Faculty Council President’s Report to the RWJMS Faculty
Dean’s Faculty Meeting
May 7, 2012

The Council has met once, on March 13, since the last Dean’s Faculty Meeting was held in February.

1. On behalf of the Faculty, the Council sent comments to the March 15 meeting of the Joint Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committee regarding the Final Report of the UMDNJ Advisory Committee. The letter, which is included as an addendum to this report, is similar to the one sent in February to the Senate Higher Education Committee. The Council stated that it was “...pleased to endorse publicly the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to merge RWJMS with Rutgers University”. The Council urged “the state of New Jersey to act on this recommendation in a timely manner, and with appropriate regard to the financial requirements and respect for faculty tenure and terms of employment necessary to make the merger a successful one”.

2. At the March 13 meeting of the Faculty Council, we welcomed Dr. Christopher Molloy, Rutgers University Interim Provost for Biomedical and Health Sciences. Dr. Molloy candidly discussed the proposed merger of RWJMS with Rutgers University and answered questions posed by those present. Regarding the merger of RWJMS with Rutgers, Dr. Molloy noted that the present focus is on operational matters and that he, Dr. Rodgers (Interim President of UMDNJ) and Dr. McCormick (President of Rutgers) meet monthly with the Governor’s office. He stated that the biggest issues of concern are financial and that Rutgers has engaged a financial analysis firm and committed $40 million to the process. He stated that Rutgers had hired a project manager and was looking for a firm to oversee the integration. He suggested that political clarity would be achieved by July 1 and that the merger would likely require legislation. In response to questions regarding a vision for the future structure of the University, he stated that time for visioning the future would come later, but mentioned several universities as potential models including Michigan, North Carolina and Pittsburgh.

3. Also at the March 13 meeting several issues were brought to Dr. Molloy’s attention by RWJMS faculty who were present (Faculty Council members and members of the Faculty at large). A key issue is that uncertainty about the future of RWJMS has impacted recruitment. Issues of concern with regard to the merger included the level of state support for higher education, the need for administrative support for matters unique to medical schools, the need to coordinate the ongoing RWJMS strategic plan with Rutgers and the status of the UMDNJ Foundation. Other issues raised included the delivery of the educational program, whether there would be opportunities to teach across school boundaries, the future of departments, the relationship of the medical school to the university and how differences between policies and tenure practices would be addressed.
4. Aside from discussions regarding the future alignment of RWJMS, the Council has focused on the challenges faced by faculty in attempting to balance their efforts to the various mission areas of the medical school in an era of diminished resources. Dean Amenta accepted an invitation to meet with the Council on May 22 to hear faculty concerns in regard to these challenges.

5. The Council continues to encourage communication between the administration and the faculty and to identify steps that will promote a culture of shared governance. On May 2 the Council sent a letter to the Dean recommending steps that could be taken to improve communication between the leadership and physicians of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group (letter included with this report).

6. The next meeting of the Faculty Council is scheduled for May 22 at 5 p.m. in the CAB1302, with V-tel to the Dean’s Conference Room in Piscataway. Meeting minutes, links to items of interest and Council reports to the Faculty can be found on the Faculty Council website at: http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/faculty/council/related.html

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy C. Walworth, Ph.D.
Professor of Pharmacology
President, RWJMS Faculty Council
March 15, 2012

The Honorable Sandra B. Cunningham  
Chair  
New Jersey Senate Higher Education Committee  

The Honorable Celeste M. Riley  
Chair  
New Jersey Assembly Higher Education Committee  

Dear Senator Cunningham and Assemblywoman Riley,

On behalf of the Faculty Council of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, we are pleased to have the opportunity to address comments to the March 19, 2012 Joint Committee Meeting of the Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committees regarding the recommendations made in the Final Report of the UMDNJ Advisory Committee. The RWJMS Faculty Council is elected by and from the Medical School Faculty and recognized by the Medical School Bylaws as having the responsibility to "transmit the views of the Faculty" and review "policies that affect the academic mission of the school." As such, we are pleased to endorse publicly the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to merge Robert Wood Johnson Medical School with Rutgers University.

For nearly a decade, the faculty and staff of RWJMS have stood by as the fate of the Medical School and its relationship to Rutgers University has been examined, considered, and debated without action. During this period of uncertainty, opportunities for recruitment and growth have been lost, while the departure of many of our most productive colleagues to more certain futures elsewhere has hurt morale. The Faculty recognizes the complexities involved in realignment; nevertheless, we concur with the Advisory Committee statement on page 10 of the Final Report:

"At stake are...the lives and futures of the faculty, staff and students that bring these institutions to life, and, ultimately, the patients whom medical and health sciences education serves. For all these reasons, uncertainty must finally be put to rest. The time for action is now."

The existing strengths of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Rutgers University, coupled with our close proximity in Piscataway and New Brunswick, offer abundant opportunities to collaboratively work toward enhancing the reputations and impact of both institutions in each of our mission areas; namely, 1) the education of health professionals, 2) the conduct of biomedical, clinical, and public health research, 3) the delivery of health care, and 4) the promotion of community health for the residents of the state. In an addendum to this communication, we highlight such opportunities identified by the Faculty.

