

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Historic \$50 Million Investment in College Affordability with Tuition-Free “Garden State Guarantee”

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First-in-the-Nation Program is Largest State Investment in Making College More Affordable in More than a Decade

WAYNE – With the promise to provide greater affordability to New Jersey’s college students, Governor Phil Murphy, joined today by Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, announced the “Garden State Guarantee” – a historic \$50 million investment in public, four-year senior public colleges and universities through his proposed FY2021 budget that would allow all eligible New Jersey undergraduate students to attend any public college or university in the state tuition-free for two years.

Under this Guarantee, 13 campuses of the state’s four-year public institutions will receive increased direct operating aid to assist low-income and underrepresented students of color. Students with adjusted gross incomes (AGIs) of \$65,000 or less would be guaranteed tuition- and fee-free prices for their first two years of study at the institution. Eligible community college transfer students who have benefitted from the Community College Opportunity Grant program would have the potential to have their total tuition and fees covered if they graduate on time. Each institution would develop a sliding scale pricing structure for students above that income threshold. A transparent, locked-in tuition price would be provided for all students throughout the duration of their academic program.

“We know students drop out of college – or worse, rule it out as an option for them – because they believe the price tag is unaffordable. After more than a decade of decreased state investments in higher education, our Administration’s innovative plan creates a path for broader college affordability,” **Governor Murphy said**. “This complementary program underscores New Jersey’s continued commitment to tuition-free community college. We remain laser-focused on retaining in-state talent through our Jobs NJ initiative and expanding opportunities for low-income communities and communities of color.”

“This means that students enrolled through the CCOG who transfer to a four-year, public institution could receive their entire four years of education completely free,” **Secretary Smith Ellis said**. “The Garden State Guarantee aligns with the goals of our state plan for higher education by sending a clear message to New Jerseyans: you can afford to go to college and earn a degree.”

“The battle for talent is THE critical contest of the 21st century economy and keeping more people in-state is essential to building out New Jersey’s workforce of tomorrow,” **said NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan**. “By leveling the playing field to make a two- and four-year college education more affordable to all New Jerseyans, the Governor is working to ensure that our state’s students have the tools they need to obtain, and create, jobs across a wide spectrum of industries.”


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"I applaud the efforts of Governor Murphy and Secretary Smith Ellis to bring New Jersey students greater college affordability and pricing guarantees - two things that have been lacking for many years," **Assemblywoman Mila Jasey said.** "The Garden State Guarantee is a first step forward as we look at strategic ways we can make the cost of college more appealing to state residents."

"We are pleased that William Paterson's innovative Pledge 4 Success Program can be a model statewide for supporting students from low-income families in their pursuit of a life-changing college degree," **said William Paterson University President Richard J. Helldobler.** "In just its first year, Pledge 4 Success has helped hundreds of students avoid additional student loan debt and furthered William Paterson's commitment to making a quality, affordable education available to more New Jersey students. We are grateful for Gov. Murphy's support for William Paterson and for his recognition of the role higher education must play in creating a better future for everyone in New Jersey."

"Investing in higher education is vitally important to New Jersey's economic prosperity and to the health and wellbeing of all its residents," **said Susan A. Cole, President of Montclair State University.** "I support this proposal, which will help make a four-year degree more affordable for our state's lowest-income students. I appreciate the leadership of Governor Murphy and Secretary Smith-Ellis, who recognize the immense benefits of investing in our colleges and universities."

"Governor Murphy and Secretary Ellis are leading the effort for the State of New Jersey to have a well prepared diverse workforce through the Garden State Guarantee," **said Joel S. Bloom, President of the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT).** "This initiative will enable thousands of young men and women who would have found finances a significant obstacle to attending a New Jersey college or university. The ROI on this investment for the students, families and the future workforce for our state is critical."

"At NJCU we are committed to serving students from many backgrounds. Most find it difficult to complete their degrees due to the costs, in spite of the current aid we afford through our Debt Free program and others," **said Sue Henderson, President of New Jersey City University (NJCU).** "This program will help them complete their degree in a timely manner with little or no debt and better ensure their strong entry into a meaningful career."

"Not only does the cost of college prevent some students from completing their degree, but the 'sticker shock' of published tuition prices also deters too many others from even pursuing postsecondary education. Through its promise of a clear, up-front net price based on family income, the Garden State Guarantee will help overcome this hurdle and put college within the reach of more New Jersey students," **said David Socolow, Executive Director of the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.** "Students will not have to fill out new application to receive this supplemental financial aid from one of New Jersey's public institutions."

Governor Murphy announced the Garden State Guarantee on Wednesday during a student roundtable event at William Paterson University with President Richard Helldobler, Secretary Smith Ellis, Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, and students.

The Garden State Guarantee allows institutions the flexibility to use their increased funding to best support students' needs, as long as the commitment is met. Institutions would begin implementing this program for students entering in fall 2021, which means that—if enacted—students applying to college in FY2021 will be the first benefit from the Guarantee. The program complements similar existing efforts at William Paterson University, Rutgers-Camden, Rutgers-Newark, and New Jersey City University. For institutions that are already able to make this commitment through existing resources, the funding increase can be used to cover other unmet needs for non-tuition costs or put in place programs to help students complete college.

The Guarantee builds on existing state programs to make college affordable, including financial aid provided to students through CCOG, Tuition Aid Grants (TAG), and New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarships (NJ STARS and NJ STARS II), as well as the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program that enables institutions to provide a range of student supports.

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