



NBFC 2024-25 Annual Report

Submitted by Prof. Anna Haley, 2023-26 Chair

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the activities, functioning, and contributions of the New Brunswick Faculty Council (NBFC) during the 2024–25 academic year. It is intended both as a tool of accountability and of continuity, linking one year’s Council representatives to the next and informing and guiding the new academic year’s work.

The report is also a hopefully valuable means of communication – for sharing the Council’s work with its primary constituency, New Brunswick faculty, as well as with the Chancellor and her leadership team and the broader university community. The report will be publicly available on the NBFC website and sent directly to the Chancellor and her team. Council representatives are encouraged to share it with their constituencies (within their schools, departments, and other relevant units).

The sections below offer summaries of NBFC’s main meetings; major focuses of Council work; and the work of the Executive Committee, standing committees, and student staff in 2024-25.

FOCUSES IN NBFC MAIN MEETINGS

Themes from the Chair

Throughout 2024–25, the Chair used opening remarks to orient Council members to both immediate updates and broader challenges. Early in the year she welcomed new members, introduced Executive Committee and committee co-chairs, and shared improvements in Council functioning through the addition of Chancellor-funded student support staff, new representative orientation sessions, elections (vs. Chair appointment) of committee co-chairs, and the transition to Microsoft Teams as a central platform for communication and records storage. She encouraged members to participate in Council-sponsored initiatives, including the two in-meeting dean panels, a jointly hosted conference on artificial intelligence in teaching in December, and Council socials designed to build connection.

As the year progressed, the Chair reported on Council involvement in campus operations and faculty (and student and staff) experience initiatives, such as Rutgers’ parking and transportation services and dining services self-studies, and a follow-up to recommendations from faculty surveys like the Senate’s Course Atlas report. She also highlighted the Council’s role in advising university leadership on federal administration actions, including funding freezes and other restrictions affecting research and academic programming. In that context, she announced the creation with the Chancellor of an ad hoc response committee to advise the Chancellor’s team

on these issues, and she stressed the need for Council to coordinate with the Senate and other university shared governance entities on responses.

The Chair regularly underscored the role of shared governance in guiding these efforts, framing it as the best means to identify problems accurately and develop solutions with broad support. She also emphasized NBFC's responsibility to refine its own practices of vertical, horizontal, and internal and external communication; build inclusion and representation through promoting unit elections that fill all possible representative slots; electing vs. appointing committee leadership; and cultivating new EC leadership. She also announced a year-end Council evaluation survey. In her final reflections, she urged the Council to carry forward both the substance of its policy work and the strengthening of its internal practices as essential foundations for governance in a time of external pressure on higher education.

Speakers

9/27	Chancellor Francine Conway; Update on Fringe Rate Negotiations with the State, Patrick Nowlan, Executive Director, Rutgers AAUP-AFT
10/25	Academic Freedom and Rutgers' new Free Expression Guidelines, Audrey Truschke, Professor, Rutgers-Newark History and Chair, AAUP Academic Freedom Committee
11/22	<i>Deans Panel:</i> • Dr. Alberto Cuitiño (School of Engineering) • Dr. Juli Wade (School of Arts and Sciences) • Dr. Lei Lei (Business School (New Brunswick and Newark)) • Dr. Stuart Shapiro (Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy)
1/31	Chancellor Conway
2/28	<i>Deans Panel:</i> • Dr. Mark Anner (School of Management and Labor Relations) • Dr. Laura Lawson, School of Environmental & Biological Sciences (and Executive Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station) • Dr. George Leibowitz, School of Social Work • Dr. Mark Robson, School of Graduate Studies • Dr. Christopher Span, Graduate School of Education
4/4	New Brunswick Budgeting Discussion: Nayland Smith, Vice Chancellor for Finance, and Professor Andrew Goldstone
5/2	Incoming Provost Jason Geary (Outgoing Dean of Mason Gross School of Arts and Vice Provost of Special Initiatives)

Resolutions adopted by the full Council

- [Resolution on New Brunswick Faculty Representation in Rutgers Presidential Search](#) (November 22, 2024): In this resolution, the NBFC called on the Rutgers Board of Governors to include a faculty representative recommended by the NBFC on the upcoming presidential search committee, ensuring New Brunswick faculty interests are meaningfully represented. Citing Rutgers' tradition of shared governance and past precedent for faculty involvement in presidential searches, the resolution urges that the NBFC-selected faculty member participate fully in the search and decision-making process.

