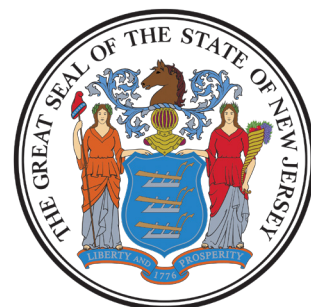


WHERE OPPORTUNITY MEETS INNOVATION

A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education



State of New Jersey
Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
February 2019





State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 001

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0001

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

February 13, 2019

I am pleased to release New Jersey's new State Higher Education Plan, which will serve as a blueprint for our work to strengthen the quality of, and improve access to, our state colleges and universities.

New Jersey's institutions of higher education deliver value to more than their students. They help strengthen and enrich families and communities, enhance New Jersey's competitiveness in the global market, and help drive innovation and discovery. New Jersey's future is being forged in college classrooms and laboratories across the state, and this higher education plan will help ensure that the fires continue to burn bright.

Education is a critical part of the formula for advancing growth, prosperity, and opportunity across New Jersey. Moreover, New Jersey is an educational powerhouse, and our educational system leads the nation in many ways -- from high quality pre-K to top-ranked K-12 classrooms, in addition to some of the most highly sought-after college campuses in the nation.

However, a higher education remains out of reach for far too many residents, and we must do better. This is why I have been so committed to expanding pre-K and fully funding our school funding formula, recommitting to STEM related educational programs, and providing free-community college to expand the quality of our system and expand access. These are the tools through which we can close the gaps among communities and ensure a stronger future for all New Jerseyans.

New Jersey's future economic prosperity depends on our commitment to the next generation of leaders, workers, and community members. A stronger and fairer New Jersey economy must re-invest in our residents to ensure that everyone has the tools to succeed in the jobs of today, and are equally well-positioned for the jobs of tomorrow. A stronger and fairer New Jersey ensures that everyone who works hard and dreams big has a chance to succeed.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Philip D. Murphy.

Philip D. Murphy
Governor



State of New Jersey

NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION
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ZAKIYA SMITH ELLIS, Ed.D.
SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

New Jersey has always charted new paths forward: in science and medicine, in music and literature, and in higher education. Fifty years ago, freshman Assemblyman – and future Governor – Tom Kean proposed the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) to support disadvantaged students in their higher education pursuits. The program's success inspired the creation of similar programs across the country, and today EOF continues to embody New Jersey's commitment to students who would otherwise lack access to postsecondary education.

Innovative programs like EOF play a central role in New Jersey's higher education heritage. Since taking office, I have had the privilege of experiencing this living history firsthand. During visits to colleges and universities around the state, I have seen countless inspiring initiatives that create opportunity through innovation and give me hope for New Jersey's future.

Yet despite the good work happening all around, New Jersey suffers from the lack of a common, collective direction for higher education across the state.

Over the past year, we gathered feedback from key educational stakeholders, analyzed trends in relevant data, and reviewed prior reports to better understand the issues New Jersey is facing with higher education. In doing so, we not only met with hundreds of students, faculty, and staff, we also conducted a first-of-its-kind survey with the New Jersey higher education community – receiving over 10,000 responses. Our outreach involved conversations with stakeholders inside higher education, as well as those outside the system, including business and industry leaders and community and philanthropic organizations.

The input received and evidence collected all pointed in the same direction: New Jersey must refocus its higher education policy around the needs of students to write the next chapter of our state's remarkable history. Students today need affordable postsecondary options, as well as consistent support to get to – and through – college. They also need to know that every postsecondary path in the state will prepare them for what comes after graduation. A plan that works to meet these needs will help ensure that every New Jerseyans has the opportunity to obtain a high-quality credential that will allow them to succeed in life.

Today, I am excited to share a plan that will ensure that New Jersey stays on the cutting edge of innovation and opportunity for all. I look forward to working with all New Jerseyans to make the vision embodied herein a reality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zakiya Smith Ellis".

Zakiya Smith Ellis, Ed.D.
Secretary of Higher Education
State of New Jersey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

College is an opportunity. An opportunity to gain knowledge. An opportunity to preview and select a career. An opportunity to improve future earnings and contribute to the economy. In order to support lasting economic growth across the state, every resident of New Jersey needs to have access to this critical opportunity. In 2018, Governor Phil Murphy unveiled an economic plan for a “Stronger and Fairer Economy in New Jersey,” setting forth a bold vision to reestablish New Jersey as an economic and innovation leader.¹ A key priority of the plan is to “invest in people” so that all New Jerseyans can find work to sustain and support their families.

To achieve this, New Jersey must take advantage of its *own* opportunity: the opportunity to transform higher education. By implementing the shared vision presented in this plan, New Jersey can make higher education in the state more affordable and accessible for all residents. And New Jersey can ensure students have the ability to thrive once in college through enhanced supports and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to not only complete college—but succeed upon graduation.

The key to making these changes starts with a renewed commitment to students. This commitment is embodied in the vision for New Jersey’s Student Bill of Rights, which holds *every* New Jerseyan, regardless of life circumstances, should have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality credential that prepares them for life after college.

Under this vision all New Jersey students should have:

1

EARLY EXPOSURE TO COLLEGE.

Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to explore college options and career paths during their middle and high school years.

2

CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIBLE FINANCIAL INFORMATION.

Every student in New Jersey deserves to receive clear and comprehensible information explaining what college will actually cost for them and their families, including an explanation of the types of aid available, an estimate of likely loan debt, and information on postgraduate outcomes—such as earnings and job placement.

3

AFFORDABLE AND PREDICTABLE EDUCATION COSTS.

Every student in New Jersey should have access to an affordable route to a college degree with predictable tuition and fees, and support to help with non-tuition expenses.

4

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to work with an employer, conduct meaningful research supervised by a faculty member, or access some other form of experiential learning before graduation.

5

SUPPORTIVE FACULTY AND STAFF.

Every student in New Jersey should have access to faculty and staff who have the ability, time, and resources necessary to support student learning and development.

6

SUPPORT FOR ON-TIME COLLEGE COMPLETION.

Every student in New Jersey should have the financial, academic, and social support needed to complete college as promptly as possible with a degree or credential.

7

OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN COLLEGE CREDIT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM.

Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to demonstrate that credentials and work experiences obtained outside a college classroom are worthy of being awarded college credit.

8

HIGH-QUALITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.

Every student in New Jersey should have high-quality, career-relevant academic programs that will prepare them to succeed in the global economy.

9

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUSES.

Every student in New Jersey should feel safe and supported in their learning environment. This means colleges must work to ensure students are not only safe from physical harm, but also included and welcome on campus.

10

A VOICE IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR EDUCATION.

Every student in New Jersey should be included in decision-making processes that affect them, whether it be on campus or statewide.

These rights are not self-executing, nor will they happen overnight. Achieving them will require the state, colleges, and students to all take on active roles and work in collaboration with one another. Some steps, however, should be taken immediately to make these rights a reality. They include:



Exposing students to postsecondary pathways through enhanced partnerships and access to fee-free college-preparatory programs;



Ensuring college access and affordability by examining new partnerships between the state and institutions to meaningfully reduce higher education costs for students and their families;



Building support systems necessary to make sure students thrive in college and get across the graduation stage;



Ensuring students feel safe, supported, and included in their chosen learning environments; and



Cultivating research, innovation, and talent to deepen and recapture our role as a leader in the innovation economy and effectively prepare students for success after college.

Taking these coordinated steps now will help transform higher education in the state. Additional steps may require more long-term, collective action. Along with the immediate recommendations set forth in the plan, a set of working groups will be charged with specific follow-up tasks to continue the conversation set forth in this living document. This type of collaboration between stakeholders will make the Student Bill of Rights a reality and showcase what New Jersey truly values: opportunity and innovation.

INTRODUCTION

HIGHER EDUCATION MATTERS FOR NEW JERSEY'S LONG-TERM ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Higher education powers New Jersey's present—and is the key to its future. Professionals with high-quality college degrees or industry-valued credentials drive New Jersey's economy, from the pharmaceutical technicians who research new drug treatments to the teachers who educate the next generation of leaders. Colleges in the state inspire their students to become lifelong learners, unafraid to question past cultural assumptions and view diversity as something to value—not merely tolerate.² They are also hotbeds of innovation where researchers and faculty routinely partner with business and industry to enhance the economic productivity of New Jersey's communities. In short, the Garden State's economy thrives because of the research enterprises and student learning provided by its institutions of higher learning.

Higher education is also vital for expanding economic opportunity and ensuring continued prosperity for New Jerseyans. The financial value of obtaining a New Jersey college degree is significant—and rising (*Figure 1*). In 2007, the median income for a high school graduate in New Jersey was \$32,000 a year, compared to the \$55,000 that could have been earned with a bachelor's degree.³ By 2017, the median income for high school graduates had increased by 7% to \$34,000.⁴ But during that same time period, the median income for graduates with a bachelor's degree in the state grew by 15% to \$63,000.⁵ Notably, the earnings advantage of a bachelor's degree grew despite the significant increase in college degree attainment across the state. The fact that bachelor's degree holders earn so much more than high school graduates, even as more of them enter the labor market, testifies to the long-term changes occurring in New Jersey's economy.

