



Poll: N.J. voters oppose merger of Rutgers campus in Camden

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THE RECORD

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As dozens of speakers converge on the Camden campus of Rutgers today to oppose a plan that would cede its South Jersey campus, the university has released a poll that says a majority of voters don't support the move.

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll found that 57 percent of registered voters oppose a plan — put forth by [Governor Christie](#) late last month — to merge the Camden campus with Rowan University in Glassboro, creating a large research institution in South Jersey.

The Rutgers-Eagleton Institute characterized opposition to the merger as “broad and deep.”

“The stunning thing about these numbers is simply how negative voters are about the plan,” said Professor David Redlawsk, the poll director. “We thought those living in South Jersey would be more supportive than most, since the proposal is put forward as a significant enhancement for the region. But the reality is this is a deeply disliked proposal.”

The results differ from a poll conducted by Monmouth University last week that found the same percentage of respondents statewide had no opinion about the proposed merger, which is part of a larger planned reorganization of higher education in the state that includes the breakup of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

“It's just really not on the radar screen,” said Patrick Murray, Monmouth polling institute director. The merger was way down the list of priorities — topped by property taxes — cited by those polled.

Murray said the wording of the Rutgers poll, which characterized the merger as a “loss” to Rutgers, may have skewed the results. The Rutgers poll found that more than 21 percent of respondents were unsure of their view. Twenty-two percent supported the plan.

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The Rutgers poll was conducted by telephone from Thursday to Saturday and interviewed 914 registered voters. Its margin of error was 3.3 percentage points.

For those voters who said they support Christie overall, 30 percent said they also support his merger plan while 44 percent are opposed. Those polled who have an unfavorable opinion of the governor are opposed to the university plan a nearly 3-1 ratio.

Rutgers has balked at ceding the Camden campus and its respected law and business schools to Rowan. Hundreds of protesters and more than 40 speakers are slated to voice opposition to the plan when the university's governing body meets in Camden today.

A 9,000-signature petition opposing the merger will be presented to the board of governors, said Hyun Kyu Seo, a student leader.

Rutgers has been more enthusiastic about the part of the plan that would give it a medical school, which now belongs to UMDNJ, at its flagship campus in New Brunswick.

The Rutgers-Eagleton poll asked only about the Camden part of the plan. Redlawsk said it was coincidental that the results were released ahead of today's hearing.

"I didn't realize that the board of governors was meeting in Camden," said Redlawsk. "Having said that, though, [the poll] is useful information."

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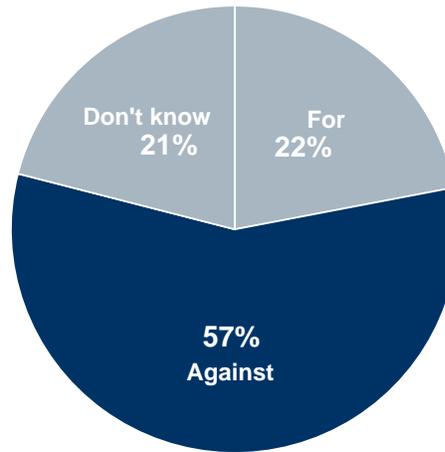


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University poll

Governor Christie has proposed major changes to higher education in New Jersey, which include the merger of Rutgers University-Camden into Rowan University. Do you support or oppose this plan?



The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from Feb. 9-11, 2012 with a scientifically selected random sample of 914 New Jersey registered voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population. The sampling error for 914 adults is +/-3.3 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.

BY DEBRA HUSTACE/STAFF ARTIST