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Dear Members of NJ Joint Legislative Committee on Higher Education,

I was scheduled to testify at the March 6th hearing held on the UMDNJ-Newark campus. Unfortunately, after 3 hours, I had to leave to attend other meetings and was therefore unable to delivery my testimony orally. I had planned to make the following points:

1. The proposed reorganization of UMDNJ, Rutgers University and Rowan University will be detrimental in the short-term.
2. The justification for the proposed reorganization is ill conceived and unlikely to increase the excellence of New Jersey's higher education research universities in the long-term.
3. The Barer Commission report correctly pointed out a problem with the burdensome bureaucratic structure of UMDNJ, but it did not propose a productive solution to the problem. The obvious solution is streamlining burdensome bureaucratic structures.
4. Instead of reorganization, increased excellence in higher education and research can be achieved by increasing collaboration between the state's universities.

I conclude by making a specific proposal to increase collaboration between the state's research universities as the most efficient means to promote excellence in education and research at UMDNJ, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers University and Rowan University.

1. The proposed reorganization of UMDNJ, Rutgers University and Rowan University will be detrimental in the short-term.

The question repeatedly asked during the committee meeting is whether the planned reorganization of UMDNJ, Rutgers University and Rowan University will be beneficial or detrimental. In my opinion, the proposed reorganization will almost certainly be detrimental in the short-term. Quite simply, reorganization costs money. The total amount has not been determined, but Rutgers alone is projecting a request for \$40 million. Over the past decade, state funding for higher education has decreased significantly when adjusted for inflation, and resources used to reorganize these institutions will put even greater pressure on university budgets. Spending money on reorganization will provide no educational or research dividend in the short term. However, any funds planned for reorganization could be used instead to strengthen existing successful programs or to seed new programs to meet the rapidly changing landscape of research and education. Strengthening programs and/or developing new programs will pay off in increased extramural grant revenues and increased tuition dollars.

2. The justification for the proposed reorganization is ill conceived and unlikely to increase the excellence of New Jersey's higher education research universities in the long-term.

Two issues have been highlighted as justification for the proposed reorganization: (1) the research and educational environments on its New Brunswick/Piscataway campus of Rutgers University and in southern New Jersey will be enhanced by formation of larger "research universities" and (2) the reputation of UMDNJ as an institution is irrevocably tarnished.

In regards to the first justification, the idea that larger educational institutions improve educational and research excellence is not borne out by the facts. Universities at the pinnacle of U.S. education system, such as Princeton University, tend to be small. Princeton's total enrollment for both undergraduate and graduate students is less than 8000. What distinguishes top-tier universities from other institutions is the degree of investment that they can make in their faculty and students. Even public institutions ranked as leading educational/research universities, such as University of California campuses (San Diego, Berkeley, San Francisco, Irvine), are not necessarily among the largest public universities. Instead, these institutions have benefited from historically high levels of public and private investment in their educational and research programs. Predictably, as the state of California has undergone its own severe financial problems, their universities have likewise suffered. The take-home message is that success in higher education and research is directly attributable to the level of investment in students and faculty, not to any particular organizational structure of an institution.

The second justification for restructuring UMDNJ is that its reputation has been irrevocably tarnished and cannot be repaired. This assertion is patently incorrect, unless the authors of the Barer Commission report are referring to the reputation of UMDNJ with state politicians.

What do I know that the Commission members do not? First, as an admissions interviewer for the New Jersey Medical School (NJMS), I have been following applications and admissions standards of the school for several years. During the period of the scandal and settlement overseen by then U.S. Attorney Christie and since, the quality of the applicants to NJMS has improved and, as a consequence, admissions standards have become significantly more stringent, whether measured by standardized test scores or overall qualifications. Thus, UMDNJ's scandal did not have a measurable negative impact on our ability to attract talented students to the Medical School.

At the height of the scandal, I was the chairperson of a recruitment committee to fill a tenure-track faculty position created when the Howard Hughes Medical Institute funded our doctoral program. We held a nation-wide search and interviewed several outstanding applicants. Eventually an offer was made to a young scientist who had completed post-doctoral training at one of the world's premiere epilepsy research laboratories. The applicant also had two job offers at other research universities and likely more on the way. The applicant accepted our offer because the resources that we offered were competitive with those from the other universities plus we had a cadre of faculty at NJMS, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and Rutgers-Newark conducting related research that was superior to the other universities. In other words, the applicant joined NJMS because we offered a better environment to create a successful research program. The on-going scandal was an issue for the applicant, but so far down the list of concerns that it had effectively no impact. This applicant, now a third year Assistant Professor at NJMS, has garnered over \$2,000,000 in extramural grant funding from the National

Institutes of Health, the New Jersey Commission on Spinal Injury Research and private foundations. Clearly, even in the midst of UMDNJ's "worst" problems, we were able to recruit a talented young scientist who is competitive at the national level.

I am presently a member of a search committee for a department chairperson at NJMS. We have received applications from quite a number of outstanding scientists from across the country. The limiting factor in filling this chairperson position will not be the applicant pool. Instead, our ability to attract any of the top applicants will be determined by the resources that Dean Johnson can devote to recruiting a high quality candidate to join the faculty of NJMS. Again, the impact of the scandal at UMDNJ will not be a principal factor in determining the ultimate outcome of our chairperson search process.

