

Rutgers University Senate

REPORT AND RESOLUTION ON PROPOSED REDUCTION IN STATE FUNDING

Approved by the Senate at its regular meeting on
February 21, 2003

Much of New Jersey society has connections to Rutgers University, and has been shocked by the devastating and unprecedented cuts in the proposed budget for the State of New Jersey. The Rutgers University Senate recognizes the difficult financial situation that the State of New Jersey is facing, and acknowledges that severe budgetary reductions have been proposed in nearly all state-supported operations. Although the Rutgers University Senate is not insensitive to the impact of these reductions in other areas, we need to point out the qualitative differences between those cuts and those proposed cuts for higher education in general and Rutgers University in particular:

- The 11.9% reduction is disproportionate compared with higher education cuts in general and within the context of the proposed state budget, which carries a 1% increase.
- The proposed cuts come on the heels of chronic underfunding that has placed Rutgers University in a more vulnerable situation than other sectors.
- Higher education is unique among the affected sectors in the role that reputation plays in achieving academic excellence. Reputations are built over decades, but can be ruined within a few years. Once a certain threshold is reached, inability to retain the best faculty may cause irreparable damage to the institution's reputation. Indeed, no institution of higher education has ever recovered from such a decline.

Rutgers is New Jersey's flagship institution of higher education, and plays a central role in creating the educated and highly trained workforce necessary for New Jersey's economic progress.. Rutgers has already been severely strained by years of disproportionate underfunding, including last year's substantial mid-year cuts. Placing those cuts into context illustrates the extended impact of those cuts: Rutgers was already ranked near the bottom third of states in percentage of state allocations to higher education *prior* to the newly proposed cuts. The new cuts in state allocations to Rutgers will result in significantly reduced course offerings and educational programs, decreased faculty/student ratio (which has already been declining under the combination of rising enrollments and budget shortfalls of the last decade), and critically impaired ability to recruit -- and especially retain -- the talented faculty upon whom its excellence depends. The proposed cuts will also necessitate tuition increases and limit enrollment levels which (especially in combination with the proposed budget for the TAG programs) will limit access to higher education for many residents of our state, .

Other proposed cuts, which will also affect Rutgers by decreasing its funding by over \$6 million, include:

- Funding for the Outstanding Scholars Recruitment Program for high-achieving students that will be reduced.
- Funding for cutting-edge research under the state's Commission on Science and Technology that will be eliminated.
- State-funded scholarly chairs that will be eliminated.
- The state's incentive endowment fund that matches private gifts that will be eliminated.
- Other state grant programs in arts, history, and other areas that will be eliminated.

The 170,000 Rutgers alumni living in New Jersey play a pivotal role in the economic growth and processes of our state, and are ample evidence of the need for sustained, predictable, and adequate funding for Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Although budgets are being cut in numerous other critical areas of the state, the reductions for Rutgers are unique in that they follow on decades of decreased funding coupled with increased demands on higher education. Academic reputations are built slowly over many years. The proposed cuts risk undoing the progress of the last twenty years. They are all the more frustrating given the recent proposals made by Governor McGreevey and the NJ Commission on Health Science, Education and Training to reorganize New Jersey higher education in order to help achieve yet greater excellence. Regardless of the merits of the proposed structural changes, any changes are unlikely to succeed in the current environment of massive budgetary cuts.

In light of the foregoing, the Rutgers University Senate, consisting of over 200 members of the Rutgers and New Jersey communities, including alumni, students, faculty and administrators, advances to the State of New Jersey and Governor McGreevey, the following:

**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED AND CONTINUED BUDGET CUTS,
AND IN SUPPORT OF EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY**

Whereas, an educated and highly trained workforce is necessary for the economic progress of the State; and,

Whereas, Rutgers, as the flagship institution of higher education for New Jersey, currently plays a leadership role in training the people of our State and in the overall economic growth of New Jersey, and,

Whereas, continued excellence depends upon sustained, predictable, and adequate funding; and,

Whereas, the projected budget cuts are of an enormous and shocking magnitude, especially following years of underfunding and last year's significant mid-year cuts; and,

Whereas, the budget cuts will limit access to higher education for many residents of our State; and,

Whereas, academic reputations are built slowly over many years, and once compromised cannot be regained; and,

Whereas, the proposed cuts are unique among those impacting the many other critical areas of the State in that they compound problems caused by decades of increasingly inadequate funding, and risk pushing Rutgers past a threshold that could undo the progress of the last twenty years;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the State prevent the most serious erosion in the quality of higher education in New Jersey by providing sufficient and appropriate funding for higher education; and,

Be It Further Resolved, that the Governor's Review and Implementation Committee of the NJ Commission on Health Science, Education and Training delay recommendations for any significant actions concerning the reorganization of New Jersey higher education until the associated cost for each action has been assessed and the necessary financial commitment to achieve them has been made by the State; and,

Be It Also Resolved, that the State also look beyond the current fiscal crisis and work with the higher education community to develop a plan for predictable, sustained, and adequate funding that can help New Jersey higher education achieve our shared goal of academic excellence, as called for in the report of the NJ Commission on Health Science, Education and Training