College is where New Jerseyans can go to prepare for, and succeed in, the economy of the 21st century. National and global economic trends drive the rising value of higher education in New Jersey, starting with automation, big data, and machine learning. Although new technology will replace some jobs, in many cases it will also create entirely new ones. Many jobs in the future will inevitably call for uniquely human skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, and relationship-building. Occupation-specific skills, obtained through internships, cooperative education, and apprenticeships, will also be needed to help graduates succeed in their jobs and careers. College is a critical venue for students to obtain these essential skills and update them as necessary to thrive in the ever-evolving workplace.

78

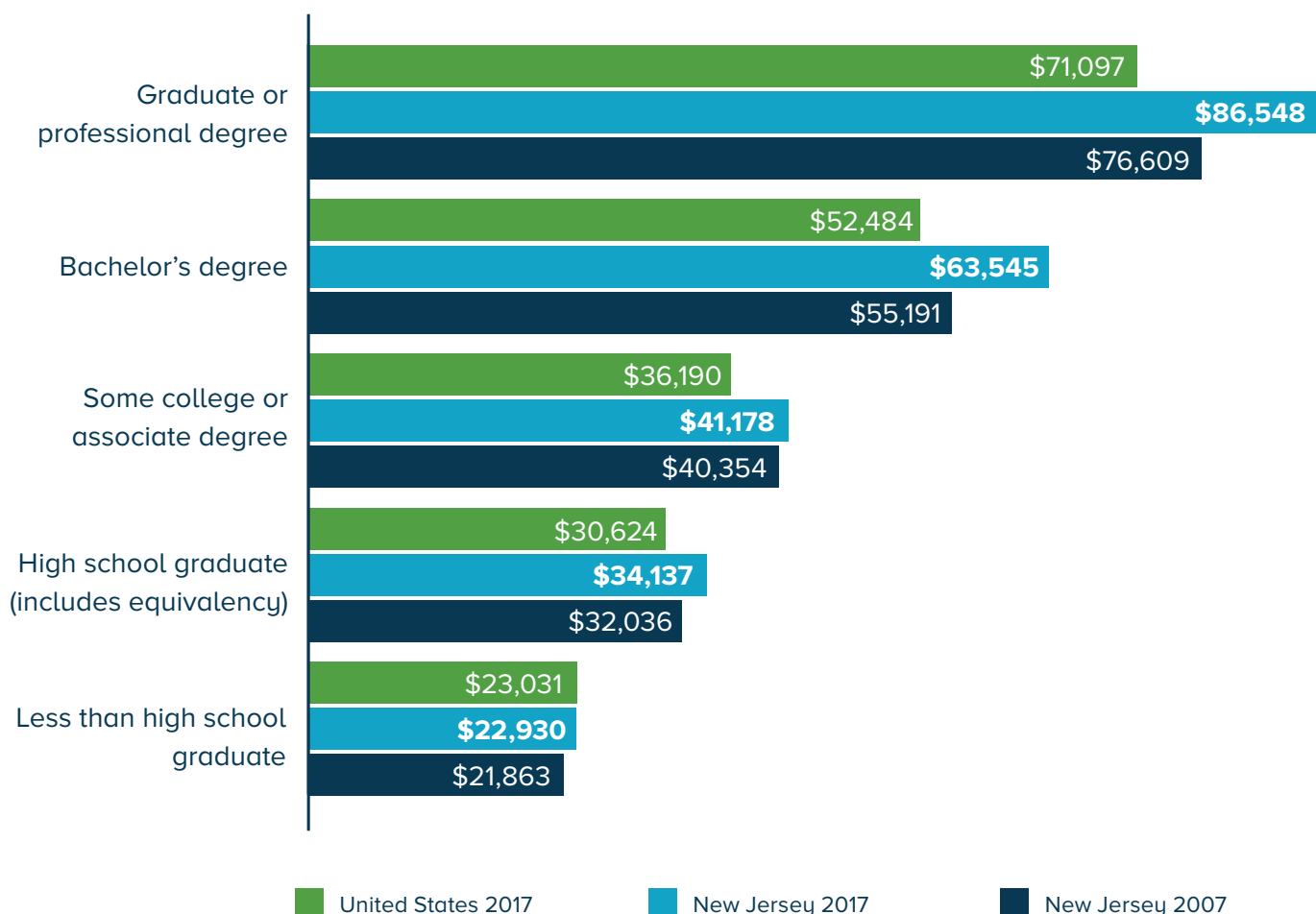
TWO-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS IN NEW JERSEY

532,772

TOTAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENT IN NEW JERSEY FOR 2017-2018

In 2018, Governor Phil Murphy unveiled an economic plan for a “Stronger and Fairer Economy in New Jersey,” setting forth a bold vision to reestablish New Jersey as an economic and innovation leader.⁶ A key priority of the plan is to “invest in people” so that all New Jerseyans can find work to sustain and support

FIGURE 1: MEDIAN INCOME BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT – 2007 VERSUS 2017 FOR NJ AND US



Going to and completing college still pays off. In 2017, a college graduate with a bachelor's degree made almost twice as much as a New Jersey worker with only a high school diploma.

their families. As part of the plan, the NJ Talent Initiative is developing innovative proposals and programs “to better attract, retain, and develop the state’s current and future workforce.”⁷ The creation of a Student Bill of Rights will assist in these efforts, sparking innovation in New Jersey’s workforce by increasing access to higher education in the state. For New Jersey to thrive in the future, every New Jerseyan should have the opportunity to obtain

a high-quality college degree or credential. Making this vision a reality is the best way for the state to achieve its economic goals and its residents to achieve prosperity. New Jersey must therefore strengthen its higher education system to ensure every student in the state has access to an affordable college degree or high-quality credential, a path to on-time completion, and proper preparation for a fulfilling career after graduation.

How Higher Education Drives Statewide Innovation

Colleges and universities drive innovation. They are centers of research and development for new industry clusters, birthplaces for new ideas and companies, and talent pipelines for start-ups and corporations. Given this, Governor Murphy's economic plan highlighted connections to higher education as an essential component of strengthening the state's innovation eco-system.

In a recent data collection of academic innovation activity, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) found a 38% increase in the number of global patents issued from 2010 to 2018. Survey results also showed a 52% and 36% increase in square footage of college and university collaborative workspace and incubator space, respectively, from 2010 to 2017. Between 2014 and 2017, the results showed an increase in invention disclosures by 16%. The number of technology licensing agreements increased as well.

Despite funding increases, New Jersey still lags behind other states in these areas. In 2017, New Jersey ranked 18th overall in national academic research spending and 19th overall in invention disclosures.⁸ New Jersey's \$1.2 billion in research and development spending is dwarfed by Maryland's \$4.0 billion and Massachusetts' \$3.9 billion. Knowledge creation is a fundamental aspect of colleges and university activity that supports commercialization, drives innovation, and ultimately strengthens the state's economy as a whole.