- [Resolution Upholding Shared Governance at the School of Arts and Sciences – New Brunswick](#) (February 28, 2025): In this resolution, the NBFC expressed deep concern over the SAS Executive Dean’s refusal to place a faculty-proposed bylaw amendment on the full faculty meeting agenda—an action that violated SAS bylaws and undermined shared governance. The resolution calls on the Chancellor to remind all New Brunswick deans that managerial authority does not exempt them from seeking faculty input or following established policies, especially on matters with significant academic and curricular implications such as course stop points. It also reaffirms the importance of transparency, faculty participation, and adherence to shared governance across all academic units.
- [Resolution on the Federal Grant Funding Chaos and the New Brunswick Campus Response](#) (February 28, 2025): In this resolution, the NBFC sought to address urgent threats posed by federal funding disruptions—such as work stoppages, canceled grants, and a sharp cut to Rutgers’ NIH indirect cost rate—that jeopardize research, student support, and academic freedom. It calls for non-administrative New Brunswick faculty to serve on any campus response committee, with representation reflecting the breadth of affected research, and urges the Chancellor to endorse the resolution and maintain regular, two-way communication with the NBFC.
- [Resolution on the New Brunswick Honors College Recent Curriculum Revisions](#) (April 04, 2025): In this resolution, the NBFC sought to reaffirm faculty authority over curricular matters and raise concerns about the process by which the new Rutgers Honors College curriculum was developed and approved. Citing a lack of transparency, limited consultation with departments and schools, and the absence of NBFC input prior to implementation, the resolution calls on the Chancellor to delay rollout of the curriculum and to establish more transparent and inclusive processes for future curricular changes.

Discussions about federal action impacts on New Brunswick faculty

During 2025, the NBFC engaged faculty in two complementary ways to assess the implications of recent federal actions for Rutgers–New Brunswick: (1) break-out discussions during the January 2025 Council meeting, and (2) subsequent outreach by NBFC representatives to their departmental and school-level constituents in late February and early March. Together, these efforts provided a broad and representative picture of faculty concerns and recommendations, culminating in the creation of the NBFC Ad Hoc Response Committee (described later in this report).

Council meeting break-out discussions (January 2025)

At the January Council meeting, representatives broke into Zoom break-out rooms to explore potential impacts of shifting federal policies on research and academic programs. Across groups, faculty called for the NBFC to take a more visible and proactive role in coordinating communication and advocacy on issues such as DEI, academic freedom, and protections for vulnerable students and faculty.

Participants emphasized the importance of drafting principled public defenses of DEI to help departments counter mischaracterizations, and of developing shared strategies and protocols across units—especially in response to possible ICE activity on or near campus. Faculty also urged the Council to monitor emerging risks and advocate for protections in evaluation, promotion, and employment practices, particularly for NTT and pre-tenure faculty whose work in politically sensitive areas may make them disproportionately vulnerable. In addition,

representatives stressed the need to strengthen cross-school communication and policy visibility, positioning the NBFC as a bridge to identify gaps, promote consistent messaging, and convene forums that foster community and mutual support in a politically volatile climate.

Constituent input gathered by NBFC representatives (February–March 2025)

Following up on the in-meeting discussions, between February 28 and March 9, 2025, NBFC representatives sought input from faculty colleagues across 17 departments and six schools/units. (This effort culminated in the March 9 memo “*NBFC Constituent Input on Federal Actions*,” sent to the Chancellor and her team.) Faculty highlighted several interrelated concerns:

- Research funding: Threats to NIH, NSF, USDA, and DOE streams were described as undermining Rutgers’ ability to sustain graduate assistants, postdocs, salaries, and hiring, while weakening the research infrastructure that depends on indirect cost recovery.
- Academic freedom: Faculty feared political directives could limit DEI-related teaching and research, prompt premature compliance, and encourage self-censorship.
- Vulnerable groups: Graduate students, international students, and pre-tenure faculty were seen as especially exposed to funding losses and heightened expectations, with significant mental health risks.
- Communication gaps: Respondents noted limited clarity from leadership about compliance guidance, financial planning, and institutional protections, calling for more transparency and proactive communication.
- Broader political climate: Federal rhetoric undermining student protest rights, curtailing DEI programs, and delegitimizing science was seen as compounding risks to Rutgers’ mission.

Take-Aways and Next Steps

In both the January meeting discussions and the subsequent February/March outreach, faculty called on Rutgers leadership to make strong, visible commitments to academic freedom and DEI, safeguard vulnerable community members, and resist pre-emptive compliance that weakens teaching and research. They emphasized the need for clear financial strategies – potentially drawing on endowment resources, budget reallocations, or state and federal advocacy – to sustain research and student support. Faculty further urged the administration to join with peer institutions in publicly defending higher education’s democratic role, improve communication and concrete guidance to departments, and expand mental health supports for faculty and students. Taken together, these two efforts established the foundation for ongoing work and led directly to the formation of the NBFC Ad Hoc Response Committee with the Chancellor.

