

RUSA

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ASSEMBLY

Fall

SEMESTER

REPORT

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....1

Message from the President.....2

About RUSA.....3

Academics.....4, 5

Accountability & Election Reform.....6

Alcohol Culture.....7

Civic Engagement.....8

College Affordability.....9, 10

Inclusion.....11, 12

Mental Health.....13, 14

Public Safety.....15, 16

Sexual Violence Education.....17, 18

Student Organization Support.....19

Sustainability.....20, 21

Transportation.....22

Message from the President

Members of the Rutgers community:

In April of 2017, I was sworn in to serve as the President of the Rutgers University Student Assembly (RUSA), your student government on the Rutgers University - New Brunswick Campus. We ran in the RUSA election with the goals of strengthening the student voice and improving the Rutgers experience for all. We crafted a platform of tangible ideas to accomplish these goals, and have made substantial progress by achieving many of those initiatives. With an experienced and dedicated Executive Board and Assembly, we seek to continue the work we have done throughout Fall 2017, and look forward to the work we will accomplish this Spring.

This is one of the most contentious political and social climates that we have seen throughout our entire lifetime. Many of the students I have spoken to throughout my time as President have expressed increasing distrust of government. That sense of distrust is not exclusive to liberals or conservatives. Students are tired of officials in government who are self-serving and disconnected from those who elected them. While student government is not a true government entity, I believe that we have a responsibility as elected members of RUSA to demonstrate that there are people actively working to support the interests of students. I hope that all Rutgers students, upon reading this document, will see that we have set priorities and have completed many tangible projects to support their Rutgers experience.

I want to thank the entire RUSA Executive Board for their outstanding work this past semester. I also want to give a special thanks to Vice President Christie Schweighardt, Treasurer Shannon Chang, and Chief of Staff Claudia Marconi. We hope you take the time to look at what we have been working on. If there is something you are interested in working on with us or if there is something you think that we should be working on, but are not, please reach out to us at RUSA.assembly@gmail.com to let us know. We are here to serve the student body.

In Scarlet Pride,



Evan Covello
RUSA President

About RUSA

The Rutgers University Student Assembly (RUSA) is the official governing body for students at the New Brunswick campus. RUSA advocates on behalf of student concerns regarding official policies and priorities; provides a forum for the open expression of student ideas; and allocates student fee funding to over 400 student organizations through the RUSA Allocations Board.

Structure

RUSA is comprised of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Senators, Campus Representatives, Professional School Representatives, and Special Population Representatives. From these positions, we internally elect members to fill the roles in our Executive Board, including appointed roles.

Academic Affairs Committee- Chris Markosian, Aneesh Deshpande

Allocations Chair- Dana Cai

Allocations Vice Chair- Christine Botvinnik

Athletics Coordinator- Billy Cundiff

Big Ten Conference Liaison- Jaidev Phadke

Health and Wellness Committee- Ini Ross

Internal Affairs Committee- Viktor Krapivin

Legislative Affairs Committee- Suzanne Link

Parliamentarian- Chris Kay

Public Relations Committee- Calvin Ferrara

Secretary- Jessica Tuazon

Senate Leader- Julie Serrano

Sexual Violence Education Department- Rita Portenti

Student Affairs Committee- Sabeen Rokerya

University Affairs Committee- Dan Chulak

The RUSA Allocations Board is a branch of the Assembly that directs over \$1.5 million each year to over 400 student organizations. A portion of this funding is allocated to RUPA, club sports, and class treasuries. This committee has a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as several other positions that aid in allocating this funding. The Assembly approves the membership of this Board, and the budgets that it creates each semester.

Elections

RUSA has Fall and Spring elections. During the Spring election, students have the opportunity to elect a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Campus Representatives and Senators. In the Fall, students elect first-year Campus Representatives, and Campus At-Large Representatives. While Spring elections consistently have higher student voting turnouts, we were able to increase Fall election turnout in 2017 by over 10-percent. We hope to continue to increase student voting turnout for RUSA elections going forward.