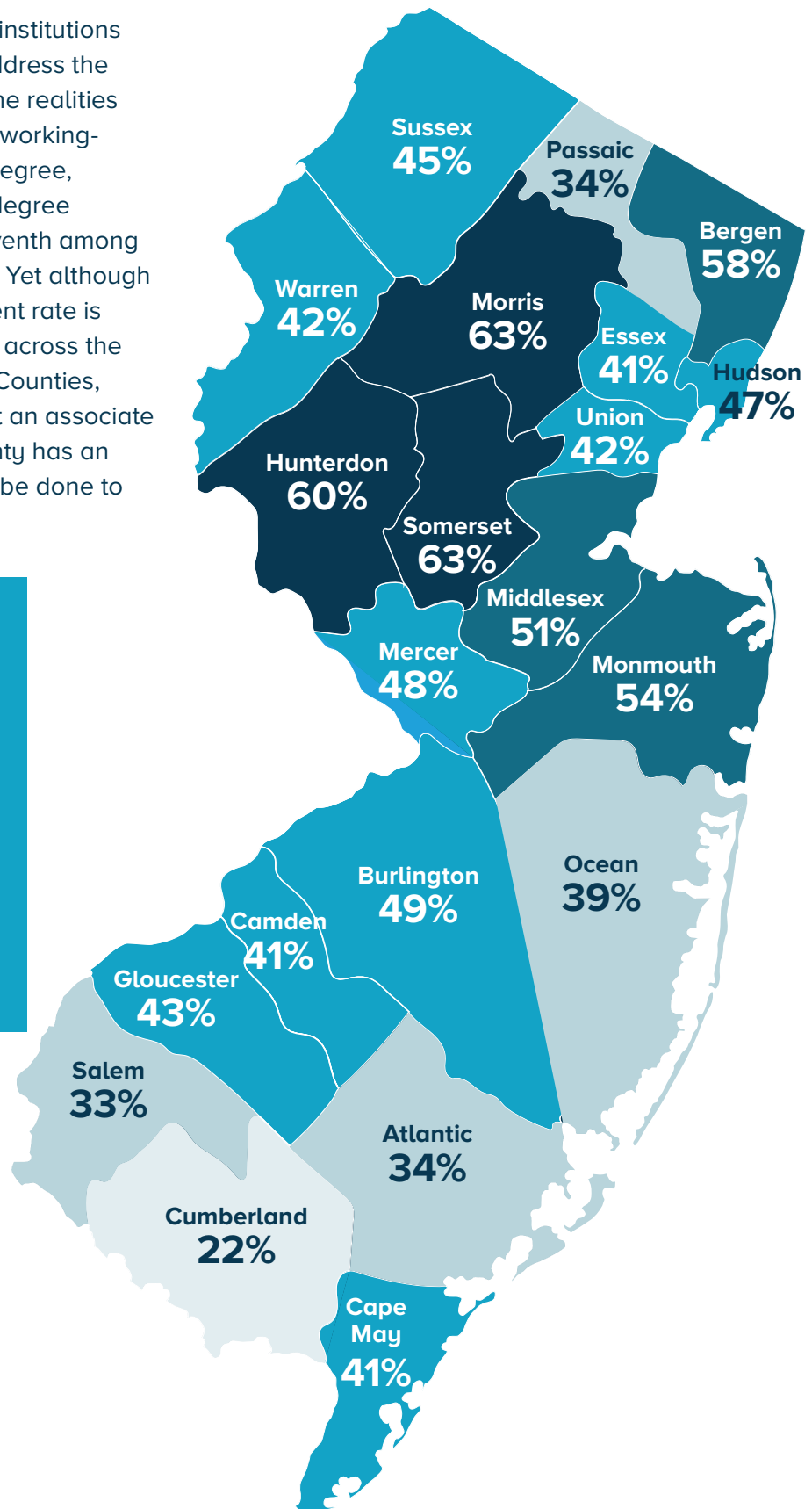
IMPROVING COLLEGE ATTAINMENT IN NEW JERSEY

In a competitive world, the state and its institutions of higher education must do better to address the needs of students and employers and the realities of a changing economy. In 2017, 48% of working-age New Jersey adults held a college degree, and another 3% held a high-value non-degree credential.⁹ That places New Jersey seventh among all states for postsecondary attainment. Yet although New Jersey's higher education attainment rate is generally high, it is nonetheless uneven across the state (*Figure 2*). In Somerset and Morris Counties, 63% of people ages 25-64 have at least an associate degree.¹⁰ By contrast, Cumberland County has an attainment rate of just 22%.¹¹ Work must be done to close this gap.



Attainment rates by county reflect gaps based on a variety of social and economic factors. Closing these equity gaps is a central theme of the plan and needed to reach the state's attainment goal.

FIGURE 2: DEGREE ATTAINMENT RATES BY COUNTY

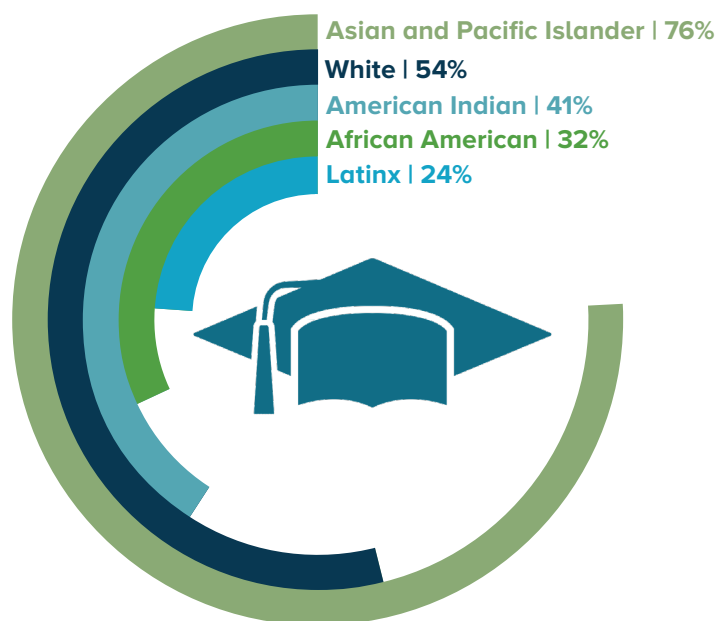


New Jersey's higher education attainment rate is also uneven across race and ethnicity (*Figure 3*). Statewide, the educational attainment rate is 76% for Asian and Pacific Islanders, 54% for whites, 32% for African Americans, and 24% for Hispanics/Latinx.¹² Part of this disparity can be attributed to completion figures. Only 50% of African American students and 56% of Hispanic/Latinx students graduate from college in New Jersey with a bachelor's degree within six years.¹³ Over that same timespan, 72% of white students and 78% of Asian/Pacific Islander students graduate.

Attainment is also uneven across socioeconomic strata and age. Although specific data on attainment by income is not currently available, attainment figures for Pell Grant recipients in New Jersey offer a close proxy for students with low socioeconomic status—indicating an approximate 10% drop-off (from 66% to 56%) in graduation rates for students of low socioeconomic status in the state. And although the number of adult students (students age 25 and older) who earned a bachelor's degree increased by 3% over the past five years, students under the age of 24 experienced a 12% increase in attainment during that same time period. This slower rate of attainment for adult students is further compounded by their overall decreasing rate in enrollment.

Given these disparities, New Jersey cannot be content with its current level of postsecondary attainment. The state must do more to prioritize degree attainment for equity populations. The success of New Jersey's economy depends on the educational success of *all* its residents.

FIGURE 3: ATTAINMENT RATES OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR HIGHER IN NEW JERSEY BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Pervasive gaps in attainment by race and ethnicity prevent the State of New Jersey from having a fully diverse educated workforce to contribute to the growing innovation economy.



WHO ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS?

75%

working while
in college



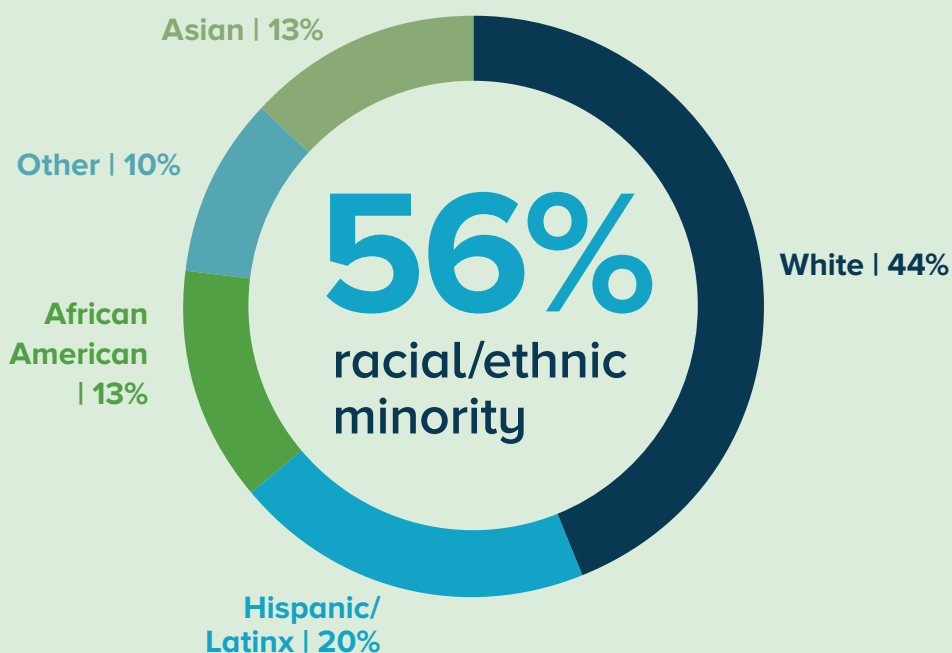
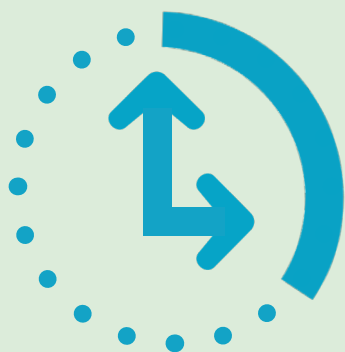
24%

undergraduates
age 25 or older



34%

going
part-time



NEW JERSEY'S HIGHER EDUCATION GOAL: 65 BY 25

In September 2017, New Jersey launched the “65 by 25” campaign.¹⁴ This ambitious, innovative plan established a statewide goal (*Figure 4*): 65% of working-age New Jerseyans will have a high-quality credential or degree by 2025.¹⁵

The goal, first proposed by the Governor’s Higher Education Council in April 2015, marked the first time New Jersey set a statewide higher education attainment target.¹⁶ Three state agencies are now working together to lead the campaign: OSHE, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), and the Department of Education (DOE). Achieving a 65% postsecondary attainment rate will strengthen New Jersey’s economy by opening doors of opportunity for hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans and providing an expanded pool of high-value workers to thousands of employers.