The Faculty of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School looks forward to the implementation of the integration of RWJMS with Rutgers University. We urge the State of New Jersey to act on this recommendation of the Advisory Committee in a timely manner, and with appropriate regard to the financial requirements and respect for faculty tenure and terms of employment necessary to make the merger a successful one. Thank you for the opportunity to communicate our views to the Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committees.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy C. Walworth, Ph.D.  
Professor of Pharmacology  
President  
RWJMS Faculty Council  

John A. Walker, M.D.  
Professor of Medicine  
Vice-President  
RWJMS Faculty Council  

Monica Roth, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biochemistry  
Secretary  
RWJMS Faculty Council
Addendum

Since the January 2011 release of the report from the Task Force on Higher Education (the Kean Commission), the faculty of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School has engaged in thoughtful discussion of the recommended merger of RWJMS with Rutgers University. Here, we summarize observations that have emerged from these discussions:

- A merger of RWJMS with Rutgers would eliminate administrative barriers that complicate existing collaborations and hamper the development of new ones between scientists at RWJMS and Rutgers, thereby enhancing collaborative research efforts that would benefit from the close proximity of RWJMS and the life sciences infrastructure at Rutgers

- A merger of RWJMS with Rutgers would facilitate the development of new programs to train clinical residents and fellows in basic sciences related to their specialties, sciences that have a strong research base at Rutgers, including neurosciences, infectious disease, obesity, cancer and pharmacogenomics

- Graduate programs in the Molecular Biosciences, Neurosciences, Biomedical Engineering, Toxicology, and Exposure Science and Assessment, are currently offered jointly by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at RWJMS and Rutgers. A merger of RWJMS with Rutgers
  - would serve to eliminate administrative disparities faced by students who are in the same graduate program and receive degrees granted jointly by two institutions, but are assigned to one university or the other by virtue of the affiliation of their research advisor
  - could offer GSBS at RWJMS students the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience as teaching assistants for undergraduate courses

- Merger with Rutgers University, a nationally recognized, comprehensive educational institution would enhance medical residency recruitment efforts and offer opportunities for
  - expanded faculty development programs, research in education, and development of medical education courses (e.g. in collaboration with the Graduate School of Education)
  - MBA programs for interested residents in collaboration with the Business School
  - alignment of educational efforts with the School of Pharmacy

- Merger of RWJMS with Rutgers would allow the opportunity to create new translational programs where clinical fellows and junior faculty train in public health and government policies in premiere programs such as the Rutgers University Health, Health Policy and Aging Research Institute

- A successful merger of Rutgers with RWJMS would enhance career development opportunities for students and post-doctoral fellows by promoting access to career development programs at each institution, for example the RWJMS Post-doctoral Association and the Career Development office at Rutgers

- Merger of RWJMS with Rutgers should increase opportunities to forge new partnerships with area hospitals, expand subspecialty services, and establish locally deliverable tertiary services to improve patient care to the citizens of New Jersey

- Existing interactions between the Medical School and Rutgers that promote delivery of healthcare to the community, particularly the underserved, would be enhanced by operating within the administrative structure of a single University
• Incorporation of a research-oriented Medical School into a major research-oriented state university offers the opportunity to cultivate cutting-edge research and create opportunity for new growth. A successful merger would include development of a sustainable financial plan, hiring of new faculty who can compete in an extremely competitive funding environment, identification of permanent leadership for departments and institutes, and recognition that scholarship and research efforts of Medical School faculty bring intrinsic value to the academic enterprise in addition to the possibilities they elicit for economic development.
May 2, 2012

Peter Amenta, M.D., Ph.D.
Dean, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Dear Dr. Amenta,

Last Friday, the Faculty Council was contacted by members of the RWJMS Faculty raising concerns regarding the implementation on May 1 of the next phase of RWJ Medconnect by the RWJ Medical Group.

Dr. John Walker engaged in a dialogue with Dr. Frank Sonnenberg regarding specific issues surrounding the implementation. On Monday, April 30, Dr. Sonnenberg sent an email to the RWJMG faculty that addressed many of the concerns raised by individual faculty members.

Looking forward, the Faculty Council makes the following constructive suggestions aimed at establishing a more consistent bidirectional conduit of information between the physician and administrative leaders of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group and the Group’s faculty practitioners.

The Group’s web-published “Guiding Principles” states:
"We are committed to nurturing and supporting the professional well-being of all of our faculty, physicians, nurses, administrators, and other employees and members of our team: They will be treated with respect and dignity, both as individuals and as essential members of our organization.”

In keeping with this principle, we suggest that the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group post on its password-protected website:

1. A complete Table of Organization of its administrative structure, with contact information (name, telephone number, and e-mail address) for each identified position. This might include a list of those individuals who can serve as a “first contact” for concerns or questions encountered frequently by the Group’s faculty practitioners (eg, insurance, legal and liability, billing, appointments, IT/EMR, staffing issues, etc).

2. A complete list of its standing Committees, along with the names, position and contact information for each Committee member.

3. The approved meeting minutes of all standing Committees.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We would be happy to discuss this matter with you further at your convenience.

Sincerely yours, and on behalf of the RWJMS Faculty Council,

Nancy C. Walworth, Ph.D.
Professor of Pharmacology
President

John A. Walker, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Vice-President

Monica Roth, Ph.D.
Professor of Biochemistry
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