Academics

Universal iClicker

Addressing college affordability needs to be done through many different avenues. One creative way we can do this is to be more efficient with the academic tools that students need to succeed. Over the past year, we have been working to consolidate the types of iClickers that classes require, so students will not have to purchase multiple iClickers through their undergraduate career. We worked to assemble a University-wide committee to address this, including students and faculty. The [report](#) was released in May, and going forward we will continue to work to implement its recommendations to complete this project.

WebReg Hours Extension

It is crucial to make the student academic experience as accessible as possible. WebReg is the primary tool that students need to register for courses at Rutgers. For years, students have expressed concerns regarding the limited WebReg hours of operation. This past summer, we partnered with the Registrar and IT offices to expand WebReg hours for our student body. Students can now access WebReg an additional 25 hours per week, until 2:00 AM each day. We will also be meeting with some of the consultants that work directly on WebReg, and will be providing input to improve the system.

Undergraduate Research Directory

Rutgers University is one of the top public research universities in the world. Our students have a unique opportunity to participate in various research opportunities. However, finding those opportunities outside of the Aresty Research Center can be a challenge. We want to simplify and centralize the process for students to find research opportunities on our campus. Partnering with Undergraduate Academic Affairs, we have launched a committee to establish a universal directory for Rutgers University, which will display all of the research opportunities offered by faculty. The committee will work this semester to develop a system that will centralize all of the research opportunities students have access to.

Addressing Absence Protocol

Navigating absence (from class) protocols can be challenging for students. Mental health leave, in particular, can be difficult for students to navigate. The first project RUSA and University Health Services are collaborating on is the creation of a simple flowchart to enable students to better understand how to address their health related absences. Another issue that we will work to address is the University's exam absence policy. Currently, faculty policies may penalize students who are absent for an exam due to health reasons. We want to ensure that every student at Rutgers has a fair opportunity to succeed, without having to worry about health affecting

performance. We will be meeting with Undergraduate Academic Affairs to work on this problem this semester.

Information Technology Student Advisory Board

Having reliable access to technology and WiFi is an essential component in higher education. This coming semester, we are piloting an Information Technology Student Advisory Board (ITSAB) to streamline student feedback regarding a number of issues including WiFi, computer labs, Sakai, and course registration sites. We are also a part of a joint faculty/student committee to explore alternatives to Sakai, to determine which system should be used by the University. Going forward, we will be looking for students to get involved in ITSAB to provide this feedback. If you are interested in participating in the work of the ITSAB, we encourage you to send us an email at rusa.assembly@gmail.com.

Subsidized Programs for Online Software

Textbook costs are a significant expense for students. One element that contributes to this high expense is the cost of online access codes and software, which sometimes have to be purchased along with a textbook for a course. Vice Chancellor Sifuentes and the RUSA Academic Affairs Committee met to discuss the idea of a subsidized software program partnership that would involve large, wholesale purchases of online software in exchange for reduced rates for students. With the current system, students are often forced to purchase both textbooks and their corresponding online software. By implementing a new system, students would be able to pay a one-time access code fee on their term-bill, which financial aid funds can cover. Students would have full access to the plethora of software offered by different publishers across the platform. This semester, we will be exploring plans of action to determine the benefits of implementing this program.

Accountability and Election Reform

Election Reform

Historically, RUSA has enacted Election Guidelines directly prior to every Spring Election. Our primary goal was to create a fairer process leading up to the Spring Election, which ensures an open process. We allowed for the Assembly to nominate members of the Elections and Appeals Committees to increase transparency and accountability on members. At the end of last semester, we put forward an Elections Code, which will be put forward for a vote before our Assembly. This Code will be long-lasting document that will take the politics out of the elections process. It will ensure that everyone can develop a comprehensive understanding of the rules long before the election begins. This Spring, we will host a Presidential Debate, and potentially additional candidate forums, to give students opportunities to hear about the candidates' plans to tackle issues on our campus. Those event dates will be released soon.