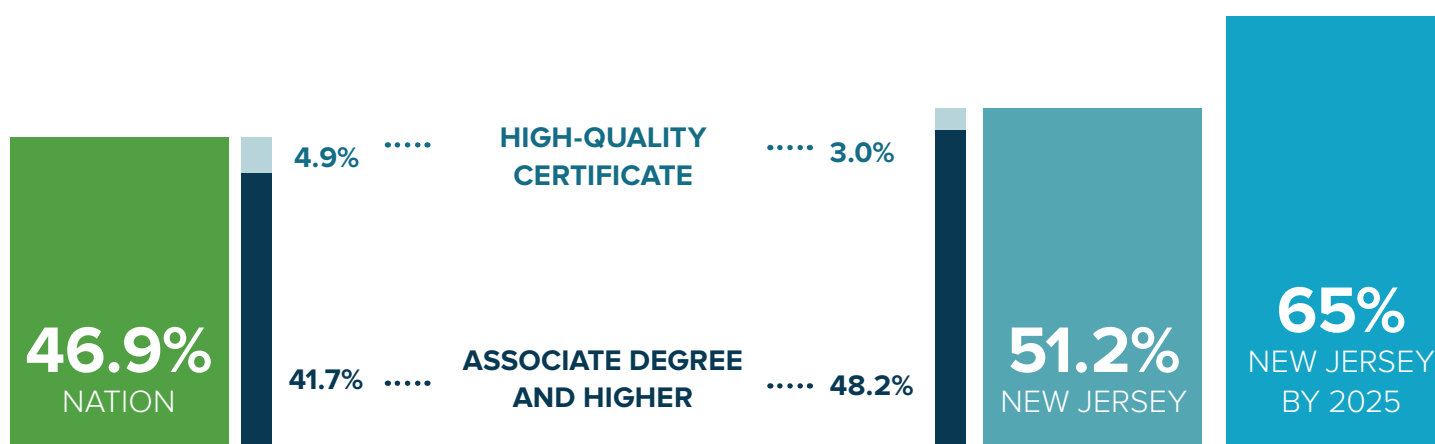
Critically, New Jersey has already taken steps to close the gap between the current level of attainment in the state and the target goal. The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund is expanding

in an effort to assist more low-income New Jersey residents who are capable and motivated for college, but need extra supports to succeed.¹⁷ The New Jersey Community College Opportunity Grant will allow approximately 13,000 qualifying students to attend one of 13 community colleges tuition-free and fee-free in spring 2019.¹⁸ And the 2016 College Affordability Study Commission identified recommendations to increase completion and reduce time to degree.¹⁹

Initiatives like these help support students and increase completion, but New Jersey needs a comprehensive plan in order to achieve the goal of 65 by 25. To make this goal a reality, the state will need to implement an aggressive long-term strategy focused on the **three areas** that can make the biggest difference:

-  increasing college enrollment among high school students,
-  increasing the number of working-age adults through re-engagement, and
-  increasing degree completion among all students.

FIGURE 4: ATTAINMENT RATES OF POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS IN NEW JERSEY



New Jersey has a high attainment rate compared to the national percent when looking at attainment of an associate degree or higher, however, still well short of the 65% goal.



When implementing this strategy, policymakers and college leaders must focus on populations that have been historically disadvantaged, including underrepresented minorities, low-income students, and working-age adults. The state must address the causes of equity gaps in order to build a better future and a stronger and fairer economy. Ignoring these populations is a lost opportunity to reach all those who never got the chance to attend college, as well as the roughly one million New Jerseyans who attended college but left without obtaining a degree.

A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH

In light of the above, improving New Jersey's higher education ecosystem must start with focusing on the needs of those who matter most: students. Prioritizing student and family needs for postsecondary education is the best way for New Jersey to ensure its residents will be ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow's economy. Creating and implementing a Student Bill of Rights is a powerful first step towards achieving the State's goal of 65 by 25.

The ten rights enumerated in the following section embody New Jersey's bold vision for the future of

higher education in the state. Committing to them is a means to close equity gaps in college enrollment, improve college degree completion among students who are already enrolled, and engage greater numbers of adults in postsecondary education. Yet simply stating these rights will not bring them into being. Putting the Student Bill of Rights into practice will require the state's colleges, policymakers, and other stakeholders to work together to develop forward-looking procedures and policies. This collaborative journey begins now.

**PRIORITIZING STUDENT
AND FAMILY NEEDS FOR
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
IS THE BEST WAY FOR NEW
JERSEY TO ENSURE ITS
WORKFORCE WILL BE READY
TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF
TOMORROW'S ECONOMY.**

A VISION FOR NEW JERSEY'S STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS



New Jersey offers a bold new vision for higher education in the state through the Student Bill of Rights.²⁰ **Every New Jerseyan, regardless of life circumstances, should have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality credential that prepares them for life after college.**

Making this vision a reality is essential for reaching New Jersey's economic goals and seeding prosperity more broadly across the state. In order to achieve it, New Jersey must strengthen its higher education ecosystem and focus on the aspirations and needs of students.

Accordingly, under this vision all New Jersey students should have:

1. **Early exposure to college.**
2. **Clear and comprehensible financial information.**
3. **Affordable and predictable education costs.**
4. **Experiential learning opportunities.**
5. **Supportive faculty and staff.**
6. **Support for on-time college completion.**
7. **Opportunities to earn college credit outside the classroom.**
8. **High-quality academic programs.**
9. **Safe, supportive, and inclusive campuses.**
10. **A voice in the decisions that affect their education.**

Putting forward this student-focused vision for the future is an important first step in an on-going process to create a higher education system in which all students in the Garden State have the opportunities they deserve.

New Jersey's Student Bill of Rights does not confer any legal or otherwise enforceable rights or privileges. The "rights" discussed are figurative — not literal and meant only as goals towards which higher education officials in New Jersey will work to achieve.

WHY THIS STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS?

1 New Jersey students need early exposure to college.

Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to explore college options and career paths during their middle and high school years. This includes participating in college preparatory programs, taking college-level coursework, and learning about future career possibilities.

College preparatory programs and courses are essential to help students begin planning for their postsecondary education, and believing in their potential to be successful. By partnering with primary, middle, and high schools, colleges can provide students with meaningful exposure to the world beyond. This enhances student learning and boosts the odds of postsecondary success. Early exposure to career possibilities is vital, as well, to put college in proper context as a springboard into adult life rather than an end in itself. Career-related instruction helps contextualize academic coursework for the real world.

The opportunity to take college-level classes while still in high school is also important. Receiving college credit in high school makes earning a degree faster and more affordable, while also preparing students for the more rigorous expectations of college. Unfortunately, although opportunities to earn college credit in high school have increased in New Jersey, these opportunities are not always available to every student. In 2016-2017, only 42% of 11th and 12th grade students in New Jersey enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course, and only 35% took an AP/IB exam.²¹ During that time, just 17% of students in the state enrolled in a dual enrollment course.²²

Some efforts are already underway to ensure students start their college and career preparation before graduating from high school. Existing opportunities to do so include:

- **Dual enrollment programs**, which provide students with the opportunity to obtain college-

level credit and reduce the time to degree completion once in college.

- **Governor's Schools**, which provide talented students with the opportunity to engage with college-level coursework and learn firsthand about New Jersey's vibrant colleges.
- **College Bound**, which enhances student academic preparation for college, particularly in the areas of math and science. The program provides quality enrichment services to students in highly disadvantaged school districts, beginning in the 7th grade.
- **P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School)**, which provides high school students with the opportunity to work closely with employers and earn an associate degree in a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) field while still in high school.
- **Vocational-technical schools**, which often partner with county colleges to offer college-level coursework to students and college credit through dual enrollment.

These kinds of opportunities should not be available at only certain schools. Every student across the state should have the opportunity to engage with these kinds of early exposure programs, no matter where they are enrolled. When necessary, this will mean addressing the fees associated with these programs to enable all students to have access to them regardless of socioeconomic status.

“ I’M A FIRST GENERATION STUDENT FROM A DISABLED SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLD. I HAD NO INFORMATION COMING INTO MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE. ”

– student response from 2018 OSHE survey

New Jersey students need clear and comprehensible financial information.

Every student in New Jersey deserves to receive clear and comprehensible information explaining what college will actually cost for them and their families, including an explanation of the types of aid available, an estimate of likely loan debt, and information on postgraduate outcomes—such as earnings and job placement.

Too often, students are left in the dark about the financial realities of attending college. The maze of financial aid eligibility standards, forms, and programs can be intimidating, creating barriers for students—especially those who are first in their families to attend college. Financial aid award forms should be clear in explaining the true expenses students should expect—yet a recent report found they can be confusing to students. Too many of these forms use unclear language and roll all types of aid together, listing grants and scholarships alongside loans that must be repaid—despite their critical differences.²³ These practices exacerbate challenges for students who may already be overwhelmed by the process.

The use of common, clear language and a standard format that enables comparison between colleges should be standard operating procedure in New Jersey. Students deserve clear and transparent financial information about the costs of college and available aid. No New Jerseyans should have to guess the amount they will have to pay for college. Nor should they be surprised at the loan amount ultimately due at graduation. College prices across the state should be clear and predictable so students and their families can prepare in advance and plan accordingly.

Colleges need to be more open in communicating the actual labor market demand for graduates of their academic programs. Doing so is the only way to ensure students are able to make informed decisions on how best to invest their valuable time and money. With so many students expected to borrow

for college, estimates of total debt at graduation, monthly loan repayment, and information on average salaries at graduation should be provided at an early stage.

“GETTING CAUGHT UP IN PAPERWORK AND LOGISTICAL QUESTIONS AND NOT KNOWING HOW TO PROCEED CAN BE A STRUGGLE. THE PROCESS FOR AID AND FINANCIAL OPTIONS SHOULD BE MORE STRAIGHT-FORWARD FOR ALL STUDENTS.”

— student response from 2018 OSHE survey

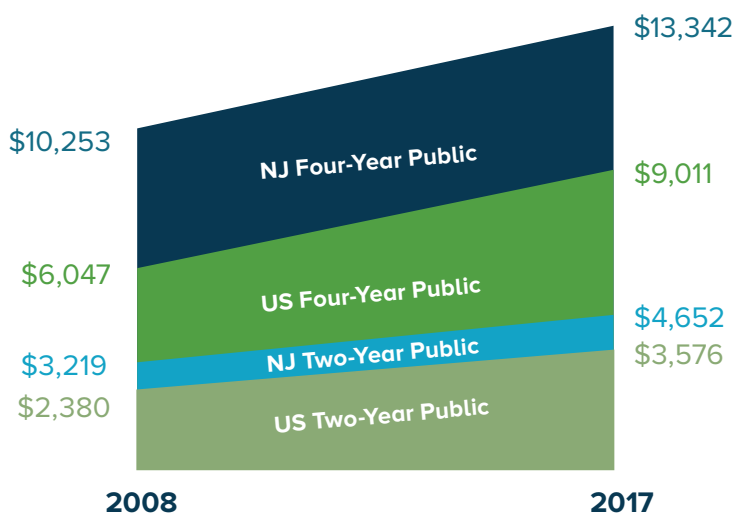


New Jersey students need affordable and predictable education costs.

