

Research examines political bias at University

By [Kristine Rosette Enerio](#)

University Editor

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Liberal presence and voice far outweighs conservative ones on campus, according to a recent report released by [campusreform.org](#).

“America’s colleges and universities are dominated by Liberals, and Rutgers University is no different,” said founder of [campusreform.org](#) Morton Blackwell in a statement. “Too often, the campus left uses its power to indoctrinate the next generation.”

The report was released as an independent project meant to supplement U.S. News & World Report’s Best College Rankings report to provide incoming students, family and alumni with an idea of the political climate on campus, said Abigail Alger, the new media manager at [campusreform.org](#).

“We want an open discussion of ideas where it’s OK to be a conservative student ... and express those ideas and beliefs and not worry about repercussions on campus,” Alger said.

Of the 18 political student organizations on campus, there are a total of 12 liberal groups while six groups are conservative or libertarian-leaning, according to the report.

The report lists organizations such as Amnesty International and the Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians and Allies of Rutgers University as liberal organizations. Meanwhile, groups like The Centurion and Young Americans for Liberty are marked as conservative.

Though these groups provide some insight into the political views of the student body, president of the Rutgers University College Republicans Noah Glyn thinks dividing students between two political ideas is not that simple.

“I would say [a] majority of students who have an opinion are probably liberal or leftist, but I don’t know if [the] majority of students even have an opinion or if they have an opinion it’s not set in stone,” said Glyn, a School of Arts and Sciences junior, adding that some students are willing to change their views depending on the facts presented to them.

But Christopher Pflaum, Rutgers University Democrats president, believes it is only natural for most

students at the University to be politically liberal.

“We are part of an educational institution. Part of the key Democratic value is higher education, funding for college, funding for academics and research,” said Pflaum, a School of Arts and Sciences senior.

Students usually want to root for the side fighting for more science and research grants as well as lowering tuition, Pflaum said.

The liberal bias that seems apparent among students is also spotted within the University’s administration as well, according to the report.

The report cites campaign finance data from The Huffington Post, which shows that 97 percent of faculty and staff who made donations during the 2008 presidential election donated to Democratic candidates.

This political donation trend is also evident among the University’s Board of Governors, according to the report. All donations toward the last presidential election were given to Democratic candidates as well.

“Across the country many surveys and many studies that have been done indicate that the faculties tend to affiliate more Democratic than Republican,” said Director of Eagleton Institute of Politics Ruth Mandel.

Jordan Romvary, editor-in-chief of The Centurion, an on-campus monthly magazine, said he had minor personal experiences of political discrimination from administrators.

“I do believe that Rutgers University, like a lot of modern academia, is a politically biased school that espouses ideals and implements policies mainly of a leftist orientation,” Romvary said.

The report also mentioned with a problem with the definition of bias as an act that appears on the Office of Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities’ website: A bias act — whether verbal, written, physical or psychological — maligns, threatens or harms a person or group based on race, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status or veteran status.

This definition received a “red-light rating” from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a nonprofit group focused on civil liberties in American education. FIRE gives “Red-light ratings” when a school has at least one policy that both clearly and substantially restricts constitutionally protected speech, said Samantha Harris, the FIRE director for speech code research.

“While speech that actually threatens another person is not protected, speech that simply ‘maligns’ someone encompasses a great deal of speech that is constitutionally protected, including expressions of opinion on controversial political or social issues,” Harris said.

If an individual’s words are hurtful or makes someone else feel bad, it does not mean he can be censored or punished in any way, Harris said.

Despite this policy and the report, Glyn feels the University is still tolerant of different political views and is

personally comfortable speaking his mind.

“It could be better,” he said. “You can’t judge based on some utopian ideal but rather on the actualities of what life is like at most major universities.”

But as the head of a conservative publication, Romvary believes and experiences otherwise.

“If it were up to the administration, I do believe that The Centurion would not receive any funding from the University,” Romvary said. “Thankfully, we have enough support and aid from students that we are able to exist as a student organization, and so receive some funding from [Rutgers University Student Assembly] to operate and publish our monthly magazine.”

Regardless, he feels any political bias in a campus setting — whether left or right — hurts true learning.

“College ought to be a marketplace of ideas, where ideas and beliefs from all over the political spectrum are welcome,” Romvary said.

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