

RUSA

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report and Recommendations on Senate Attendance

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Sponsor: Internal Affairs Committee

Introduction

The University Senate is arguably the most important democratic representative body over all four campuses: Rutgers--Camden, Rutgers--Newark, Rutgers--New Brunswick, RBHS. The following excerpt from the Senate's website lays out the functions and responsibilities of the the body¹:

“The University Senate, with its standing and ad hoc committees and its Executive Committee, shall exercise its powers through the following functions:

Legislative Function

The Senate shall regularly review, revise and otherwise regulate and legislate those matters specifically assigned to Senate jurisdiction by the Board of Governors in University Regulation 2.2.2.A., which include:

1. establishing minimum standards respecting admission, scholarship and honors
2. regulating formal relationships among academic units within the University
3. recommending norms for teaching loads
4. establishing the University calendar

Advisory Function

The Senate shall study and advise on matters listed in University Regulation 2.2.2.B on its own initiative, or when these matters are brought to the Senate's attention by the central administration, by colleges, faculties and divisions of the University, or by special-interest groups or individuals within the University.

Initiative Function

¹ See <http://senate.rutgers.edu/About%20the%20Senate.shtml>

In accordance with the provision in University Regulation 2.2.2.B(1) that the Senate may, upon its own initiative, advise the president or the Board of Governors on any matter of concern to the University

Appeal Function

University Regulations prescribe two appeal functions for the Senate:

- Under University Regulation 2.2.2.C, the Senate shall consider and decide appeals filed with the Senate executive secretary by faculty or students, or any division thereof, on the ground that the faculty/students were not adequately consulted prior to making a major decision on an academic or administrative matter affecting the faculty or students made at a departmental, college or any other internal level
- Under University Regulation 2.2.2.B.(2), in matters of significant consequence to the University's broad educational and research policies, a representative of the University Senate may appeal, on the Senate's behalf, to the Educational Planning and Policy Committee of the Board of Governors, an action of the University president in which the representative alleges that the president has acted contrary to any of the following provisions: policy of the Board of Governors; University Regulations; state or federal law; a contract to which the University is a party, except contracts involving collective bargaining; practice well established in the absence of Board policy or University Regulation; or the University's best interest in an action that establishes a policy in a matter not regulated by any of the foregoing. If the Educational Planning and Policy Committee finds that the decision questioned is consequential and that the issue requires interpretation under any of the provisions above, the committee will request the advice of the Senate on the issue if that has not already been offered, and will refer the question to the Board of Governors for resolution."

There are a wide array of constituencies and interests represented within the Senate, and RUSA has the responsibility to make the New Brunswick School of Arts and Sciences, hereafter referred to as SAS, students' voice heard. According to SEBS Senator and RUSA University Affairs Chairman in a statement to the Internal Affairs Committee, student attendance historically was around 57%, compared with faculty, which was around 52%, with a 1:2 ratio between the sizes of the two groups. Recently, there has a dramatic decrease in student Senate attendance. Students attend 41% of the time, whereas faculty attendance has been relatively constant at 51%. Typically based on the available data, the most absences are from appointed Newark and Camden Student Senators. It is important to also understand that several additional units in Newark and Camden are entitled to student senators, but do not appoint any.

New Brunswick SAS Student Senators have the best attendance, but it is not perfect. SAS is by far the largest academic school and needs significant, consistent representation.

Additionally, New Brunswick SAS Student Senators represent approximately 25% of the total number of student Senators. There has been a dramatic improvement in SAS Senate attendance over the past three years. In the current Senate session, the absence rate (total absences divided by the total number of meetings) of SAS Student Senators has been 15%. In the 2015-2016 academic year SAS Student Senators absence rate was 38%. The reduction in the Senate absence rate was due to RUSA's increasing seriousness towards Senate absences. Rules penalizing absent senators were only adopted by RUSA in the 2016-2017 academic year. This data can be found as part of Appendix A, and was retrieved from the Senate website (links to absence counts can be found in prior meeting minutes of the Senate, available [here](#)). In addition, there was also a high turnover rate, with 57% of SAS Student Senators being appointed during the year to replace those who resigned for various reasons. The reason behind these resignations is partially because several of the Senators were unprepared for their role as Senators and commitment to attend Senate meetings. The voice of students within the Senate is already hindered due to the fact that students are simply entitled to less Senate seats than faculty.