The point that I am making is that the scandals that capture the attention of the general public (and politicians) are rarely the issues that determine the attractiveness of an institution for its education and research missions. New Jersey Medical School, and other schools of UMDNJ, I suspect, have remained competitive educational and research institutions because the fundamental factors that made them competitive still exist. In short, the reputation of the schools of UMDNJ remain strong and untarnished where it really counts, and that is in their ability to educate and provide a competitive research environment.

In summary, the justification for the reorganization is ill conceived. Reorganization into larger universities is not an obvious long-term path to greater excellence for New Jersey's major research universities. The reputation of UMDNJ's schools remains strong. Thus, the reorganization plan recommended by the Barer Commission report should not be pursued.

3. The Barer Commission report correctly pointed out a problem with the burdensome bureaucratic structure of UMDNJ, but it did not propose a productive solution to the problem. The obvious solution is streamlining burdensome bureaucratic structures.

The structures of UMDNJ and Rutgers University have not been the factor that most impedes the progress of these otherwise successful institutions. In fact, the final report by the Barer Commission points out that a significant issue confronting UMDNJ is its overly burdensome administrative structure. I would hazard to guess that the same statement could be made for Rutgers University. My colleagues at Rutgers certainly agree with the sentiment. As I will assert below, the most efficient way to improve the educational and research success of New Jersey's largest research universities is to streamline their bureaucratic structures. This change can be accomplished with little or no additional costs and will almost certainly save money.

Although recognizing that the administrative burden prevents UMDNJ from fulfilling its mission in the most effective manner, the Barer Commission provided no guidance on how to deal with the problem except to recommend that substantial autonomy be provided for the Public Health Research Institute (PHRI), the School of Osteopathic Medicine (SOM) and the University Behavioral Health Center (UHBC) as a mechanism to free these selected units from that burden. The rationale for proposing administrative relief selectively to these three units of UMDNJ is not at all clear. In fact, it is quite distressing that Commission members did not seem to understand that research, education and clinical activities, no matter where they are carried out within the university system, are impacted negatively to an equal degree by the bureaucratic environment.

The administrative structure of UMDNJ impedes the mission of the university because it diverts resources away from core research, education and patient care activities, and it impedes innovative and entrepreneurial activities that can expand and improve these core activities. While it is true that the central administration provides essential services to constituent units of the university, the cost of those services is high but quality is often lacking. Implicit in the Barer Commission's recommendation that PHRI, SOM and UBHC be given autonomy from the Central Administration is that these essential services could be purchased for less and/or the quality of the services could be improved.

What should be done to improve the administrative structure of UMDNJ? Streamline Central Administration by (a) eliminating non-essential activities, (b) critically re-examining its structure and function, and (c) purchasing services from outside vendors when favorable to the university's core educational, research and patient care missions. These recommendations are consistent with the spirit of the Barer Commission report.

You might already be thinking if the size of the Central Administration is reduced, won't jobs be lost? The answer is no, if resources are redirected from Central Administration to the constituent schools of the university. In fact, if those resources can be used to strengthen academic programs and research, there will be net job creation from increased tuition and grant revenues.

4. Instead of reorganization, increased excellence in higher education and research can be achieved by increasing collaboration between the state's universities

Finally, in striving to maximize the success of New Jersey's largest education and research institutions, Rutgers University, UMDNJ, NJIT and Rowan University should work more collaboratively to encourage joint educational and research activities. Students don't need to be informed of this idea. In Newark, graduate students routinely cross-register for courses at NJIT, Rutgers-Newark and UMDNJ-Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Faculty members don't need to be told this. In Newark, there are joint educational programs between UMDNJ and NJIT, UMDNJ and Rutgers-Newark, NJIT and Rutgers-Newark and so on. I personally know of eleven research collaborations between NJMS and NJIT faculty in the Biomedical Engineering Doctoral Program run jointly between these institutions, and I am sure that more research collaborations are out there. On the Piscataway campus of UMDNJ, doctoral programs in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences are run jointly with Rutgers University, and many research collaborations occur there as well. Thus, the interest and willingness to work between institutions already exists on the part of students and faculty. What are lacking are administrative structures to foster such collaborations and institutional incentives to promote and create greater collaboration. However, streamlined administrative structures that promote collaboration between UMDNJ, NJIT and Rutgers University would make them far more facile to plan and implement.

How do I know that increasing collaboration between the universities will promote excellence? In 2005, a group of faculty from the UMDNJ-Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Newark, NJIT, and Rutgers-Newark came together to plan an inter-institutional doctoral training program. I was a director of that plan. We wrote a grant proposal that was submitted to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to support this training program. After a competitive process that included proposals from over 140 schools, our program and nine others (from

universities such as Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, University of Chicago, University California-San Francisco, and University of Pennsylvania) each received a one million dollar grant to start-up our educational programs. This point is this: when faculty at New Jersey's major universities come together to collaborate, they can achieve a level of excellence that is on par with the best schools in the country. Reorganization is not needed to achieve that level of excellence. Promoting and supporting that kind of collaboration, however, is a key to success.

Proposal: In this light of the above, I propose that funds that might have been used to support the reorganization proposed by the Barer Commission instead be used to set up a pool of resources that is specifically targeted to support existing joint educational and research programs and to seed new joint educational and research programs between the universities. That investment will have a much greater positive impact on New Jersey's research universities than any proposed reorganization and will certainly move these institutions towards the goal of excellence that everyone agrees is in the best interests of the state.

I am available to discuss, in more detail, the points that I have raised and my proposal, if members of the Legislative Committee contact me.