Every student in New Jersey should have access to an affordable route to a college degree with predictable tuition and fees, and support to help with non-tuition expenses.

Transparent college pricing and clear financial aid information is ultimately of limited use if the bottom line cost remains more than students and their families can afford. Even after accounting for available financial aid, tuition and fees at New Jersey's public four-year colleges and universities are higher than the U.S. average (*Figure 5*).²⁴ Other costs for students include books, transportation, food, housing, and child care. Together, these costs, minus federal, state, and institutional grants received, add up to the "net price" of college attendance. Notably, the net price paid by low-income students in New Jersey is higher than all but three other states. For a family earning \$30,000, the net price of college attendance in New Jersey today amounts to 40% of family income, an obviously unaffordable sum (*Figure 6*). Case in point: a 2018 OSHE survey of

FIGURE 5: **AVERAGE TUITION AND FEES**



New Jersey tuition and fees have risen sharply in the last decade and remain higher than the US average.

“

**I... HAVE TO
JEOPARDIZE MY
ATTENDANCE GRADE
IN ORDER TO WORK
AND PAY OFF MY
SCHOOLING.**

”

– student response from 2018 OSHE survey

New Jersey college students found 52% of students disagreed with the statement, “The tuition and fees at the institution I attend are affordable for me and my family.”

Increasing affordability is critical for increasing college access and success across the state. When asked, a national sample of 22- to 30-year-old students with at least some postsecondary education, but no degree, listed finances as the primary reason for not completing college.²⁵ In addition to frustrating student paths to graduation, high prices can also deter low-income students from ever enrolling, or cause higher income students to seek better deals out of state. Over the past ten years, state financial support for higher education in New Jersey has declined in nominal dollars and decreased by 33% per student when adjusted for inflation. In turn, colleges have increased prices—leaving students paying more. In 2008, New Jersey students at public colleges and universities paid 46% of the cost of their education through tuition and fees. By 2017, due to declining state funding and rising costs, student tuition and fees covered 60%.²⁶

Yet the challenge of affordability goes beyond just tuition and fees. Material hardships are all

FIGURE 6: NET PRICE FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

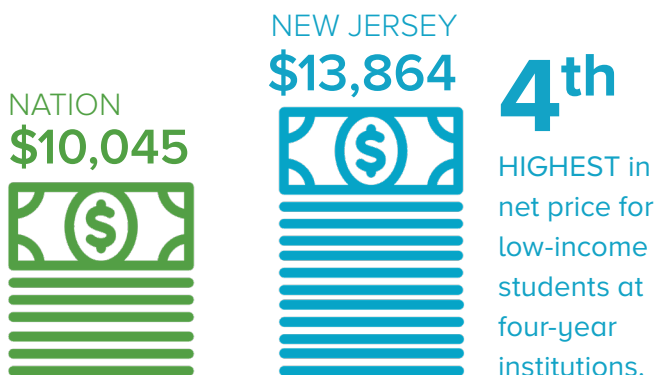
TWO-YEAR



too common for many students today. In a recent nationwide survey, over half of community college students reported food or housing insecurity.²⁷ And a 2016 campus survey showed 37% of undergraduates and 32% of graduate students at Rutgers University New Brunswick experienced food insecurity.²⁸ Eye-opening statistics like these are essential to understanding the true needs and costs for college students, yet they are only now beginning to be compiled. More needs to be done in this area, particularly at the state level, in order to ensure actual college affordability exists for New Jersey students. In addition, one in four college students across the nation have children of their own.²⁹ For these students, access to adequate childcare is an added college expense and concern. Making college affordable must include solutions that address the full cost of attendance such as these.

Policymakers and institutions continue to seek new ways to make college more affordable. In 2016, the College Affordability Study Commission studied the link between affordability and completion, and made recommendations to reduce student time-to-degree as a way to curb costs.³⁰ Some of the recommendations, such as adopting degree credit caps, have been enacted by policymakers. In addition, several New Jersey colleges are developing innovative programs to address college affordability. New Jersey City University, Rutgers-Newark, and Rutgers-Camden all have initiatives

FOUR-YEAR



to provide a clear, predictable, and guaranteed low-cost option for low-income students.³¹ Camden County College has a campus-wide food bank, and the state itself has partnered with the county colleges to offer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to more students.³² Initiatives such as these should be broadly supported to ensure they become the new standards instead of notable exceptions.

In 2018, Governor Murphy announced a down payment on his vision to make community college tuition-free. In January 2019, the first students were able to realize this vision at 13 county colleges through a pilot program.³³ The state should explore funding strategies that allow even more students to access not only tuition-free community college, but also less expensive options at other types of institutions as well.

DURING THE SPRING 2019 SEMESTER, THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY GRANT WILL ALLOW QUALIFYING STUDENTS TO ATTEND ONE OF 13 COMMUNITY COLLEGES TUITION AND FEE-FREE.

New Jersey students need experiential learning opportunities.

Every college student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to work with an employer, conduct meaningful research supervised by a faculty member, or participate in some other form of experiential learning before graduation.

Nationally, two out of three students say they want to go to college to obtain the skills necessary to get a good job.³⁴ Students therefore need opportunities to learn about the actual expectations of employers in their future field, so they can apply that knowledge to their studies. Experiential, work-based learning enables students to step outside the classroom and complete meaningful job tasks in the workplace. This allows students to increase their readiness for post-graduate work, develop their understanding of professional environments, and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to support advancement in their future career fields.

Offering research experience is another way to open doors for students. Many of New Jersey's colleges and research institutions have missions that go beyond imparting knowledge and credentials to students. An integral part of their work is to foster understanding through research and development activities. In 2017 alone, 303 patents were filed by six research institutions in New Jersey. Scholarly pursuits like these can spur revenue-producing activities such as launching businesses, developing patents, and making medical and scientific discoveries. Providing students with access to this kind of research and development can help jump-start their careers and put them ahead of the game.

Students can also benefit from opportunities to participate in developing knowledge alongside their faculty mentors. In particular, women and minorities are underrepresented in STEM fields. Opportunities for experiential learning can increase participation in these areas. Eight New Jersey institutions participate in the Garden State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, which provides these types of

opportunities through a learning community where students interested in STEM receive dedicated support services and opportunities to conduct research and intern with faculty.³⁵ Experiences like these enhance student learning and can increase retention and graduation rates in academic programs. They also provide pathways for students to enroll in graduate education and offer effective career preparation by providing opportunities for students to develop skills that help promote an innovation-oriented culture.

Experiential learning can come in many forms, whether through research with faculty, apprenticeships, internships, or cooperative education. There are many ways for students to get real-world experience, but whatever the route, work-based learning opportunities need to become a standard part of the college experience in New Jersey.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HENRY M. ROWAN COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND LOCKHEED MARTIN, STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN AN ENGINEERING CLINIC PROGRAM WORKING ALONGSIDE ENGINEERS TO DESIGN, EVALUATE, AND UNDERSTAND COMBAT SYSTEMS, WHILE BUILDING IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR THE WORKFORCE.

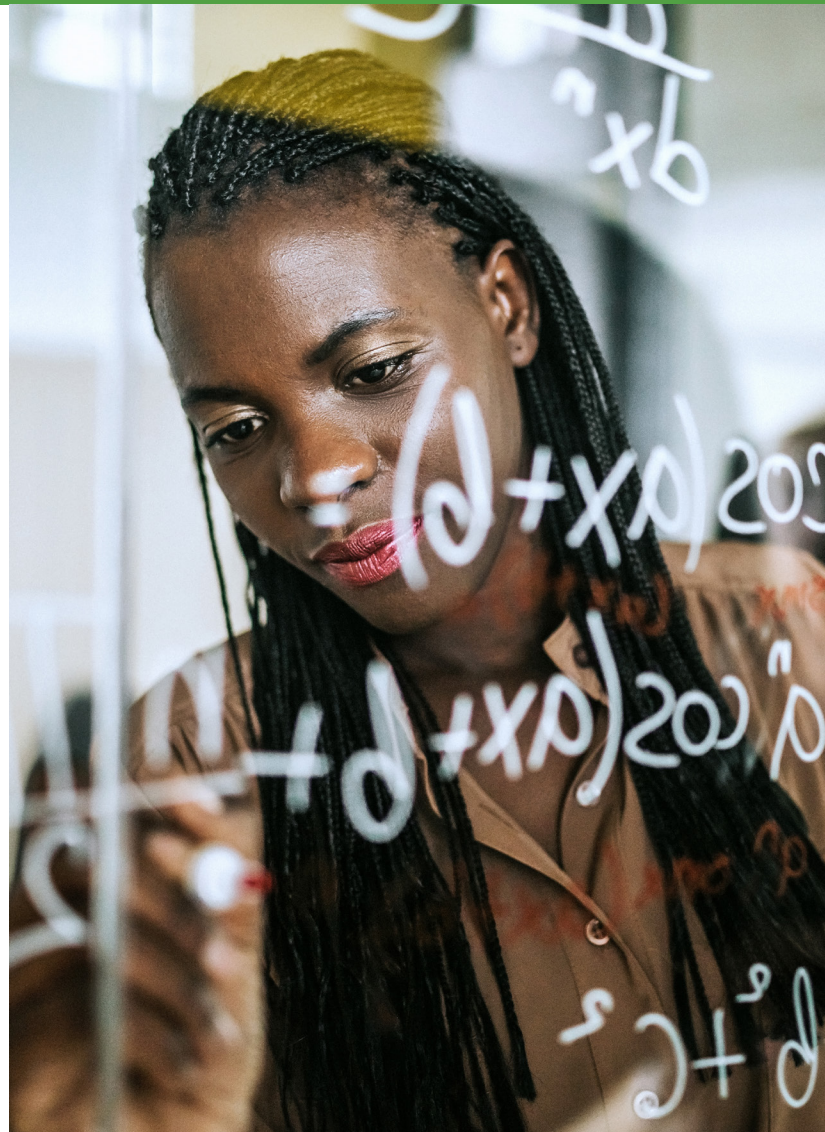
New Jersey students need supportive faculty and staff.

