

Poll: Rutgers-Rowan merger opposed by 59 percent of voters

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By **Matt Friedman/Statehouse Bureau**

By

TRENTON — New Jersey voters are deeply opposed to a takeover of the **Rutgers-Camden campus by Rowan University**, according to a poll being released today.

Fifty-nine percent of registered voters do not favor the takeover, which was rolled out by Gov. Chris Christie in January with the support of Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) while 19 percent supported it, according to the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

The results are almost unchanged from February, when the poll found 57 percent opposed it and 22 percent in support of the takeover.

"Those working toward the merger have apparently not made their case to New Jerseyans over the past six weeks," said David Redlawsk, the director of the poll.

The proposed takeover is strongly opposed by the students, faculty and staff of Rutgers-Camden. The Christie administration has not yet provided details on the financing and execution of the plan, though he has said he would like to it to be in place by July 1.

The opposition crosses partisan lines, according to the poll, which was conducted from March 21 to 27. While a majority of Democrats are opposed, a plurality of Republicans and independents also reject the proposal.

Rutgers-Eagleton surveyed 518 registered voters, with a margin of error of 4.3 percentage points.

Voters are less clear about, another aspect of the proposal — the Rutgers takeover of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, the Cancer Institute of New Jersey and the School of Public Health — which an advisory committee to the governor also recommended. Thirty-eight percent support that part of the plan, while 34 percent oppose it and 28 percent are undecided.

"Support for the Rutgers-UMDNJ plan remains well below a majority because so many simply have no opinion," Redlawsk said. "But even so, that proposal gets twice the support of the Rowan merger. Voters clearly differentiate between the two plans, though in both cases many remain uncertain despite — or perhaps because of — the ongoing public debate."

The sweeping reorganization would also create the New Jersey Health Sciences University in Newark to replace UMDNJ, but voters weren't polled about that.

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Christine Deguzman, 20, a junior at Rutgers-Camden majoring in music, joins other students as they rally against proposed merger with Rowan University near Gordon Theatre on Thursday February 2, 2012. Patti Sapone/The Star Ledger TO PURCHASE THIS PHOTO, CALL THE STAR-LEDGER PHOTO LIBRARY AT 973-392-1530

Rutgers-Camden students rally against proposed merger with Rowan University gallery (10 photos)

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