MAJOR NBFC FOCUSES

Bylaws Revision (process concluding November 2024)

The NBFC began a comprehensive revision of its bylaws during AY2023-24, concluding the effort with adoption of revised bylaws at the November 2024 meeting. Chair Haley held meetings dedicated to discussing revisions attended heavily by EC members and several other representatives; utilized a shared online document mechanism for representatives to provide input and engage each other’s opinions about changes; and facilitated discussion of proposed changes during multiple Council meetings in Spring 2024 and Fall 2024. This culminated in a two-step approval process per NBFC by-laws: an in-meeting vote followed by an online ballot requiring a two-thirds majority, concluded in November 2024.

Main Meeting “Deans Panels” (November 2024 and February 2025)

We welcomed four deans at November’s main meeting and five in February (see “Speakers” list on the prior page). These sessions had two purposes: to give Council representatives an opportunity to learn more about the schools each dean leads, and to hear directly from the deans about their leadership perspectives, the challenges facing their units, and broader issues confronting Rutgers. Council members reported that these conversations were highly valuable, as both an educational resource and a way to strengthen relationships between the Council and New Brunswick’s academic leadership.

Conference on “AI in Teaching: Transformative Tools & Challenges” (December 2024)

Co-sponsored as in past years by the Office of the Provost and held in a hybrid format, this half-day event brought together over 150 in person and online participants to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping higher education teaching. The conference was co-organized by the New Brunswick Faculty Council Executive Committee, then-Provost Sandra Tomlinson-Clarke, Senior Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education Carolyn Moehling, and Dr. Tracie Addy, founding director of TIIP (Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy), with a take-away lunch hosted by Chancellor Conway. Prompted by NBFC’s 2023 faculty priorities survey, where AI emerged as the top topic for a teaching-focused program, the conference aimed to equip faculty with practical tools and foster dialogue about ethics, creativity, and assessment in the AI era.

Dr. Tracie Addy (TIIP) opened with an overview of generative AI in teaching and learning, highlighting its capabilities, the importance of critical literacy, and cautions about overreliance on detection tools. A set of faculty case studies followed: Prof. Jim Samuel (Bloustein School) examined AI as a creative partner in “*Is AI Creative?*”; Prof. Sharon Stoerger (SC&I) described an “*AI Stress Test*” assignment to strengthen student analysis and foresight; Prof. Jenny Yang (Asian Languages & Cultures) shared inclusive strategies in “*You’ve Got a TA in Me*” for reducing anxiety and tailoring instruction in world language classrooms; and Profs. Hussein Issa and David Ding (RBS) reflected on “*AI at RBS*,” discussing both teaching AI as content and integrating it into pedagogy, with attention to opportunities and risks. The day concluded with a panel on assessing learning in a post-AI world, where panelists emphasized course policy clarity, institutional support, and creative approaches such as journaling, analytics, and self-monitoring, while underscoring the enduring value of critical thinking, creativity, and ethical engagement.

Communications Survey of Representatives (March 2025)

In March 2025, the EC conducted a Qualtrics survey of its representatives to better understand faculty preferences about and engagement with social media and digital communication tools, as well as perceptions of the NBFC Teams site. The survey, which drew 39 responses with some variation across questions, asked about frequency and type of social media use, perceived usefulness of platforms for external communication with faculty constituents, and experiences using the NBFC Teams platform for internal communication.

Findings

Results showed limited overall engagement with social media among faculty, with Facebook emerging as the most used platform, while TikTok, X, and BlueSky saw minimal to no use. Even among users, most faculty engage passively, viewing content rather than posting. Respondents

expressed skepticism about the usefulness of social media for professional communication, instead favoring a periodic emailed newsletter and interactive features on the NBFC website as the most effective channels for reaching constituents. Internally, faculty reported low levels of use and mixed perceptions of the NBFC Teams site; many access it infrequently and mainly for information retrieval rather than collaboration. Neutral or negative views were common, and some faculty noted a lack of clarity or support in using Teams effectively.

Take-Aways

The EC concluded that external communication should prioritize regular email newsletters and an updated, interactive website over heavy reliance on social media. Efforts should continue to secure direct emailing rights for NBFC, rather than routing through the President's office. For internal communication, NBFC should provide orientation and ongoing support on use of Teams through written and recorded tutorials and orientation sessions to help representatives use it more effectively.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In AY24-25, the EC focused on strengthening the Council's governance capacity, deepening engagement with campus leadership, offering special programming, and responding to national threats to higher education. Its work combined attention to internal structures with active initiatives aimed at helping position NBFC as a campus leader and a faculty-driven partner to the New Brunswick administrative team.

A central theme was strengthening Council function and coordination. The EC revisited its own roles and structures throughout the year, considering how best to balance coordination of the standing committees, maintain vertical communication, and clarify oversight without overcentralization. Much attention was devoted to the bylaws revision process, with EC members attending Zoom discussions and collaboratively editing a shared draft with other representatives. The Council also implemented a new parliamentary model following the retirement from that role of Emeritus Professor Martha Cotter: trained student assistants, funded by the Chancellor, now support parliamentary needs and also help with meeting minutes, event planning, and website updating. The EC also transitioned the Council from a combination of Box document storage and reliance on email for communications to Microsoft Teams as a cohesive project coordination mechanism.

