

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: Tuition-Free Community College Now Includes Students Statewide in Spring 2019

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TRENTON – New Jersey's program to make community college tuition-free for certain students, which began with a pilot at 13 county colleges, is being expanded to cover eligible students at all 19 county colleges in the current spring semester.
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"With this expansion, students in need at all 19 of our community colleges will have access to an education that is within financial reach and allows them to worry about their grades instead of how they will pay for school," **said Governor Murphy**. "We know that if our students can obtain a higher education, our communities become more prosperous, their employers become more competitive, and the state economy becomes more innovative and attractive to businesses. I look forward to providing this critical opportunity to students at all 19 community colleges for the upcoming Fall and Spring semester."

Thirteen county colleges across New Jersey began piloting the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) program in January 2019, while all 19 county colleges indicated interest through their application for the Community College Innovation Challenge last summer. The expansion will provide qualifying students with the ability to attend county college tuition-free this spring at these six additional schools: Brookdale Community College; County College of Morris; Essex County College; Raritan Valley Community College; Rowan College at Burlington County; and Sussex County Community College.

Students across the state now will be eligible for CCOG if they meet the requirements of enrolling in at least 6 credits this spring, making satisfactory academic progress, coming from families with adjusted gross incomes between \$0 and \$45,000, and having a completed application for federal and state financial aid. Such students are eligible for CCOG, which is a "last-dollar" grant that covers any gap remaining between their tuition and covered educational fees and all other financial aid grants they receive. Current students who are already enrolled at these six additional institutions will be processed for potential CCOG eligibility over the next few weeks; students do not need to complete any additional application to be considered for eligibility.

"We initially pursued a pilot approach at 13 community colleges to ensure that the program costs did not exceed the funds appropriated. Throughout the pilot, all 19 county colleges have been working to build capacity for the program expansion and to share learnings and best practices during implementation with the goal of expanding in the fall," **said Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis**. "We are delighted to announce that we now have room to expand this opportunity even earlier than anticipated to benefit all eligible students statewide."

"The 19 county colleges recently provided detailed information about all of the students enrolled this Spring. Our analysis of these data shows that the current Fiscal Year 2019 funding for CCOG will be able to cover eligible students at all 19 county colleges, as a greater share of students are receiving other aid this semester, including Federal Pell grants and State TAG, than was the case in prior years" **said David Socolow, Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority**. "We are delighted that students at New Jersey's county colleges are hearing about this initiative to make college more affordable."

The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) are jointly administering this funding opportunity. To learn more about the Community College Opportunity Grant, visit: <https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/ccog.aspx> (<https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/ccog.aspx>).

Governor Phil Murphy

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