

# Rowan and Rutgers-Camden hold first Board of Governors meeting

By [Andy Polhamus | South Jersey Times](#)  
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**CAMDEN** — Officials gathered at Cooper Medical School on Monday morning for the inaugural meeting of the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors. The board, created under the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act, will oversee the development of curriculum and programs for the joint program, as well as any building projects or purchases that may come with expanding the two universities' health sciences departments.

“This is a great day for South Jersey and especially Camden,” said Senate President Stephen Sweeney in opening remarks. “We have two great universities coming together to improve this region’s economy.”

“When you first say it, it sounds like ‘how big can that be?’” said Board Chair Jack Collins, who previously served as speaker of the state Assembly for 16 years. “But it’s so expansive when you consider the medical schools, the nursing programs, biometrics, bioengineering and genetics.”

The meeting itself was fairly straight forward, revolving mostly around the structure of how the board will operate in the future and naming officers. Besides electing Collins president at the beginning of the meeting, members chose Louis Bezich, chief of staff to the president of Cooper Health System, to the position of vice chair. It will have eminent domain and hiring powers, but “nothing that goes beyond the authority of the two schools,” Collins said.

The seven-member board is tentatively slated to hold 10 meetings a year, although the dates of those meetings have yet to be determined. Several members said the primary goals of the schools, as well as the board, were to expand access to health care in South Jersey by educating professionals who would serve the area after graduation and to spur economic growth in Camden.

“In today’s economy we find that institutions, especially public institutions, are being pressured to do substantially more with substantially less,” said Rowan President Ali Houshmand. “That speaks to increasing access, improving quality and decreasing costs. That’s a very big challenge, but one that I think these institutions are ready to meet.”

The board is made up of two representatives from Camden and Gloucester counties, and three more members appointed by Gov. Chris Christie's office.

"I am elated, and that's an understatement, to have so many strong partners to help us rebuild and revitalize the city of Camden," said Camden Mayor Dana Redd, who also serves on the board. "I believe the Restructuring Act and this joint board will take Camden to the next level."

Gloucester County Administrator Chad Bruner, also a board member, said he was grateful to the governor, Sweeney, and Senator Donald Norcross "for having the trust and confidence" in the venture.

The board is made up of the following people:

Louis S. Bezich – Cooper University Health Care, Chief of Staff to the President and Executive Director, Population Health Management

Chad M. Bruner – Gloucester County Administrator

Jack Collins, Esq. – former New Jersey Speaker of the General Assembly

Michellene Davis, Esq. – Barnabas Health, Executive Vice President for Corporate Affairs

Fred Graziano – TD Bank Group, Head of Regional Commercial Banking and Executive Vice President

Robert Mortensen – R.E. Mortensen Associates; Rutgers University Trustee and Member of the Board of Overseers at Rutgers University Foundation

Dana L. Redd – Mayor of Camden

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