The EC additionally prioritized cultivating relationships with university leadership and administrators. Meetings with the Chancellor identified shared concerns around academic advising for on-time graduation and career readiness, inconsistent incentives and structural barriers to faculty collaboration under the RCM budget model used by Rutgers, and the implications of looming NCAA settlement impacts. The EC committed to maintaining regular invitations to the Chancellor, Provost, and deans for continued dialogue on issues such as faculty affairs and campus budgeting. EC members also stressed the need for stronger faculty communication channels, pursuing options for representatives to email constituents directly.

Programming for faculty was another major focus, with the EC playing a central role in shaping and delivering the December 2024 "AI in Teaching" conference. EC members were instrumental in helping to refine the concept, shape the program, identify and recruit speakers, and hone session focuses. They also served as on-site and online facilitators during the event, ensuring a

smooth hybrid experience and helping to anchor discussion. The conference underscored the Council's ability to mobilize and engage faculty in addressing emerging pedagogical issues.

The EC additionally engaged in self-reflection on progress and future directions. EC members expressed interest in building NBFC's external impact, public profile, and mechanisms for feedback. Plans were developed to conduct an internal evaluation to solicit representative feedback to improve operations.

Looking ahead, the EC emphasized academic freedom, faculty support, and budget transparency as continuing priorities. A Council session on fiscal transparency is being planned for 2025–26. Responding to external political pressures – particularly challenges to DEI, academic freedom, and federal funding – was also identified as a priority. To address these issues, the EC supported the creation of an ad hoc response committee (described further below).

Ad Hoc Response Committee (formed April 2025)

As previously noted, an Ad Hoc Response Committee (AHRC) was established in Spring 2025 by the NBFC Executive Committee, in collaboration with the Chancellor, to advise campus leadership on the impacts of and potential strategies of response to federal government policy shifts and actions. Its charge is to help the Chancellor and her team anticipate risks to research and academic programming and student wellbeing; identify challenges posed by evolving federal conditions; and recommend strategies that safeguard academic freedom, institutional integrity, and community protections.

The AHRC is composed of seven Council representatives, identified by the Chair and reviewed by the EC, from across the New Brunswick campus that span diverse units and academic and research areas. Beginning in late spring through Summer 2025, the committee has met regularly as a group to refine its focus, assess emerging challenges, and explore potential strategies for institutional response and mitigation. In parallel, the committee has convened roughly monthly with the Chancellor, Provost, and other members of the executive leadership team to discuss issues including academic freedom, research protections and supports, student protections, and communications practices. This consistent engagement enabled the committee both to sustain momentum during a typically quiet period and to provide timely faculty input into leadership deliberations. With these foundations laid, the AHRC will continue its work into the 2025-26 academic year, serving as a structured channel for faculty perspectives on urgent and evolving federal policy impacts.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Committee Co-Chair Coordination

The Chair convened meetings with committee co-chairs (who starting this year were elected by their respective committee members rather than Chair-appointed) in the fall and spring terms. These sessions were designed to support committee oversight, strengthen leadership, and engage in two-way discussion about Council functioning and emerging issues.

In the sessions, co-chairs emphasized both the centrality of committees to NBFC's work and the challenges they face. Committees are the engines where initiatives take shape and leadership priorities receive faculty input, but they often struggle with understanding their scope, setting internal priorities, and coordinating getting work done. Co-chairs noted that at times, it is unclear

whether an issue properly belongs to the Senate, the union, or administrative units; similar uncertainty can also arise between Council committees themselves, creating risks of duplication or missed opportunities for amplification.

By spring, co-chairs stressed the need for a clearer system to identify, prioritize, and align work with Council and administrative priorities. In response, co-chairs proposed a set of solutions to strengthen committee functioning and coordination. These included more collaborative agenda-setting between committee co-chairs and members; shared committee meeting facilitation that amplifies committee member voices; and more robust use of Teams for asynchronous communication. They also endorsed developing a systematic process for “charge vetting,” modeled on the Senate, to ensure Council work remains relevant, strategically aligned, and accountable. To operationalize these principles, co-chairs recommended instituting EC review of proposed committee focus issues prior to committees’ working on them and ongoing EC tracking of committee work; integration of Chancellor priorities with committee focuses; and circulation of a draft Council work agenda to all representatives at the start of each academic year.

