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Rutgers Students Take Over Board of Governors Meeting, Demand University Become Immigrant Sanctuary



By JACK MURTHA

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ - Dozens of students stormed the Rutgers University Board of Governors meeting Tuesday, demanding University President Robert Barchi strengthen the school's commitment to undocumented immigrants and other minority groups in anticipation of Donald Trump's presidency.

The group, believing Barchi did not go far enough in declaring Rutgers a "safe haven" during his opening remarks of the meeting, effectively ended the session with their chants. As of 3:30 p.m., after the board adjourned, a dozen or so students remained seated in the Winants Hall meeting room.

The organizers said they intend to occupy the space until a "credible threat of arrest." Rutgers Police Lt. Brian

Protesters who want Rutgers to more staunchly defend its immigrant communities rise up during Tuesday's Board of Governors meeting. *Credits: TAPinto New Brunswick*

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Emmett, who was in the room, said his team was "monitoring" the situation. He declined to say when the police might break up the sit-in.

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Prior to the start of the meeting, students and faculty gathered outside the College Avenue building, where they rallied for Barchi to label Rutgers a "sanctuary" campus. They then took the protest inside.

In the wake of Trump’s election, roughly 30 other colleges have adopted the “sanctuary” title, signaling that they will not provide information on undocumented students to the authorities or, in some cases, allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel on campus.

“You are doing what Rutgers is already doing, which is the status quo,” Thais Marques, a sit-in organizer and undocumented Rutgers-Newark student, said. “Your fear of using the sanctuary label is not as big as the fear that I feel as an undocumented person in this country right now.”

She then demanded the board and Barchi immediately decide whether they would “go further.” Although Barchi reinforced his dedication to Rutgers’ immigrant communities, he refused to take on the moniker, prompting the student takeover.



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At two times in the meeting, Barchi pledged his support for two existing resolutions that support immigrant children and college students. He also said Rutgers would refuse to hand over any student information to law enforcement without a court order.

“In today’s political environment, the term ‘sanctuary’ has become encumbered by vague and shifting definitions,” Barchi said, reading from an open letter he penned that day. “We must be focused on policy and principles, not labels.”

The president's "safe haven" speech earned him praise from faculty and students alike, but some believe it simply is not enough.

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