Strategic Plan

This year, there are many senior members in top Executive positions in the Assembly. This makes the transition of power a unique challenge, but one that will be easier with a comprehensive plan for the future of RUSA. At the end of the Spring Semester, there will be a strategic plan finalized to propose recommendations for RUSA's future. It is essential that RUSA, as a student government, continues to effectively represent the student body.

Standing Rules

The Standing Rules of our Assembly describe how our Assembly must operate, and this document takes precedence over all others except our Constitution. In one of the first meetings of the new Assembly, we passed updated standing rules that allow for additional appointed positions to handle internal administrative work, so that more time can be spent working on the issues students care about. We also sought to better-address the issues facing students, so we created a Sexual Violence Education Department and a Health and Wellness Standing Committee. We also expanded the term of the Secretary and Parliamentarian to the Spring to facilitate the transition following elections. The updated standing rules provide clearer structure to prevent inefficient overlap in RUSA Allocation funding and Assembly funding.

Assembly Budget

In an effort to be fiscally responsible, we took additional steps in contrast to previous years to remove additional expenditures. For example, we eliminated an Assembly retreat, cutting nearly \$5,000 in spending. This is funding that can be reallocated to student organizations and other initiatives that support students. Going forward, we will continue to evaluate the budget and consider further initiatives to support students and improve the Rutgers experience.

Alcohol Culture

Student Tailgating and Athletics

Earlier in the Fall Semester, we worked with student leaders in Greek Life and Riot Squad to bring back the student tailgating lot called, The Alley. While it was unable to return for the 2017 football season, we are working with Athletics to utilize other models in the Big Ten Conference to reintroduce student tailgating for future seasons. There were undeniable concerns with The Alley that could not be overlooked, including space maximum capacity, and underage drinking. We have partnered with Athletics on other initiatives, including a cosponsorship of the Rutgers vs. Seton Hall basketball game, with rally towels including a RUSA logo on them. We will be working to find other ways to address student tailgating, and school spirit surrounding athletics on our campus.

MidKnight Snacks

MidKnight Snacks is a program that began last year in an effort to curb heavy episodic drinking. On syllabus weekend and Halloween weekend, RUSA tabled outside of the College Avenue Student Center and handed out free food and water to students. This has been a very popular program that served over 2,000 students this past semester. With additional co-sponsorships, we have been able to continue the program in a more cost-efficient way, saving thousands of dollars.

Presence of Alcohol in Stadiums

One initiative that has been established in several Big Ten Universities is the sale of alcohol in stadiums. Some universities have implemented this in a way that allocates generated revenue to mental health counseling on their respective campuses. In 2015, RUSA passed a resolution supporting this measure at Rutgers University. Furthermore, a University Senate Ad Hoc committee is investigating this potential initiative as well. We are opening up further research on this subject, to see if this initiative can lead to less fan incidents at games and less binge drinking.

Civic Engagement

Task Force on Voter Registration and Civic Engagement

Student voter turnout is a critical component of strengthening the student voice in an impactful way. Last Spring, we implemented a Task Force on Voter Registration and Civic Engagement. This was implemented to connect interested student organizations, in an effort to increase awareness of the 2017 Gubernatorial Election, to partner effectively with RU Voting, and to compile a report on institutionalizing voter registration at Rutgers University. This report on the institutionalization of voter registration will be completed in March 2018.

Voter Shuttles

The Gubernatorial Election in 2017 was one of two gubernatorial elections taking place across the United States. State elections are one of the most important ways to impact policies at Rutgers University, and in higher education overall. For this election, we partnered with RU Voting to provide student voter shuttles for the entire day of the election. Since several voting locations are inaccessible from our campus, shuttles were arranged to transport students from their Residence Halls to their polling locations.