Building on these discussions of scope and process, co-chairs also emphasized the importance of strengthening the Council’s impact through more effective resolutions and clearer communication. Resolutions were recognized as a key tool of influence, but their quality and clarity have been uneven, limiting administrative response. Participants suggested developing templates and offering training so that resolutions consistently articulate desired outcomes, implementation steps, and timelines. Parallel to this, members underscored the need for stronger communication infrastructure to raise the Council’s profile and ensure its work is visible across the university. Proposals included creating short, shareable reports for representatives to bring back to their units, further developing the Council website as a public-facing hub, expanding the use of Teams, and re-surveying faculty to help shape the Council’s annual agenda (the last such survey was conducted in November 2022).

Finally, a consistent theme discussed was participation and capacity challenges. Concerns were raised about uneven member engagement, limited awareness of committee expectations, and burnout among the most active members. Suggestions included shifting more administrative tasks online to preserve synchronous time for substantive discussion and building in stronger onboarding to set clear expectations. Some co-chairs also pointed to possible perceptions that committees focus more on problems than solutions, or that members feel limited ability to represent their constituents and in turn contribute to committee work because they are isolated within their own schools.

Standing Committee Activities

Academic Affairs Committee

Co-chaired by Julia Maxwell and Xenia Morin, the Academic Affairs Committee pursued a full and evolving agenda throughout the 2024-25 academic year, focused on structural, pedagogical, and governance issues. The committee began by setting internal expectations and outlining key topics of interest, including test-optional admissions policies, library collections, the Course Atlas and InfoSilem scheduling systems, and the role of AI in teaching. Several of these areas reflected not just emergent concern but ongoing Council commitments tied to prior resolutions.

A central strand of the committee's work built directly on the Council's February 2024 resolution on test-optional admissions, which called for regular reporting on the policy's impact on student diversity, access, and success. In response, the Chancellor committed to providing annual data on application and admission patterns, retention, and first-year GPA disaggregated by testing status. To operationalize this, the committee initiated a sustained collaboration with Associate Vice Chancellor Marco DiNovelli, who joined the January 2025 meeting to discuss available data and reporting timelines. Although full graduation data for the first test-optional cohort (Fall 2021) is not yet available, the committee laid groundwork for ongoing data-sharing and evaluation, which it expects to continue into 2025-26. Next steps include requesting updated datasets, clarifying when additional metrics will be released, and possibly drafting a follow-up resolution or report summarizing ongoing concerns around transparency, equity, or assessment methods tied to admissions practices.

The committee also revisited the unresolved 2023 resolution on Student Instructional Rating Surveys (SIRS), which had been forwarded to the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (OEVPAA) but not acted upon in a visible way. Promotion guidance now treats SIRS as one of multiple tools, but the committee noted the lack of formal communication or implementation guidance. In 2025-26, the committee plans to follow up directly with EVPAA Prabhas Moghe and to coordinate with the University Senate's Faculty Personnel Affairs Committee (FPAC), which is also reviewing teaching evaluation practices. Potential actions include drafting model evaluation language for use by unit P&T committees or hosting a Council-wide forum on holistic, fair approaches to assessing teaching.

In addition to its resolution-driven work, the committee conducted an internal review of the Course Atlas and InfoSilem implementation, using feedback from the NBFC faculty survey and consultations with Rutgers stakeholders. Members raised concerns about uneven departmental coordination between enrollment forecasting and course scheduling, and plan to continue monitoring these systems. The committee also tracked persistent resource and staffing challenges within Rutgers University Libraries, a longstanding concern for faculty, and plans to invite the University Librarian for further dialogue in 2025–26.

Throughout the year, the committee took a lead role in shaping Council-wide programming. It helped design and present the December AI & Teaching Conference, and it contributed to a cross-committee review of the First Day textbook initiative, including collaboration with Student Affairs on data collection and policy recommendations. In the spring, Academic Affairs also drafted and successfully advanced a resolution opposing proposed curricular changes at the Honors College that would have removed a world language requirement without appropriate faculty consultation. This action built on prior Council resolutions affirming the role of faculty in curricular governance and helped reassert shared governance expectations across schools.

Looking ahead, the committee has proposed to deepen engagement with university-wide efforts such as the Discovery Advantage initiative and is considering forming ad hoc subcommittees to support that work. It also plans to explore the broader impacts of federal policy shifts on academic activities beyond research and is interested in helping forge more coordinated communications across Rutgers' shared governance bodies. Finally, the committee recommends that NBFC leadership consider creating a dedicated committee focused on the research enterprise, given its size and institutional significance.

Athletic Affairs Committee

Co-chaired by Ken McKeever and Nick Linardopoulos, the Athletic Affairs Committee in AY2024-25 focused on both the financial and academic dimensions of Rutgers' athletics programs, and on establishing clearer lines of communication with athletics leadership. One area of attention was the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) project, which the committee continued to discuss throughout the year. Co-chair McKeever began preparing a report on the project and drafting a resolution to be sent to the committee for editing, then to the Executive Committee for approval and eventual placement on the Council's agenda.