Every student in New Jersey should have access to faculty and staff who have the ability, time, and resources necessary to support student learning and development.

The payoff can be tremendous when students get meaningful opportunities to connect and build lasting relationships with the faculty and staff at their schools. Studies show that having a faculty mentor increases the chances of a student graduating.³⁶ Faculty and staff mentors can also help students take full advantage of the vast array of co-curricular, extra-curricular, and experiential learning opportunities offered at their institutions.

Interactions between student and faculty members form the cornerstone of learning in college, yet it is ultimately the role of the faculty member to shape that important experience. Faculty members must therefore be properly supported so they, in turn, can support their students. This means they need to be equipped with the necessary tools to advance knowledge in their discipline and apply best practices in the classroom. And they should receive professional development in new and emerging learning strategies to help students succeed in their courses and meet the cultural communication challenges inherent to diverse communities of learning.

Notably, students benefit from learning with diverse faculty, but in New Jersey (as in many states) the diversity of faculty lags behind the diversity of students. The non-white race/ethnic makeup of full-time faculty in New Jersey is 23%, which is much lower than the 40% of students who identify as non-white. College leaders across the state must increase their efforts to diversify faculty and staff to ensure these critical teachers are available for student access and support.



23%

NON-WHITE FACULTY IN NEW JERSEY

40%

NON-WHITE STUDENTS IN NEW JERSEY

New Jersey students need support for on-time college completion.

Every student in New Jersey should have the financial, academic, and social support needed to complete college as promptly as possible with a degree or credential.

College can often be a primary route to economic success, but not necessarily for students who drop out without a degree. These students risk forfeiting most of the value of their education, as well as the time and money invested. This loss can then be further compounded by student loans that subsequently need to be repaid without the extra earning power of a degree. In an OSHE survey, only 41% of students agreed that they felt confident they would be able to pay off any student loan debt they or their family were taking on to fund their higher education pursuits. Although students are ultimately responsible for learning while in school, appropriate structures must be in place to facilitate this learning so that it can occur in a timely manner.

College non-completion is a problem at New Jersey colleges, particularly at community colleges. New Jersey has the eighth lowest graduation and transfer rate among all states at the community college level. Only 22% of first-time, full-time community college students in New Jersey obtain an associate degree within three years, and only 16% transfer to another college. Although students at senior colleges in the state have a relatively high graduation rate, 31% fail to obtain a bachelor's degree within six years. Notably, only half of all African American students at these schools, and 60% of Hispanic/Latinx students, graduate within six years.³⁷ These rates must improve.

The drivers of college non-completion are academic (students who are assessed as underprepared for college and placed into remediation), financial (students who struggle to afford college expenses), and social (students who lack the “college knowledge” to make good decisions or build peer

support networks). These causes are interrelated, and many students often cope with a combination of all three. Efforts should be made to develop new solutions to help mitigate the effects of these graduation obstacles and provide support to students who are struggling to overcome them.

Credit transferability is another impediment to on-time college completion. Students who transfer from one college to another often find that not all of their credits transfer. This inevitably slows degree completion progress, and can even deter students from transferring to another school that might be a better fit for them. State leaders across New Jersey have passed laws designed to smooth transition between institutions, and innovative 3+1 programs have improved the transfer process between county colleges and four-year colleges.³⁸ Nonetheless, more work still needs to be done in this area.

Fortunately, colleges across the state are working to incorporate evidence-based models to boost student completion. Several colleges have developed clusters of majors so students can begin their college career by learning about a broad field, instead of only a specific program of study. Brookdale Community College, for example, created a first-year-experience course tailored to students in health majors.³⁹ Colleges across the state are also overhauling their placement and remedial education models, adding GPA as a placement criterion to identify students who do not actually need remediation, providing small group tutorial sessions for gateway courses to enable underprepared students to catch up quickly, and offering statistics as a credit-bearing alternative to remedial algebra. Acceleration is another area of emphasis in the state, as colleges retool their advising and communications services to let students know that taking 30 credits per year is necessary to graduate on time—even though 24 credits is often considered a full-time load. These actions, and others like them, are necessary to ensure New Jersey students have the proper support for on-time college completion.

New Jersey students need opportunities to earn college credit outside the classroom.

Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to demonstrate that credentials and work experiences obtained outside a college classroom are worthy of being awarded college credit.

Many working adults in New Jersey see value in returning to college, or enrolling for the first time, because college offers the opportunity to obtain skills and credentials that are often sought after by employers. Actually going to college, however, can be a struggle for working learners. Every course costs money, and every semester is time spent away from family and jobs. These obstacles are all the more frustrating for adult learners who find certain college courses to be redundant or overly familiar given their prior relevant work experience or certifications.

Colleges should therefore provide working learners with opportunities to obtain credit for prior work-based learning and demonstrable competencies. By assessing experience and certifications, and then assigning course credit, colleges can shave hours off degree requirements for many adult students. Changes like these can make a significant difference for students, as studies have shown that those who receive credit for prior learning are more than twice as likely to graduate as comparable students who do not.⁴⁰

Approaches vary for awarding credit for prior learning. At Thomas Edison State University, for example, students can earn credit for more than 60 licenses and certifications, as well as military and professional training, and successful performance on testing programs.⁴¹ They can also develop a portfolio to assess their learning in multiple subject areas that can be applied toward their undergraduate degrees.⁴² In general, students in New Jersey would benefit from more standardized approaches to providing portability of credit into and across institutions. Students should be able to receive credit for what they know and are able to do—not just the amount of time they have spent in a classroom.

AT THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY, FOR EXAMPLE, STUDENTS CAN EARN CREDIT FOR MORE THAN 60 LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS, AS WELL AS MILITARY AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, AND SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE ON TESTING PROGRAMS.



New Jersey students need high-quality academic programs.

Every student in New Jersey should have high-quality, career-relevant programs that will prepare them to succeed in the global economy.

Students today want to know that their academic studies will align with their life goals. Although successfully completing a degree continues to generate an earnings premium, students and parents still want to ensure that what is learned in college is relevant for future careers. Rising tuition rates heighten their concerns about what coursework is actually relevant for degrees to yield a strong return on investment.

As the skill requirements of the economy continue to change, higher education institutions must also adapt to ensure their offerings remain relevant and of the highest quality. Curriculum and advising should be applicable to students in their future careers, and skills learned should be transferable to allow students to navigate and adapt in the constantly changing workforce. Institutions, as well as the state, should strive to create centers of excellence based on the local economy and state needs. Duplicate programs that compete for resources and result in substandard quality should be eliminated.

Collaboration across institutions can benefit students, as well as employers. For example, the New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rutgers University formed the New Jersey Continuous Manufacturing Institute to pool together their resources in an effort to address issues facing pharmaceutical manufacturing.⁴³ Similarly, the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University strives to make real-world connections in active learning classrooms, by enabling students to create films and videos in a screening room through a partnership with Sony.⁴⁴ The Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering has partnered with Lockheed Martin for over ten years. Students participate in programs with Lockheed Martin engineers to solve real-world problems,

connecting the classroom to the workforce.⁴⁵ Each of these partnerships demonstrates how institutions can effectively collaborate with industries in a variety of different sectors to develop high-quality programs that will help students succeed in their next steps after school.

High-quality, market-relevant programs such as these are necessary to ensure New Jersey graduates remain in high demand across the state, the country, and the world. Going to college is about more than just getting a first job, but every program at every college in the state should nonetheless help prepare students for that critical experience.

THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY STRIVES TO MAKE REAL-WORLD CONNECTIONS IN ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOMS, BY ENABLING STUDENTS TO CREATE FILMS AND VIDEOS IN A SCREENING ROOM THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH SONY.



New Jersey students need safe, supportive, and inclusive campuses.

Every student in New Jersey should feel safe and supported in their learning environment. This means colleges must work to ensure students are not only safe from physical harm, but also included and welcome on campus.

Attending college is an exciting opportunity for many New Jersey high school graduates and returning students, yet it can also lead to difficult experiences outside the classroom. Only when students feel safe and supported can they focus on learning and enriching their lives. Colleges therefore have a responsibility to ensure the physical safety of all students; foster environments free from discrimination, sexual harassment, and any form of violence; and provide access to social and professional supports, including mental health services. In a 2018 OSHE survey, a majority of students (83%) agreed with the statement, “The New Jersey college/university I currently attend provides a safe and secure environment for their students.” Institutions in the state are clearly working hard to make sure students feel safe on campus, and that work must be sustained over time.

