

October 27, 2011

Mr. Ralph Izzo
Chair of the Board of Governors of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Dear Mr. Izzo,

I write as president of the Faculty Senate of the Rutgers-Camden Faculty of Arts and Sciences as a result of a meeting of the Senate that was held on October 18. The Senate asked unanimously that I write to you and others in order to communicate its concern—which I fully share--about the possible reorganization of higher education in New Jersey that has been written about in several newspaper articles during the past few weeks.

Although we appreciate George Norcross's and Governor Christie's professed desire to enhance the quality of higher education in the southern as well as the central and northern parts of our state, we are not at all convinced that breaking up what exists now and creating something entirely new makes much if any sense for our campus or for the southern region of New Jersey. For Rutgers to take over the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School of UMDNJ, from which it is separated by a distance of only a few miles, may well be quite sensible. Resulting synergies could greatly strengthen both institutions. Proceeding along the same lines in the greater Camden area would not, however, be nearly as feasible, the distance between Rutgers-Camden and Rowan University being almost nineteen miles and the distance between Rutgers-Camden and the School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford being almost as great. How all of these institutions could be consolidated into a single entity that would function effectively as a single university is difficult to envisage.

Great though the logistical challenges would be, they are not the source of our deepest concerns. These have to do with the likelihood that whatever new university might be created down here—although it would of course be bigger than Rutgers-Camden—would lack the quality and stature of what currently exists. Rutgers-Camden can boast of a distinguished faculty, whose members have fully met the high standards that are in effect for faculty members in New Brunswick. (One of my colleagues in the Rutgers-Camden History Department, for example, just won a coveted MacArthur "genius" award of \$500,000 in recognition of his path-breaking work in early modern European history.) Retaining the outstanding scholars who are here now, let alone attracting new men and women of their caliber in the future, would be much more difficult if we were a campus of a University of Southern New Jersey than it is currently. If faculty members who currently live in Philadelphia or elsewhere in Pennsylvania found that they had to drive to Glassboro to teach some of their classes, many of them would almost certainly seek positions elsewhere. And even if they did not have to make this trip, just the loss of the Rutgers name would make our campus much less attractive than it is now.

My colleagues and I envisage other difficulties as well. Students and faculty at Rutgers-Camden currently benefit from being able to make use of a university-wide library system, without which advanced research would probably be much more difficult than it is now. I say "probably" because there is at least a theoretical possibility that a new university would receive enough funding to purchase the expensive electronic databases that we have become accustomed to using. Whether that would really happen is, however, very much open to question.

I could write a great deal more about the fears felt by a number of my colleagues—which I earnestly hope are unfounded—that being cut loose from Rutgers would lead to loss of tenure and loss of collective bargaining rights for men and women who have been led to believe that they had earned secure employment. You should understand that these fears are widespread, even though I have sought to keep the focus in this letter not on what would be good for my colleagues and me but instead on what we honestly believe would be good for future students and for the state of New Jersey.

I enclose for your consideration a copy of the latest issue of *The Gleaner*, the Rutgers-Camden student newspaper, which I find quite moving. As you will quickly see, there is great consternation among students over the possibility they may lose their identity as enrollees at and graduates of our state’s leading research university. They are concerned as well over the possibility that students who come after them will fail to get as good an education as they have gotten. My colleagues and I feel strongly that people in leadership positions at our University (e.g., you and I and others too) should be prepared to speak out as vigorously as our students are doing in defense of what President McCormick likes to describe as “our Rutgers.” Please stand with us and fight for us as we seek to withstand what is threatening to become a renewed assault on an institution we have all learned to respect and to cherish.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lees
Professor II of History
President of the Rutgers-Camden FAS Senate

Copies to: Richard McCormick, Prersident
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