All In Challenge and Vote BIG Challenge

In 2016, we participated in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. As a result of a 54-percent student voter participation on our campus, we were awarded the Bronze Campus award. This would not have been possible without the many committed entities on campus registering students to vote. The Vote BIG Challenge was also piloted in 2016 for the Presidential Election. This was a project done in collaboration with the Association of Big Ten Students to increase voter registration on our campuses. Now that this is being funded by all 14 Big Ten Universities, we will be using this Challenge to promote the 2018 Midterm Election.

University Senate Voting Report

The University Senate Student Affairs Committee made recommendations to the University to make it easier for students to vote. One of those recommendations include systematically offering the opportunity for students to apply to vote by mail during New Student Orientation, in Residence Halls, and at voter registration drives. We recognize that there are several other student organizations and entities working on student civic engagement, so another recommendation is for the University to create a Campus Civic Action Plan. We believe it is important for the University to set goals to alleviate the barriers to student voter turnout. It should be a priority to educate the student body about the elections taking place, and to encourage full civic participation.

College Affordability

Student Vote on the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is the highest decision-making body at Rutgers, and one of those decisions is that of the rate of tuition and fees. One way to address college affordability is to get students a vote, and a seat at the table on the Board of Governors. Currently, students have a non-voting representative on the Board, but the implementation of a student voting representative on the board will allow students to have a legitimate voice in the tuition-setting process. This past summer, we worked with the New Jersey General Assembly Higher Education Committee to create a resolution supporting the appointment of a student member to the Board of Governors by the New Jersey Governor, or the Board of Trustees to appoint a student to the Board. After meeting with several members of the State Legislature, and testifying before the Assembly Higher Education Committee, the resolution passed through the committee unanimously. Going forward, we will work to pass this resolution through the New Jersey State Assembly. We will also be working closely with Governor Murphy and his administration to appoint a student to the Board.

Full Year Pell Grants

Full Year Pell Grants have been proven to increase four-year graduation rates, as they provide students the ability to pay for courses in the summer and winter sessions. The implementation of Full Year Pell Grants was an initiative that was accomplished with many strong partnerships. In the Summer of 2016, we were the primary sponsor of a resolution supporting Full Year Pell Grants that passed unanimously by the Association of Big Ten Students. Since that time, we have been able to communicate to the New Jersey Congressional Delegation that thousands of students across the country support the implementation of a Full Year Pell Grant program. We also established a great partnership with the Rutgers University Office of Federal Relations, which organized Student Advocacy Day, which was a trip to Washington, D.C. to advocate to the New Jersey Congressional Delegation for the implementation of Full Year Pell Grants. This program was then implemented in the Congressional Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 2018. We are looking forward to Congress passing the Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations, to implement the program.

Financial Aid Office Improvements

The legislative route is just one way to address college affordability. Unfortunately, the Office of Financial Aid has structural problems that negatively impact the ability of students to promptly receive information they need. This is a concern that we have been consistently raising to the New Brunswick Campus Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. We are pleased that the university will be implementing a “one stop shop” on Busch Campus to address this problem by creating a more welcoming and efficient system for students to get the information they need about their financial aid, course registration, parking, etc. This information will also

start to become more accessible online, to avoid personal visits or telephone calls to obtain information. This Spring Semester, we will be collecting feedback from all students about their experiences with financial aid, and will continue to collect this feedback upon the implementation of the “one stop shop.”

Scholarship Project

Student involvement is a pivotal part of receiving a college education. While we spend time emphasizing the importance of involvement to students during New Student Orientation, Convocation, the Involvement Fair, and similar events throughout the year, we realize that finances can be a major barrier to students joining clubs and being active on campus. Many students are not able to join clubs because they must fill their free time with part-time work in order to fulfill their financial obligations. We are exploring the creation of a scholarship with the university to encourage campus involvement, which would help reduce this financial barrier for students.

Employer Participation in Student Loan Assistance Act

Student loan debt is the highest it has ever been. For that reason, we need to advocate for federal, state, local, and university policies that can help to alleviate this debt. The Employer Participation in Student Loan Assistance [Act](#) is bipartisan federal legislation that incentivizes employers to pay down the student loans of their employees. The bill extends tax exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance to include qualified loans students have obtained. We will continue to advocate for this legislation because it will help provide relief to our fiscally overburdened Alumni.