The committee also worked to engage athletics leadership. Early in the year, members identified a disconnect between the operational priorities of athletics and broader institutional values, and began examining the costs and benefits of the program. To support this work, the committee invited the Interim Athletics Director and academic support staff lead Scott Walker to meetings. In late spring, McKeever, along with Tom Stephens and Ann Gould, met with the Interim Athletics Director. That meeting was described by McKeever as a first step toward creating a working relationship with faculty, with an agreement to explore the possibility of a future meeting with the full committee.

Attention was also given to budget transparency and academic outcomes for student-athletes. The committee continued to gather and review data on the financial operations of the athletics program, with a focus on budget transparency and the alignment of spending with the university's broader academic mission. Members sought further reporting on student-athlete outcomes, moving beyond GPA data to request information on retention, graduation rates, and the effectiveness of academic support. The committee noted that all athletic teams had achieved a minimum GPA of 3.0.

Finally, by spring, the committee was working to build on its initial relationships with athletics staff to strengthen dialogue and to explore how athletics programming might better integrate with faculty concerns and institutional values.

Budget, Planning, and Infrastructure Committee

Co-chaired by Thomas Figueira and Thomas Davis, the BF&I Committee pursued a multifaceted agenda throughout the 2024-25 academic year, with a strong emphasis on fiscal transparency, long-range infrastructure planning, and strengthening faculty voice in institutional decision-making. Despite beginning the year with limited members, the committee tackled a wide range of operational concerns – including faculty dining, student group storage, electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, and campus parking and transportation systems – while also expanding its engagement with systemic financial issues affecting academic units.

One key area of focus was the committee's follow-up to the January 2024 Council resolution on faculty dining, which called on the university to support more intentional, accessible spaces for faculty collegial interaction. In her Spring 2024 response, the Chancellor acknowledged the absence of a faculty-only dining facility and expressed openness to forming a committee to explore alternative models. In response, the BFI Committee began developing options for informal, low-cost social spaces and discussed broadening the conversation to encompass faculty community-building more generally. Plans for 2025-26 include re-engaging the

Chancellor's office – likely through her Chief of Staff – to propose a joint working group and identify administrative and faculty participants. The committee also expects to consult with faculty colleagues via survey or informal channels to assess interest and define space needs.

Beyond dining, the committee made progress on infrastructure concerns. It led to the drafting of a Council letter to Chancellor Conway regarding EV charging station expansion across the New Brunswick campuses, with leadership from committee member Jennifer Shukaitis. This effort reflected the committee's growing role as a liaison between NBFC and operational planning processes. The group also closely tracked Rutgers' consultant-led transportation study, expected to conclude by June 2025, reviewing internal materials and pushing for faculty inclusion in RFP review and vendor selection processes. These efforts underscored the committee's insistence that major infrastructure decisions affecting commuting, parking, and sustainability should be made transparently and with academic community input.

As the year progressed, the committee's focus widened to include more structural financial matters, particularly concerning the effects of Responsibility Center Management (RCM) on academic unit sustainability and cross-disciplinary programming. BFI members participated in University Senate budget town halls, monitored cost drivers associated with central administration and athletics, and raised alarms about the opacity of fund allocation mechanisms at the unit level. These discussions often emphasized the disconnect between budget structures and academic mission, and the committee advocated for faculty involvement in shaping financial priorities.

Looking ahead to 2025-26, the committee plans to continue its work on EV infrastructure, campus dining, and transportation, while initiating deeper analysis of how federal and state budgetary shifts may reshape institutional support for students, faculty, and programs. Its overarching goal remains ensuring that budget and planning processes at Rutgers reflect the values of academic integrity, shared governance, and long-term sustainability.

Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee

Co-chaired by Heather Pierce and Eleanor LaPointe, the Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee sustained a multi-pronged agenda throughout the 2024-25 academic year, centered on faculty equity, departmental governance, and the implications of political interference in higher education. Early in the year, the committee resumed prior work on several standing concerns, including increasing lecturer inclusion in departmental governance, advocating for recognition of service in promotion and tenure reviews, and developing guidelines for department chair term limits. These areas reflected widespread interest in ensuring that personnel practices remain inclusive, transparent, and aligned with academic values.

Over time, the committee's attention turned more pointedly toward academic freedom and institutional responses to external threats, particularly around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). In this context, the committee began gathering information on institutional supports for international faculty and students, while also seeking greater clarity on the administration's public and internal positioning related to DEI, faculty vulnerability, and grant funding. This work directly intersected with the Council's 2023 resolution on DEI in faculty hiring and evaluation, which had affirmed the value of recognizing DEI contributions in promotion and tenure processes. The committee's ongoing conversations reflected many of the same themes – specifically,

concern over how such contributions are treated across different units, and the need for clear guidance that protects both academic standards and institutional commitments to inclusion.