It is disingenuous to run for office, claiming a commitment to the student body, only to disappear from Senate meetings when duty calls. Students are already outnumbered in the Senate. Our voices need to be stronger, and we need a policy that reflect how seriously students take their own voice.

Recommendation to RUSA

Based off this information regarding Senate attendance, it would be most sensible to implement a new Senate Attendance policy. We urge the next RUSA Assembly to adopt the following amendment to the RUSA Standing Rules:

Replace Article XXIII Section 3 with:

3. RUSA Senators shall be permitted no unexcused absences from Senate meetings.
 - a. Any SAS Senator is not allowed any unexcused senate absences per Senate session. A Senate session shall be defined as starting during the organizational meeting of the Senate and continuing until the last meeting of the Senate for that academic year.
 - i. SAS Senators must request to have their absences excused by the Executive Secretary of the Senate.
 - ii. In addition to requesting that absences be excused by the Executive Secretary of the Senate, Senators must also request to have their absences excused by the RUSA SAS Senate Leader, subject to appeal to the Internal Affairs Committee. Senate absences can be excused multiple times by the SAS Senate Leader for the following reasons: personal injury/illness,

- family emergency, religious holiday, or irregularly-scheduled exam. Other excuses may be accepted at the discretion of the SAS Senate Leader.
- iii. Absences which are not excused by both the Executive Secretary and SAS Senate Leader will be deemed unexcused.
 - iv. Any unexcused absences, upon conviction after a RUSA impeachment trial, will result in removal from their position as SAS Senator within RUSA, removing them from the University Senate.
- b. SAS Senators shall have at most one (1) unexcused committee meeting per Senate session. Absences must be excused by the appropriate University Senate authorities and the SAS Senate Leader. Denials of excuse requests by the SAS Senate Leader may be appealed to the Internal Affairs Committee.

This would replace the original language which follows:

3. RUSA Senators shall be permitted a limited number of unexcused absences.
- a. Any Student Senator is only permitted one unexcused senate absence per Senate session. A Senate session shall be defined as starting during the organizational meeting of the Senate and continuing until the last meeting of the Senate for that academic year.
 - i. Senators may only request to have their absences excused by the Secretary of the Senate. The Internal Affairs Chair may not excuse any absences from a Senate meeting.
 - b. Senators shall have at most 3 unexcused committee meetings a year and excuses may only be granted by the Senate Secretary.

Conclusion

We thank you for your consideration of this important issue. The Internal Affairs Committee welcomes any other ideas or policies to improve Senate attendance. Furthermore, the Committee urges the President of the Assembly to actively promote participation in the Senate to other Student Governing Organizations at Rutgers University.

Appendix A: Statistics on RUSA Senator Attendance

2014-2015	Present	Excused Absence	Unexcused Absence	Unexcused Rate	Absence Rate
Battle, Brianna	5	0	2	28.57%	28.57%
Covello, Evan **01/2015	3	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Fernandez, Luis	3	0	4	57.14%	57.14%
Gibson, Patrick **01/2015	2	1	0	0.00%	33.33%
Glaser, Francine	6	1	0	0.00%	14.29%
Marchick, Natasha	4	1	2	28.57%	42.86%
McGinnis, Christina	4	1	2	28.57%	42.86%
Navrot, Pamela	4	1	2	28.57%	42.86%
Patel, Vishal	5	0	2	28.57%	28.57%
Schulberg, Justin *	6	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Shulman, Jacob	4	1	2	28.57%	42.86%
Svasti, Luke	5	0	2	28.57%	28.57%
Average	4.25	0.50	1.50	21.43%	30.16%