Inclusion

Free Menstrual Hygiene Products

Making menstrual hygiene products free for our students has been one of the top priorities of RUSA this year. Access to these products is often overlooked as being an issue of inclusion, but college campuses across the country are starting to take action. By partnering with University Facilities and Capital Planning (UFCP) and Student Centers and Involvement, we will be piloting free menstrual hygiene products in all student centers throughout this semester. This will help students who are unable to afford the high prices of purchasing these products from on campus stores, and also help those who need these products in an emergency. This will be the first step in a long term plan to install menstrual hygiene product dispensers in the bathrooms of these student centers. You can look for this to be implemented in the coming weeks.

Rutgers Student Food Pantry

Before Thanksgiving, we sent a campus-wide email discussing the food pantry, resulting in an increase in the number of students that utilized it over the days that followed. This illustrates the need for more information regarding the food pantry around the university. The [Rutgers Student Food Pantry](#) is located at The Office of Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships at 39 Union Street. The Food Pantry is working to address food insecurity on campus, as this is a growing problem across the country. This past year the University conducted a survey to gauge the precise scope of food insecurity on campus. When the results of that survey are released this coming semester, we plan to release sponsored posts on social media to ensure that students are connected to the food pantry and aware of the impact of food insecurity on campus.

The DREAM Act

RUSA and UndocuRutgers collaborated on writing a resolution in support of the DREAM Act, which would provide a pathway to U.S. citizenship for those who meet the requirements outlined in the legislation. Some requirements individuals would have to meet include being continuously physically present in the United States for four years preceding this bill's enactment, being younger than 18 years of age on the initial date of U.S. entry, has not been convicted of specified federal or state offenses, and has fulfilled specified educational requirements. For student government, this is not an issue of political ideology, but is about supporting all of our fellow students.

Net Neutrality

Rutgers University, as a public research university, has a unique obligation to maximize educational and professional opportunity for all of its students. The way in which students are able to access the internet is a fundamental part of being a student, here and across the United States. We will be in communication with the New Jersey Congressional delegation to encourage

action to protect net neutrality. That will either be under the Congressional Review Act or by advocating for a new law to be enacted to overturn the FCC's decision. We will also be working to encourage every student to call their representative in Congress about this issue.

Free Speech Town Hall

Everyday, we use our right to free speech to communicate our knowledge, ideas, opinions, and questions. While free speech is a tool that we are all granted as students of Rutgers University, there are still many questions surrounding the concept of free speech and the implications of the First Amendment in our lives here on campus. Some of the recent issues include the new disruption policy, vandalism, and flyers with racist sentiment being posted on campus. This past Fall, we hosted a town hall with the attendance of over 100 students centered around free speech on campus. We hope to continue this dialogue, and work to make Rutgers University feel welcome to all students.

Mental Health

Scarlet Knight Support Network

It is important as a student government that we bring people together to address some of the biggest concerns students face at our university. One of those concerns is mental health. As with many aspects of Rutgers life, there are many different projects and initiatives to address mental health on campus, but not a unified resource available to students. Our goal is to create a support network of students to better-communicate all aspects of mental health services at Rutgers University, and to develop ways that we can work together to address those problems. This semester, we will be connecting the students involved with the new model of community-based counseling. This will provide an outlet to collect relevant feedback about the services offered on campus, and how to positively impact campus culture.

Expand CAPS Hours

The demand for mental health services on campus increases every year. With that, we understand how important it is that Counseling, ADAP and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) provides services that are increasingly available to the student body. This past summer, we worked very closely with CAPS and they were able to use additional resources to expand the hours that counseling is available to students.

Online Appointment System

The stigma surrounding mental health is significant, but improving. One way to combat this stigma was to ensure that students are able to more easily make appointments at CAPS. Making the effort to seek help can be challenging, especially for the first time. That is why we worked with CAPS to implement an online appointment system, so students would not have to worry about making the call. We hope that this will encourage more students to seek the services that they need to succeed.