Students seek out environments where they feel not just safe from physical harm, but also supported and included. Student exposure to a campus culture that promotes a sense of belonging influences academic performance in a positive manner, particularly for minority and first-generation college students.⁴⁶ Fortunately, New Jersey’s college campuses boast an array of centers celebrating and supporting students of all identities and experiences. The Joseph A. Unanue Latino Institute at Seton Hall University hosts a series of events, ranging from lectures to plays, on Latin American topics.⁴⁷ Rutgers University’s Center for Social Justice Education & LGBT Communities holds events and offers education programs focusing on gender identity and sexuality.⁴⁸ Providing students with spaces that reflect who they are and affirm their “belonging”

is a critical element for fostering student success in college.⁴⁹ Spaces like these help build college communities that are understanding and respectful of people from all backgrounds.

THE 2017 NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORT PROVIDES RESEARCH-INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER TO:

- 1. INCREASE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE;**
- 2. ADDRESS AND ENHANCE SAFETY AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS ON CAMPUS; AND**
- 3. PUT POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN PLACE TO CREATE HEALTHIER CAMPUS COMMUNITIES ACROSS NEW JERSEY.**



**10****New Jersey students need a voice in the decisions that affect their education.**

Every student in New Jersey should be included in the decision-making processes that affect them, whether it be on campus or statewide.

Students should have a more direct role in the decision-making processes that affect their education. This includes the ability for students to be heard by leadership, to advocate on their own behalf, and to have voting power on decisions that will impact their overall college experience. The diverse perspectives of New Jersey's college students can provide new approaches and add innovative solutions to improve higher education within the state.

Student governments and student representatives on school governing boards provide one avenue for students to engage with leadership on key issues impacting campuses. But it is not enough for student representatives to simply have a seat at the table. They need to be given the time and opportunity to voice their perspective on campus and state priorities. And their input must be valued by those who are listening. Nationally, only two-thirds of student body presidents felt they had a voice in their school's decision-making.⁵⁰ This number should be far higher.

In short, administrators should not simply assume they know what students need. They should actively engage students in the decision-making process to achieve the best overall outcome for the school. Similarly, state policymakers advocating on behalf of students should also listen to the voices of those they represent. In order to move higher education forward in New Jersey, students need the opportunity to be heard. And they must see that their opinions matter.

PUTTING THE STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS INTO PRACTICE

The standards that all students in New Jersey should expect higher education to meet are set forth in this document. This vision, however, is not self-executing. Achieving it will require the state's colleges, policymakers, and other stakeholders to work together to develop new institutional and public policies. The biggest changes will not happen overnight, but there is no time to lose in beginning the journey.

The following immediate recommendations seek to translate the Student Bill of Rights into a series of concrete action items and roles for policymakers and institutions to implement and adopt.

VISION IN PRACTICE: CREATING ON-RAMPS TO COLLEGE

#1 New Jersey students need early exposure to college.

College is a time of adjustment for students working to navigate new campus environments, different schedules, and rigorous coursework. To help ease this transition period, on-ramps should be created to guide students as they prepare to explore potential postsecondary pathways. The more prepared students are for taking the next step, the more momentum they are able to bring with them to college classrooms.

The Role of the State

The state should work collaboratively across agencies to create better pathways to postsecondary success. Partnership programs like dual enrollment, Governor's Schools, P-TECH, and College Bound should be expanded across the state. In general:

- **Governor's Schools** are designed to give high-achieving students the chance to be exposed to New Jersey institutions while still in high school. These schools are currently STEM-focused, but could be expanded to include a broader set of disciplines as well.
- **P-TECH** programs are partnerships between high schools, colleges, and industry designed to

develop academic, technical, and professional skills. These programs should be evaluated and appropriately scaled to give more students across the state the opportunity to gain career-relevant experience and earn college credit while still in high school.

- **College Bound** provides students in disadvantaged communities with academic preparation, mentorship, and tours of college campuses to help create college-going cultures and pathways to college enrollment. This program has been in existence for 32 years and should seek ways to expand into additional communities across the state.
- **Dual enrollment** programs provide opportunities for high school students to gain college credit, but these opportunities currently depend on specific relationships between individual high schools, school districts, and colleges. These programs should be scaled across the state to ensure all students have access to them regardless of where they live. Dual enrollment should be fee-free for low- and moderate-income high school students.

In addition to strengthening and supporting these partnership programs, the state should explore options for providing feedback reports to high schools detailing overall college retention and completion statistics for students graduating from their district. High schools can use information like this to help ensure students enroll in colleges where they are likely to be most successful.

The state should also support programs serving special populations facing obstacles to college access, such as previously incarcerated students. Students with disabilities need support transitioning to college as well, and pre-college pathways should be inclusive of their specific needs.

Working with local school districts, state agencies should ensure high school students, faculty, and staff get accurate information on college preparation and financing. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) routinely offers financial aid sessions for high school students and their families, and also provides training for secondary school counselors. Similarly, the New Jersey Association for College Admission Counseling provides professional development programming for guidance and admissions counselors on college pathways. Information sharing can help increase awareness of alternative avenues to college admission such as the Educational Opportunity Fund, which provides access, opportunity, and support to nearly 13,000 students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The state should also provide a central avenue for information dissemination to all students, particularly adult students who may not otherwise have access to traditional college advising.

Each of these efforts can be bolstered by a statewide marketing campaign highlighting the benefits of attending college in New Jersey. The state should work collaboratively with the New Jersey Presidents' Council and other statewide organizations with an interest in postsecondary success on such a campaign, using this plan and highlighting the Student Bill of Rights as a key feature of why choosing New Jersey for college makes sense.

The Role of Colleges

Colleges in New Jersey, with the assistance of the state, should work with local school districts and agencies in their communities to ensure high school students, faculty, and staff get accurate information on college preparation and financing. Many colleges host their own pre-college programs. These institutions should continue to partner with their communities to expose students to college options at an early age. In addition, colleges should provide dual enrollment opportunities for students in a manner that is not cost-prohibitive for students of modest means.

Reaching adult learners is essential for achieving state attainment goals. To help reach this critical population, community colleges should co-locate with One-Stop Career Centers to make it easier for adult students to receive career services, education, and training all in one place.⁵¹ Colleges should also assess their capability to serve adult learners by exploring what services need to be adapted to meet the needs of this growing population and ease their transition into college.

Action should also be taken to ensure the strength of New Jersey's colleges is better known here and nationwide. The Presidents' Council is working to create a marketing campaign to highlight the unique opportunities that exist at colleges across the state. Coordinated marketing campaigns such as this highlight the many different high-quality options available in New Jersey.

The Role of Students

Students should take advantage of pre-college opportunities by engaging in some form of college and career exposure while in middle school or high school. While doing so, they should explore the diversity of offerings at New Jersey colleges across the state. By touring campuses or reviewing college websites, students can learn more about which college or program is right for their future. All students—no matter their age—should visit state agency websites for information on program offerings, training opportunities and apprenticeships, and available financial aid.

VISION IN PRACTICE: MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE

#2 New Jersey students should have clear and comprehensible financial information.

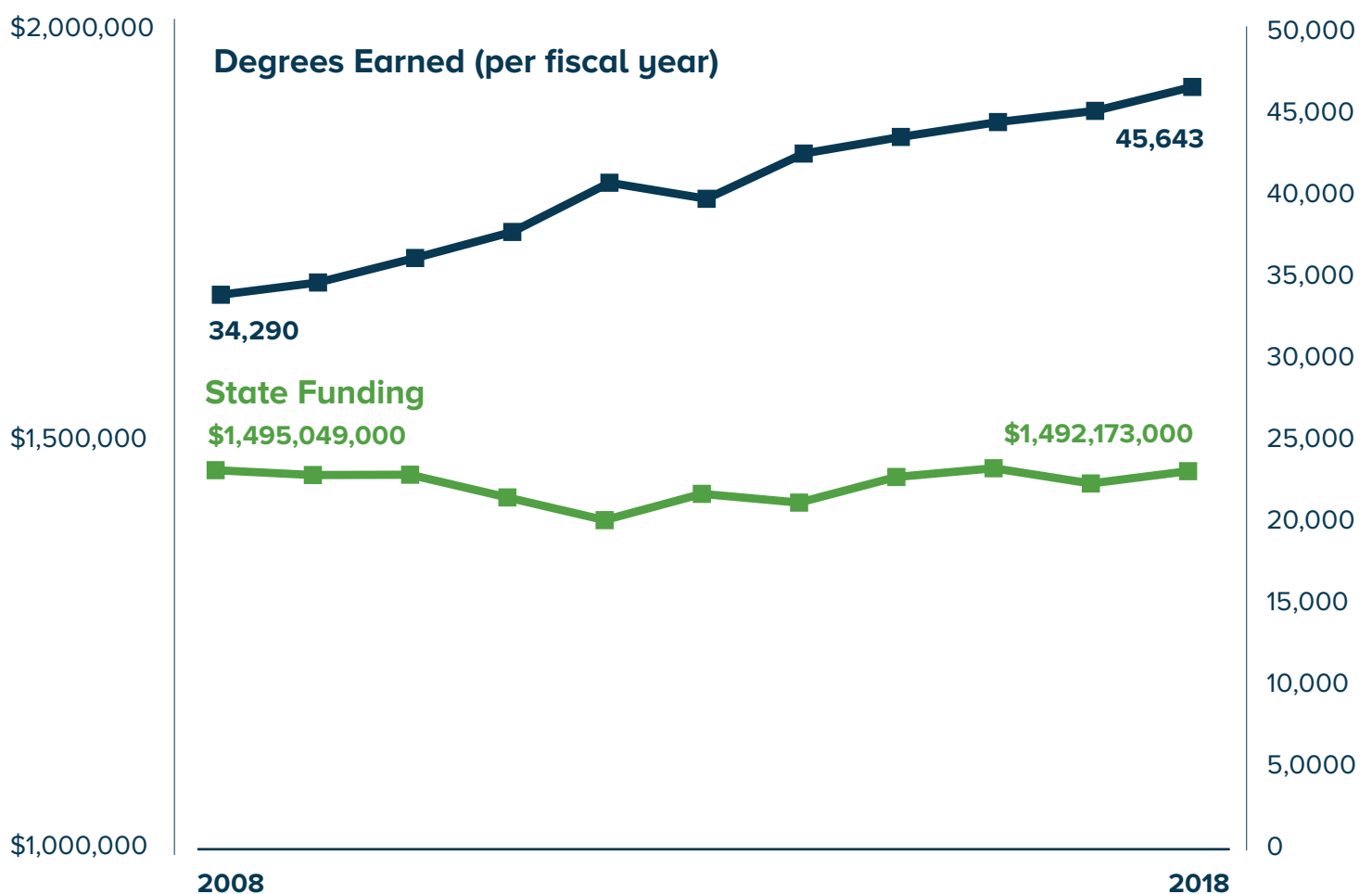
#3 New Jersey students should have affordable and predictable education costs.