2015-2016	Present	Excused Absence	Unexcused Absence	Unexcused Rate	Absence Rate
Arezzi, Emily **02/2016	3	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Capone, Constance	0	0	9	100.00%	100.00%
Covello, Evan	9	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Gramieri, Christina	3	1	5	55.56%	66.67%
Kelshikar, Rachana	9	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Krapivin, Viktor **12/2015	4	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
LaBella, Anthony	2	0	7	77.78%	77.78%
McGinnis, Christina	3	2	4	44.44%	66.67%
Meyer, Mikayla	3	2	4	44.44%	66.67%
Parisi, Nicholas	5	0	4	44.44%	44.44%
Schulberg, Justin	9	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Sung, Monica	3	2	4	44.44%	66.67%
Williams, Alexandra	7	1	1	11.11%	22.22%
Average	4.62	0.62	2.92	32.48%	39.32%

2016-2017	Present	Excused Absence	Unexcused Absence	Unexcused Rate	Absence Rate
Carrasco, Vladimir	6	2	1	11.11%	33.33%
Cutler, Samuel *	5	1	2	25.00%	37.50%
Jackson, Tyrus	8	1	0	0.00%	11.11%
Jaffry, Mustafa	6	1	2	22.22%	33.33%
Johnson, Davon **02/2017	1	0	2	66.67%	66.67%
Kelishkar, Rachana	8	1	0	0.00%	11.11%
Krapivin, Viktor	9	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Markosian, Christopher **11/2016	5	1	0	0.00%	16.67%
Salazar, Cecilia	7	0	2	22.22%	22.22%
Serrano, Julie	7	1	1	11.11%	22.22%
Settimo, Natalie	6	2	1	11.11%	33.33%
Average	6.18	0.91	1.00	15.40%	26.14%

2017-2018	Present	Excused Absence	Unexcused Absence	Unexcused Rate	Absence Rate
Ahmed, Adeel **10/2017	5	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Arezzi, Emily **02/2018	1	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Chang, Zoe **02/2018	1	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Bhatnagar, Tilak **11/2017	4	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Kane, Emily **02/2018	1	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Krapivin, Viktor	7	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Patel, Meet **10/2017	5	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Phadke, Jaidev	6	1	0	0.00%	14.29%
Resnick, Jessica	5	1	1	14.29%	28.57%
Ross, Caroline	4	1	2	28.57%	42.86%
Salazar, Cecilia	5	1	1	14.29%	28.57%
Serrano, Julie	7	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Zapata, George **02/2018	1	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Ziessler, Paul **11/2017	4	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
Average	3.92	0.31	0.31	4.08%	8.16%

* SENATOR BEGAN TERM AFTER THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

** (MM/YY) SENATOR BEGAN TERM DURING THIS MONTH/YEAR

Appendix B: Sample Bill Adopting Introduced Changes



RUSA Bill S#####

Author: AS APPLICABLE

Sponsors: Internal Affairs

Bill to Update the RUSA Standing Rules

Whereas, it is important that RUSA Senators attend all Senate meetings,

Whereas, the proposed Standing Rules change aims to achieve this goal,

Be it hereby enacted, that the Assembly amends its Standing Rules, Article XXIII Section 3 to read as follows:

3. RUSA Senators shall be permitted no unexcused absences from Senate meetings.
 - a. Any SAS Senator is not allowed any unexcused senate absences per Senate session. A Senate session shall be defined as starting during the organizational meeting of the Senate and continuing until the last meeting of the Senate for that academic year.
 - v. SAS Senators must request to have their absences excused by the Executive Secretary of the Senate.
 - vi. In addition to requesting that absences be excused by the Executive Secretary of the Senate, Senators must also request to have their absences excused by the RUSA SAS Senate Leader, subject to appeal to the Internal Affairs Committee. Senate absences can be excused multiple times by the SAS Senate Leader for the following reasons: personal injury/illness, family emergency, religious holiday, or irregularly-scheduled exam. Other excuses may be accepted at the discretion of the SAS Senate Leader.
 - vii. Absences which are not excused by both the Executive Secretary and SAS Senate Leader will be deemed unexcused.

- viii. Any unexcused absences, upon conviction after a RUSA impeachment trial, will result in removal from their position as SAS Senator within RUSA, removing them from the University Senate.
- b. SAS Senators shall have at most one (1) unexcused committee meeting per Senate session. Absences must be excused by the appropriate University Senate authorities and the SAS Senate Leader. Denials of excuse requests by the SAS Senate Leader may be appealed to the Internal Affairs Committee.