Hiring New Counselors

We have built a very strong partnership with CAPS, and we have been an active part of the hiring process of their new community-based counselors. Through multiple interviews, members of our Assembly have been able to interact with prospective counselors that will serve our Rutgers community. We have been able to give feedback about the qualifications and fit of those candidates, and we look forward to more counselors being hired to support our student body.

Into The Light 5k

This year involved many ‘firsts’ in terms of mental health awareness on campus. RUSA partnered with Artemis and Sophia Mazzini, the organizers of the Into The Light 5k for Mental Health Awareness, to provide financial and promotional support for the 5k. We passed a bill

which allocated \$4,000 to support the event. We believe that awareness efforts for mental health are just as important as working to improve services. Improved mental health services are valuable, but we must also work to assure that students feel comfortable and unashamed with taking care of themselves.

Mental Health Town Hall

Another ‘first’ for this year was facilitating a conversation about mental health between different sectors of the university. This was a well-attended event, as over 100 students came and were able to have a dialogue with a panel consisting of members from CAPS, Scarlet Listeners, and the Into the Light 5k event. This created an open dialogue and a consensus that we must better-connect the segments of our university working to address mental health on campus.

Public Safety

Bridging Police and Community

With contentious political times, these are also contentious times between communities around the country and law enforcement. In an effort to be proactive, we created a town hall hosted at the Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD), with multiple cultural student organizations and cultural centers sending representatives. RUPD gave a presentation and had an open Q&A to discuss concerns about law enforcement and our diverse campus community. Some of the issues brought forward was the diversity of the department in New Brunswick, and security at cultural centers. Going forward, we will be working with our campus community and RUPD to ensure that all safety needs are met.

Public Safety Committee

Partially as a result of the town hall discussed above, we want to improve the way in which we collect feedback about public safety at our university. For the first time, we created a specific committee outside of RUSA to discuss issues regarding safety on campus. This is a committee comprised of campus leaders from student government, cultural and religious organizations, the Residence Hall Association, Greek Life, and others. We want to represent students as effectively as possible, and by collecting feedback from the entire campus, we can address the small and large problems regarding the safety of students at Rutgers University. This semester, we will be continuing meetings, and will be meeting with RUPD as well to directly discuss concerns and promote solutions.

Off-Campus Cameras

One of our biggest priorities is to make our student community feel safe. That is why we are co-sponsoring an initiative with RUPD to install cameras in the off-campus area. These cameras are going to be installed throughout the Spring semester, and we are cosponsoring this initiative with a contribution of \$5,000 to help with the costs. We believe that this is an initiative that will help in the prosecution of those who commit crimes, and make a real difference in keeping our Rutgers community safer.

Lighting Improvements

We want students to be able to walk the campus at night and feel safe. One of the ways that this can happen is with increased lighting in dark areas on campus. Last year, we were successful in encouraging the City of New Brunswick to fix broken lights around the Rutgers area. This semester, we will be finalizing a report on lighting that will outline areas on and off campus we believe need improvements. This report should encourage the university to make necessary lighting upgrades around the campus.

RUPD Escort Improvement

RUPD provides a safety escort service to students who need it, but it is currently lacking in a student notification component to notify the student when their escort has arrived. After meeting with RUPD, this is a problem that we look to be corrected soon. That way, students will not have to wait outside for their escort service to arrive to their location.

Sexual Violence Education

RA Mandated Reporting

Survivors of sexual violence should always retain the right to decide who to disclose to and whether or not to report their experience to the police. The former Residence Life protocol mandated Resident Assistants and Apartment Assistants to call RUPD anytime a student disclosed an experience with sexual violence. While incidents of sexual violence must still be reported to the police, resident assistants (RA) and apartment assistants (AA) must call RUPD first only when an incident is ongoing. If a student discloses to an RA or AA about a situation that is not ongoing, the RA or AA may call a Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) advocate first. Contacting a VPVA advocate first allows survivors to learn about all of the resources and options available to them before they speak to anyone else. This was an initiative that was developed by Rutgers NO MORE, and we were very proud to be a part of this initiative with them and VPVA. We hope to continue our work with Rutgers NO MORE and other organizations passionate about supporting survivors of sexual violence.