By spring, the committee was actively preparing to transmit a set of questions and concerns to the Chancellor, particularly in light of evolving political conditions and their impact on institutional integrity. Although the committee's efforts did not focus solely on the prior resolution, they reinforced its underlying principles and helped maintain faculty attention to its core issues. As such, the committee's work during the year supported the broader Council effort to safeguard inclusive evaluation practices and ensure consistent, values-based personnel policies.

Student Affairs Committee

Co-chaired by Alisa Belzer and Mei Ling Lo, the Student Affairs Committee sustained a focused and evolving agenda centered on student wellbeing, equitable access, and transparent communication. Building on previous investigations into CAPS and the First Day Textbook program, the committee began the year by articulating a plan for actionable deliverables, with a particular emphasis on non-academic advising in alignment with the university's Discovery Advantage initiative. Early discussions included concerns about the structure and impact of the First Day program, which automatically enrolls students in digital textbook bundles billed through their term bills. Under Crystal Akers' leadership, the committee formed a working subgroup that developed outreach strategies, compiled background research, and drafted a faculty survey aimed at evaluating the program's accessibility, cost transparency, and academic value. David Smith developed a one-page guide for faculty, while Mei Ling Lo and Marci Meixler analyzed usage and cost data across units. While outreach to student government (RUSA) is still underway, the group met with NJ PIRG members advocating for an opt-in model, and the committee intends to distribute a revised survey in fall 2025.

In parallel, the committee dedicated significant effort to strengthening Rutgers' student mental health infrastructure and faculty engagement with it. A subgroup led by David Kryscynski invited representatives from ScarletWell to present on new wellness initiatives, peer support training, and gaps in student awareness. Ellen Williams organized a presentation from the RU OK Club, which shared insights into student-led wellness efforts, including therapy dog events, educational programming, and proposed mindfulness rooms. The committee also reviewed assessment data from CAPS and raised concerns about website accessibility and service clarity. Looking forward, members aim to propose faculty training focused on mental health awareness, referral processes, and the growing complexity of student stressors.

Throughout its work, the committee emphasized the importance of collaborative cross-unit engagement and equity-minded policy evaluation. For AY25-26, the Student Affairs Committee will continue advancing both major threads – mental health and the First Day initiative – before adopting new focus areas. It has also recommended that NBFC leadership strengthen Microsoft Teams orientation and support, to better facilitate internal communication and collaboration across Council members.

Potential Standing Committee AY25-26 Focuses

Academic Affairs

- Test-optional admissions policy monitoring: Continue collaboration with administration to secure annual disaggregated data (on applications, admissions, retention, GPA); request updated datasets; clarify release timelines for graduation data; and consider preparing a follow-up resolution or report on equity and transparency implications.
- Teaching evaluation reform (SIRS follow-up): Reintroduce NBFC's concerns to the newly appointed EVPAA, coordinate with Senate FPAC, and explore concrete actions such as drafting model language for P&T committees or convening a forum on holistic teaching evaluation.
- Course Atlas and InfoSilem oversight: Continue monitoring implementation challenges in scheduling and enrollment coordination, drawing on departmental feedback and faculty survey data.
- Library resources & staffing: Continue dialogue with the University Librarian to address ongoing concerns about resources and staffing adequacy.
- Shared governance in curricular changes: Maintain vigilance over faculty consultation in curricular matters, building on the Honors College resolution.
- Cross-cutting and new areas of focus: Deepen engagement with Discovery Advantage, track federal policy impacts on academic affairs (beyond research), and explore coordination across Rutgers' shared governance bodies.
- Potential structural proposal: Consider recommending a new standing committee dedicated to the research enterprise.

Athletic Affairs

- New Athletics Director: Following the appointment of President Tate and the announcement of Keli Zinn as the new Athletics Director in summer 2025, co-chair McKeever contacted the athletics office and secured a meeting with Zinn for September 23, 2025. That meeting, which will include McKeever, Tom Stephens, and Ann Gould, is intended as a first step toward inviting her to meet with the committee and eventually with the full NBFC. More broadly, the committee aims to build a constructive working relationship with the Athletics Director, continuing its practice of regular dialogue with athletics leadership.
- Budget transparency and sustainability: The committee will continue gathering and reviewing data on the financial operations of the athletics program, with particular attention to alignment between program spending and the university's broader academic mission.
- Academic outcomes for student-athletes: Building on the initial review of GPA data, the committee will seek more comprehensive reporting on retention, graduation rates, and the effectiveness of academic support services for student-athletes.
- Faculty–Athletics collaboration: The committee will work to strengthen cross-campus dialogue and identify ways in which athletics programming can better integrate with faculty concerns and institutional values.

Budget, Finance, and Infrastructure

- Faculty dining and community-building: Re-engage the Chancellor's office (via her Chief of Staff) around the proposed joint working group; continue developing feasible models for informal, low-cost faculty social spaces; and consult broadly with faculty to assess interest and define space needs.

