Rutgers New Brunswick Faculty Council
Statement Concerning the Reorganization of New Jersey’s
Public Research Universities and the Report of the
University Committee - Central
November 21, 2003

The Rutgers New Brunswick Faculty Council, representing the faculty of all units of Rutgers University in New Brunswick and Piscataway, enthusiastically supports efforts to strive for excellence in all aspects of higher education in New Jersey. In this spirit, we endorse the vision set forth in the report of the University Central Committee. The Council is enthusiastic about the proposed merging of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School with Rutgers-New Brunswick and supports the major recommendations of the University Central Committee with respect to the structure of the merged institution. In particular:

- We strongly support the recommendation for a single Vice President for Academic Affairs to whom the dean of the medical school, as well as other academic deans, will report.
- All major academic programs offered at the New Brunswick/Piscataway institution should be part of that institution. No leading institution of higher education has major programs serviced by another institution. We therefore strongly support the recommendations for the establishment of a School of Business and a School of Nursing in New Brunswick/Piscataway.

The Council is more cautious in its support for other, more global aspects of the proposed restructuring of New Jersey’s public research universities. Key issues of funding and governance must be addressed before we can unequivocally support the proposed restructuring as a vehicle that will lead to the increased excellence that we all desire.

The Council reiterates the following principles that must form the basis for a successful restructuring of New Jersey research universities:

- The goal of the restructuring must be excellence - not cost savings, not capacity growth, and not reorganization for reorganization’s sake. The metric by which all detailed restructuring proposals must be judged is the extent to which excellence is likely to be achieved.
- Any restructuring of the public research universities must be accompanied by a firm commitment to enhance excellence in all aspects of teaching, research and service - not just those related to health science, education and training.
- Rutgers New Brunswick/Piscataway is the flagship public research university in the State. Out of all institutions of higher education in New Jersey, the Association of American Universities (AAU) - a century-old organization of 62 universities in the US and Canada devoted to maintaining a strong system of academic research and education - has invited only Princeton University and the New Brunswick/Piscataway campus of Rutgers to join its membership. Any quest for excellence in New Jersey higher education must recognize and protect the excellence already achieved in New Brunswick and Piscataway and support the drive to bring New Jersey’s flagship university into the top echelon of public research universities.
- With or without restructuring, excellence will only be achievable with appropriate, sustained, and predictable funding, and steps to ensure such funding must be laid out clearly and unequivocally. Measures that could achieve the required level and reliability of funding include establishing a dedicated funding stream for higher education, and establishing guarantees of state support of each student’s cost of education, at a rate that reflects a genuine commitment to excellence. In particular, we agree with the recommendation of the New Jersey Commission on Health Science, Education and Training which, in its original report under section 7.9 (Funding), endorsed “the state’s existing objective of funding two-thirds of educational operating costs for NJ students in state research universities and 90 percent of costs for health science students . . . as outlined in the 1995 Report of the Commission on Higher Education on Funding and Tuition Establishment”.
- The quest for excellence requires guidance from and participation by all the stakeholders in higher education as well as protection from political forces whose focus may stray from academic excellence. Therefore:
○ If there is to be a Chancellor and a Board of Regents, they should primarily serve as advocates for higher education in Trenton and coordinate academic missions across the universities created by the reorganization.

○ If there is to be such a Chancellor, broadening his or her responsibilities to include all New Jersey public institutions of higher education would make possible even greater opportunities for excellence. This would create a single effective advocate for higher education in Trenton, and a single office responsible for comprehensive mission differentiation for the entire system of higher education in the State.

○ Each of the research universities formed from the restructuring should have a strong local Board of Governors/Trustees with authority to govern and operate the university, as well as appoint its President.

○ All governing boards, including the Board of Regents, should have sufficiently representative faculty membership.

○ Each university formed from the restructuring should have strong and effective mechanisms for shared governance.

The New Brunswick Faculty Council is enthusiastically committed to the goal espoused by Governor McGreevey and the Commission on Health Science, Education and Training to move New Jersey’s public research universities into the top tier of those in the Nation. The concerns that we raise about funding and governance reflect our strong commitment to achieving that goal. We remain eager to continue working constructively with all the major stakeholders in New Jersey higher education on achieving our common goal of excellence.