Bystander Training for Student Organizations

We believe that to end sexual violence, it will take more students standing up and being active bystanders. Last Spring, we passed a bill that will require student organizations receiving an allocation of over \$1,000 to have two of their officers receive bystander intervention training through VPVA. This is an initiative that has been supported by RUSA and VPVA, and we are currently working to implement more training sessions during this semester to enable organizations to get members trained. This policy will officially go into effect in September 2018, and should result in over 300 students receiving bystander intervention training.

It's On Us Campaign

We are very pleased that the University organized the “It's On Us” campaign rally at Rutgers. This was an event where 47th Vice President of the United States Joe Biden spoke, along with many students affected by sexual violence that had the opportunity to speak. RUSA President Evan Covello and the RUSA Sexual Violence Education Department Director Rita Portenti had the opportunity to speak as well. We hope that this event will continue to energize students and build awareness around the issue of sexual violence on our college campus.

Establishment of Department

Last Spring, we created the Department of Sexual Violence Education within RUSA, and the position of the Department of Sexual Violence Education director. This was to allow for a more formal process to select the person in charge of initiatives relating to sexual violence, and to formally involve students from outside of RUSA into the conversation. This Department gives the issue of sexual violence the level of consideration and care necessary to address it on

campus. At our very first RUSA meeting as a newly elected Assembly, we hosted VPVA Director Loren Linscott, who discussed the issue of sexual violence on our campus. We look forward to our continued partnership to end sexual violence.

Video Series

Our Sexual Violence Education Department is working on connecting students together to create a video series regarding the issues associated with sexual violence. We will be partnering with VPVA and cultural centers on a culturally-based video about this issue, and will be working with other organizations to create videos to discuss this topic and provide new perspectives to students.

Student Organization Support

Student Organization Funding

Each semester, RUSA approves a RUSA Allocations budget, which funds hundreds of student organizations across the New Brunswick Campus. In recent years, funding has been a significant problem for these organizations, as requests for funding increase at a rate faster than the amount of funding made available by student fees. This semester, however, we approved a budget that closed the gap of available funding and fundable requests from 50-percent to 35-percent. This is a significant improvement, and could bring us on the path to continuing to close the funding gap faced by student organizations.

Funding Guidelines Update

For the first time in years, we have updated the RUSA Funding Guidelines for student organizations. One of these key changes include clarifying the different types of funding open to student organizations. Another key change is that student organizations are granted more flexibility with their funding. Specifically, organizations will be able to transfer excess funding from one event to another, as long as the request is deemed fundable by the RUSA Allocations Board or by the organization's advisor. RUSA will also have more oversight into consideration of non-fundable items. Overall, these guidelines provide more accountability to RUSA and more flexibility to organizations being funded.

Meal Swipes for Charity

The meal swipe for charity program is an opportunity for students to donate an unused guest swipe to be used to benefit a specific charitable organization. Any registered student organization is eligible to apply. This program helps support their respective charity, and has raised thousands of dollars for various philanthropic causes in the past. Student organizations applied for the program in October, and The Youth Empowerment Club was selected to administer the program in the Fall semester. The Youth Empowerment Club's mission is to provide students on campus the opportunity to serve at-risk children in the New Brunswick community through educational assistance, mentoring relationships and recreational-based prevention and intervention programs offered all year around. We will be running Meal Swipes for Charity this semester as well, and we encourage interested organizations to apply.

Sustainability

Water Bottle Filling Stations

One issue, particularly on Busch Campus, is that of having access to quality water. We partnered with the Take Back The Tap campaign, and contributed \$4,500 to water bottle filling stations. This contribution, plus the funding acquired by Take Back The Tap, was matched by University Facilities, and several new water bottle filling stations were installed before the Fall semester. Two were installed in the SERC building, and six were installed in other housing suites.