- Transportation study: Review results of the consultant-led transportation study (expected June 2025); ensure faculty are included in follow-up planning and decision-making on commuting, parking, and sustainability.
- EV charging infrastructure: Build on the 2024 letter by pursuing next-phase expansion, in coordination with university operational planning.
- Structural budget concerns: Continue examination of RCM impacts on unit sustainability and cross-disciplinary programming; monitor opaque fund allocation mechanisms and advocate for greater alignment between budgets and academic mission.
- Engagement with new EVP/Chief Administrative Officer: Establish a working relationship with EVP Lewis (who now oversees University Finance and Administration, including the CFO's office), ensuring BF&I has a direct faculty voice in institutional planning and financial oversight.
- Federal and state budget shifts: Initiate analysis of how external funding changes may reshape institutional support for students, faculty, and programs, and develop Council recommendations accordingly.

Faculty and Personnel Affairs

- Transmit and follow up on concerns to the Chancellor: Finalize the set of questions developed in spring 2025 regarding academic freedom, DEI, and political interference; engage the Chancellor's office in dialogue and track administrative responses.
- Institutional supports for international faculty and students: Continue unfinished review of policies and resources; assess vulnerabilities and propose improvements to ensure adequate protection and inclusion.
- Clarity on DEI positioning and evaluation: Press for clear, consistent institutional guidance on how DEI contributions are recognized in promotion and tenure, building from the 2023 resolution but addressing ongoing unevenness across units.
- Monitoring political and funding pressures: Stay vigilant about external political threats and grant funding risks, and develop Council recommendations to safeguard faculty autonomy and academic integrity.

Student Affairs

- First Day Textbook program review: Distribute revised faculty survey, expand outreach to RUSA and other student groups, analyze data on cost, accessibility, and academic value, and evaluate alternatives such as opt-in models.
- Student mental health & wellbeing: Propose faculty training on mental health awareness and referral pathways; continue collaboration with ScarletWell, CAPS, and student-led initiatives (e.g., RU OK Club) to address service clarity, accessibility, and student stressors.
- Faculty-student engagement on wellness: Develop strategies to raise faculty awareness of available resources and support integration of wellness practices into classroom and advising contexts.
- Equity in student support systems: Assess how non-academic advising and wellness initiatives serve diverse student populations; recommend improvements for equitable access.
- Internal Council communication: Support NBFC-wide adoption and effective use of Microsoft Teams to improve collaboration and information-sharing.

NBFC STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Council Operations and Parliamentary Support

As Student Assistants and Parliamentarians for the Council during the 2024–25 academic year, Christopher Godoy (SAS '26) and Brielle Fedorko (SAS & SC&I '25) worked closely with the Chair of the Council to coordinate priorities, support initiatives, and ensure smooth Council operations. In their parliamentary roles, they oversaw adherence to Robert's Rules of Order during the Council's monthly meetings and answered parliamentary questions as they arose. During meetings, one student served as parliamentarian while the other recorded minutes, which were later finalized and sent to the Chair and Vice Chair for review and adaptation to the NBFC website. This arrangement allowed all Council members to fully engage in meeting discussions.

Technology Transition and Communication Support

With the Council's transition from Box folders to Microsoft Teams, Christopher and Brielle assisted in adding and editing documents for upload to Teams and created a video guide for members on how to navigate the platform. In line with Chair Haley's priorities on communication and outreach, they also collected data on members' preferred communication methods, particularly with respect to social media. Their work extended to the development and management of the NBFC website, where they uploaded documents, adjusted formats, and ensured that information was accessible to both Council members and the public. In carrying out these tasks, they coordinated with OIT staff to better understand challenges related to the outdated website system and processes. To align the Council with Rutgers' rebranding, they also developed an updated NBFC logo for use on the website and in other Council communications.

Event Support and Additional Responsibilities

In addition to these ongoing tasks, Christopher and Brielle assisted in the planning and logistics of the "AI in Teaching: Transformative Tools & Challenges" conference in December. They captured photographs and presentation materials that were later incorporated into the NBFC website. Throughout the year, they also supported other delegated responsibilities as assigned by the Chair, helping ensure that the Council's mission and goals were effectively carried out and that members could fully participate in shared governance.

Continuing Priorities for AY2025-26

Looking ahead, several areas remain important for student support in the coming year. Collaboration with OIT will continue to be valuable for strengthening the NBFC website's structure and functionality, and additional training and resources will help Council members make fuller use of Microsoft Teams. These priorities will guide the focus of incoming student assistants as they build on the progress made in 2024–25.

NBFC END-OF-YEAR EVALUATION

An evaluation of representatives' experiences and sentiments from their AY2024-25 year of service was conducted in May, possibly the first time NBFC performance was formally internally assessed. That summary is provided in a separate document.