

Governor Christie Partners with Community Colleges to Create New Economic Opportunities For All Residents

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Governor Announces 'Career Connections' Expansion to Empower at Least 65 Percent of Adults with College Degrees or Credentials by 2025

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today announced a new partnership with the state's 19 community colleges to provide all New Jerseyans with new pathways to economic opportunity through an expansion of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's "Career Connections" network.

Governor Christie made the announcement at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, where state Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) Acting Commissioner Aaron R. Fichtner, Ph. D., Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks, and presidents from New Jersey's community colleges convened to sign the attached agreement, setting a goal to increase the percentage of New Jersey residents who have earned employer-valued certificates and college degrees to at least 65 percent by 2025. The agreement is designed to improve employment possibilities and career goals for people in the Garden State by providing them with the educational degrees, certified skills and industry-recognized training demanded by the industry sectors driving the state's economic growth.

Today's action builds on the momentum of seven consecutive years of private-sector job growth under Governor Christie. Last week, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics released data showing employment growth in New Jersey in 2016 hit a historic level with 60,800 private sector jobs added, and the state's private sector employment growth between January 2016 and January 2017 outpaced the national rate.

"New Jersey's diverse and powerful workforce remains a primary reason why employers choose to open and grow in the Garden State," Governor Christie said. "This initiative will prepare more people for the careers being generated in the key industries driving New Jersey's impressive economic growth. It will provide residents with expanded access to employer-valued credentials and degrees, fruitful training networks and high-quality career assistance, creating new economic opportunities and improving people's quality of life. Our unified and visionary goal to hit at least 65 percent by 2025 ensures an even more skilled and prosperous New Jersey workforce will continue to drive American innovation in our thriving economy."

The State and New Jersey's 19 community colleges committed to three main components as part of this new initiative:

Launch an expanded New Jersey Career Connections initiative to ensure that all New Jersey residents have access to unified, high-quality career guidance, planning resources, and job search assistance;

Identify, expand and build career pathways at community colleges that lead to economic opportunity and industry-valued credentials and degrees, and expand opportunities for internships and other work experience; and

Partner with employers to ensure that investments in education and training programs are aligned with the needs of the business community.

"Community colleges are an important partner in workforce development in our 'Many Paths, One Future' campaign," said LWD Acting Commissioner Fichtner. "We are thrilled that all 19 of the state's community colleges have agreed to this exciting and unprecedented focus ensuring that New Jersey maintains one of the most productive, competitive

and innovative workforces in the world.”

LWD’s Career Connections program was created to help New Jerseyans of all backgrounds, education levels, and work experiences find job navigation information and explore the many available career pathways. The services are currently available at New Jersey’s 29 One-Stop Career Centers, libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and some community colleges throughout the State. The formal partnership with community colleges expands LWD’s Career Connections program to all 19 community colleges in New Jersey, making these job-finding services more accessible with increased locations.

Additional staff at community colleges will receive training by LWD under this partnership, to provide unified job search assistance services and economic opportunities for all New Jerseyans. In addition, by unifying the program, jobseekers and students will be able to more easily identify and access LWD’s Career Connections whether at a community college, One-Stop Career Center or other agency where the program is available.

The New Jersey Career Connections website, CareerConnections.nj.gov, is the cornerstone of the initiative and features networking tips, up-to-date labor market information, interview advice, and easy access to government resources including unemployment insurance. The website also includes an Industry-Valued Credentials List of the 198 skills most in-demand by New Jersey employers.

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