ROWAN UNIVERSITY/RUTGERS–CAMDEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Dr. Dougherty introduced Mr. Jeffrey Nash, CEO of the Rowan University/Rutgers–Camden Board of Governors, to provide an update on the Joint Board.

After a brief overview of the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act, which created the Joint Board in 2012, Mr. Nash focused on the economic development function of the legislation.

Following a standstill caused by the pandemic, the city of Camden is once again poised for reinvigoration through economic development. Projects Mr. Nash cited include Cooper University Health Care’s planned \$2 billion expansion, funding of \$250 million from the State of New Jersey to replace the existing Walter Rand Transportation Center with a new mixed-use center, building market-rate housing in the vicinity of the Lanning Square neighborhood, and working with Rutgers University to build a food market that will be operated by a community co-op.

Mr. Nash also discussed possible projects outside the footprint of the Joint Health Sciences Center including mixed-use development along the Camden waterfront and a 32-mile trail stretching from the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to Winslow, New Jersey.

Mr. Nash concluded his presentation by answering questions from Board members.

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. Chancellor Tillis sadly marked the recent passing of Mr. Jeffrey Dean, Rutgers–Camden's long-serving athletic director. There was no further 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 at 11:23 a.m.

Minutes prepared and submitted by,

Michele L. Robinson
Rutgers University–Camden Chancellor's Office