

ESSEX COUNTY PROSECUTORS OFFICE PRESS RELEASE



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Subject: A Former Employee of Rutgers Medical School Sentenced to Five Years in State Prison
Date: May 17, 2019
Category: Theft
Defendant(s): Sondra Bell

May 15, 2019

A Former Employee of Rutgers Medical School Sentenced to Five Years

Newark — Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II, announced today that Sondra Bell, 55, of Newark was sentenced to five years in New Jersey State Prison for stealing more than \$87,000 from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, where she was employed for 24 years as an administrative assistant.

Assistant Prosecutor Walter Dirkin, who handled the case, said the theft started in January of 2017 and continued until April of 2018 when the Ethics and Compliance Department at Rutgers University notified the audit group regarding an \$87,145 discrepancy. During the investigation, it was determined that Bell had been generating vouchers for her own personal use.

Bell was sentenced by the Honorable Michael L. Ravin, Judge of the Superior Court. Bell maintained she used the stolen funds for personal use including paying her son's college tuition.

The theft began in January of 2017. In April of 2018 it came to light when Bell was asked to purchase airline tickets for her boss to attend a medical conference. At that point she advised the doctor there was not enough money in the account to pay for the airline ticket, admitted stealing the money and asked him to "cover" the \$87,000. He declined, and authorities were alerted.

On Jan. 18, 2019, the defendant entered a guilty plea to second degree theft by deception.

"The defendant was a trusted employee and she was respected in the community. Unfortunately, in her greed, she sold reputation ultimately her freedom; and in the process, she harmed a program which served the most vulnerable in our society," said Assistant Prosecutor Dirkin.

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