Rutgers 2030 Practices

We believe Rutgers University should be a leader in sustainability. After meeting with Chancellor Dutta, we believe that we can work towards the creation of an Office of Sustainability, which will allow students, faculty and staff to be more involved in making our campus more sustainable, and could potentially help save the university money. This is a department that several other Big Ten Conference Universities have in place as well. We will be working on a 5-year plan to implement this office at Rutgers University, and hope to get the support of our Chancellor.

Reusable Water Bottles at Dining

During the Spring 2017 semester, RUSA worked with Rutgers Dining Services and the Daily Targum to implement a reusable water bottle available in takeout to all students with a meal plan. The purpose of this initiative was to reduce costs and significant waste associated with disposable cups, lids, and straws. Even with this initiative, students are free to use their own water bottles if they wish. During the Fall 2017 semester, we continued to support this initiative and allocated \$2,000 to purchase new bottles for students at all 4 takeout locations. This is to ensure that the program will last for years to come.

Water Quality Testing

One concern that students have expressed last Spring semester was water quality on and off-campus. This semester, we plan to work with the university to test the water quality in select areas on campus, to ensure that students have access to clean water. We also need to solicit student feedback on the water off-campus, in order to work with the City of New Brunswick to correct any issues there may be. If you are having any problems regarding water in New Brunswick or on campus, please send that feedback to rusa.legislativeaffairs1@gmail.com.

Sustainability Symposium

This semester, we cosponsored the RU Sustainable to The Core event. This sustainability symposium allowed students to learn, share, and shape opportunities as individuals and collectively as members of the Rutgers community. This illustrated how to foster sustainability

in our lives, local communities, Rutgers, and society by connecting with the UN Sustainable Development Goals through service, education, research, the arts, or some other means. We look forward to more events that the university will host related to sustainability this coming semester.

Endorsed 100-percent Renewable Campaign

In cooperation with the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group (NJPIRG), the RUSA University Affairs Committee conducted research and wrote a report on renewable energy at Rutgers University. A resolution was included in the report for RUSA to endorse NJPIRG's 100-percent Renewable Energy campaign. Since the start of the campaign last semester, it has gathered over 4,000 student petitions and over 100 faculty endorsements of this goal. As part of this campaign, NJPIRG has partnered with the Frontier Group research center and Environment New Jersey to launch a 10-part series of reports with case studies on how universities can move towards 100-percent renewable energy. The report detailed various aspects of sustainability at Rutgers including energy usage, greenhouse gas emissions, and current commitments. Since RUSA has been advocating for the University to take a more proactive approach to sustainability initiatives, the resolution we passed urges President Robert Barchi to commit to achieving a goal of 100-percent clean, renewable energy no later than 2050.

Transportation

Bus Form

Buses are perhaps the most common problem students have at Rutgers University. The New Brunswick campus faces very unique challenges regarding transportation, different than any other university. Therefore, it is important to collect as much feedback from the student body as possible. Upon releasing our form through social media, we have received nearly 100 responses, and the most frequent responses noted bus timing inconsistencies, air conditioners leaking, the smell of gas fumes in the buses, and disability accessibility. We brought these concerns to the Rutgers Department of Transportation, and they relayed those concerns to First Transit, which is the company that provides the buses. We are going to work to hold the Department of Transportation accountable to these concerns that students have brought forward.

Meeting with Transportation

We met with the Rutgers Department of Transportation Services about various issues, including the issues that were submitted in the form explained above. We also discussed the university bike share program, which has received a \$1.1 million grant, and should be implemented in Fall 2018. This should help to reduce the need for the usage of buses on campus. Transportation also discussed a plan to redo the mapping of the university, which will make it easier for students to have the opportunity to walk as opposed being dependent on the bus system. We hope for these plans to positively impact transportation at Rutgers, and to lower the congestion which is slowing down the bus system.