Students in New Jersey need to know that college is an affordable option to obtain the education and skills they need to successfully enter today's workplace. A renewed partnership with colleges, the state, and students should therefore be developed to ensure college affordability for all New Jerseyans. In an effort to achieve affordable pricing guarantees for students, key stakeholders should explore options for more rational funding on the part of the state to allow for increased affordability.

The Role of the State

College affordability is inextricably linked to funding the state provides in terms of operational aid to colleges and direct aid to students (*Figure 7*). Inadequate state funding can lead to higher tuition prices for students and their families. In order for New Jersey to more rationally fund public colleges, the state should explore the creation of a funding methodology that takes into account an institution's size, mission, and outcomes. A more strategic approach

FIGURE 7: NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION INVESTMENT FOR FOUR-YEAR SENIOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



While total state funding has remained relatively flat over the past decade, the number of students completing at institutions has increased.

to public funding at state colleges will ultimately lead to measurably lower prices for students.

Given the state's structural budget challenges, providing enough aid to appropriately support public colleges has been a challenge. To make the most strategic use of limited state funds, the state should direct funding toward areas of excellence at each institution. Only by ensuring colleges are building on their strengths and not unnecessarily duplicating programs can the state move forward with a rational system of funding that leads to lower prices for students and their families.

To help students and their families determine the most affordable options for college, the state should encourage new models of affordability and increased use of transparency tools like the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet, which provides a standard mechanism for comparison of financial aid across different institutions.⁵² Because many student financial struggles go beyond tuition and fees, the state should also serve as a facilitator for social services, many of which can be a lifeline for students struggling to afford non-tuition costs. For veteran students, military benefits could be accessible on campus as a first-stop shop. A recent expansion of the SNAP program for county college students is just one example of how New Jersey can efficiently and effectively boost support for non-tuition expenses by examining and improving existing policies and programs.⁵³

In addition, the state should work to improve and build awareness of existing financial aid programs available to reduce higher education expenses for students, such as Tuition Assistance Grants, the Educational Opportunity Fund, the Governor's Urban Scholarships, and the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship. Information about these programs should be shared more actively with students so they can take advantage of the opportunities offered by these programs. The state should also work to develop flexible student loan repayment options by building on the models of the

Repayment Assistance Program and the Household Income Affordable Repayment Plan, as well as other targeted forms of assistance like the STEM Loan Redemption Program.⁵⁴

The Role of Colleges

Colleges should develop clear, consistent, and comprehensible pricing structures based on student need to ensure students with the most difficult financial circumstances do not bear the burden of tuition and fees. Institutions should also consider creating bundled services to streamline and reduce the burden of non-tuition expenses on students. All colleges should commit to using the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet, which displays education costs to students in a manner that allows for clear comparisons across schools and distinguishes gift aid from loans and other means of paying for college.

New Jersey City University, Rutgers University-Camden, and Rutgers University-Newark are already delivering more predictable affordable pricing guarantees, such as guaranteeing a lower tuition price to students who meet certain income qualifications.⁵⁵ Other colleges are pursuing efforts to reduce the cost of course materials. Warren County College, for example, has entered into an agreement with an education and technology company to offer students unlimited access to all of their course materials for a flat annual fee.⁵⁶ This innovative approach is estimated to save each student who uses it approximately \$1,000 per year. Efforts like these should be expanded to all New Jersey colleges to allow every student to obtain a guarantee of an affordable, clear, and predictable college education.

Many colleges are also collaborating with county social services agencies to address non-tuition costs faced by students, such as transportation, food, and childcare.⁵⁷ To ensure affordability, every institution in the state should survey the material hardships of students to better understand the impact of non-tuition costs. This information should then be

AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-CAMDEN, STUDENTS CAN REDUCE THEIR COSTS UP TO 50% THROUGH THE BRIDGING THE GAP PROGRAM. FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM PARTICIPATE IN WEEKLY SEMINARS THAT ADDRESS TECHNIQUES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

incorporated into comprehensive plans to help fill existing financial gaps and address student needs.

The Role of Students

Students must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or the New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application to qualify for available federal and state aid. These forms should be filled out on time to ensure applicants are eligible for all available aid. Students in high school should be proactive in asking teachers or advisors for help filling out these forms, if necessary. And students who have been accepted to college should use tools like the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet to help them make informed financial decisions.



VISION IN PRACTICE: FOSTERING STUDENT SUCCESS

#6 New Jersey students should have support for on-time college completion.

#7 New Jersey students should have opportunities to earn college credit outside the classroom.

A perennial question asked in higher education circles is whether students are ready for college. But an equally important question in today's marketplace is whether colleges are ready for their students. Every student accepted to study at a college in New Jersey invests considerable time, money, and effort to achieve a degree. It is therefore the responsibility of colleges and the state to build the necessary support systems to make sure those investments pay off.

The Role of the State

New Jersey currently funds public colleges without regard for their effectiveness in supporting students toward degree attainment. To truly foster student success, this must change. The state should overhaul its operational funding procedures to reward public colleges that get their students to completion, particularly low-income and minority students who historically drop out at higher rates.⁵⁸ Although student success is a complex field, promising strategies continue to emerge across the country. The state should seek out technical assistance and other forms of support from national organizations with expertise in student success and college completion strategies.

In order to achieve 65 by 25, it is essential for all higher education stakeholders to start with the same set of facts and track overall progress toward the statewide goal of increased postsecondary attainment. Accordingly, OSHE should regularly publish a comparative analysis of college completion in New Jersey. The analysis should provide college completion and transfer rates for all colleges in New Jersey, with particular focus on student performance at public institutions that receive state funding. Relevant information and data should be disaggregated by the equity populations identified in this plan.

The state must also work to improve transfer pathways for students. New Jersey's extensive network of two-year and four-year colleges serves more than 400,000 students—thousands of whom transfer schools. In the fall of 2017 alone, 10,713 students transferred from a New Jersey community college to another institution.⁵⁹ If these students are to succeed, their credits must transfer with them. The Lampitt Law (P.L. 2007, c. 175) mandates full transfer of degree credits when a student follows certain guidelines, but it is unknown how successful the state's transfer and articulation standards are in practice. OSHE should therefore conduct an institution-level survey of transfer and articulation in New Jersey and, upon completion, make any necessary recommendations for improvement.

The Role of Colleges

Colleges in New Jersey must work to help students overcome the host of barriers that stand in the way of student success today, including academic, social, and structural impediments.

When academically underprepared students apply to college, many colleges view them as having a high risk of dropout. Yet these students need not fail. Success rates dramatically improve at colleges that use high school grades to accurately place students into mainstream English and math courses, provide co-requisite supports for students who need them, and make developmental education a last resort rather than the default expectation.⁶⁰ Colleges across New Jersey should take note of these policies and work to incorporate them. Developmental education needs to be reexamined throughout the state. Traditional developmental education models have the potential to cause student dropout, rather than prevent it.⁶¹

Too often, social barriers to college completion are overlooked, despite their significant impact on students. Many capable students, especially “first-generation” students whose parents did not obtain a college degree, find college culture bewildering and its connection to employers tenuous. Colleges should do their part to help demystify the process by providing advising services and developing guided pathways to keep students on-track to a degree. Institutions with existing partnerships and programs to help students succeed should involve the staff of these programs in policy discussions to help ensure the needs of all students are addressed.

The most effective evidence-based student success model at the community college level is CUNY ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs), a support model designed by the City University of New York to prevent students from falling behind and dropping out.⁶² CUNY ASAP has more than doubled the rate of on-time graduation at community colleges in other states where it has been implemented.⁶³ Community colleges should evaluate the work and lessons learned from CUNY ASAP and, where possible, pilot the program.

Colleges should also focus on addressing structural barriers relating to transfer and articulation to ensure students do not lose credit when transferring from one institution to another. In addition, efforts should be made to address the transition from non-credit to degree-seeking study. Opportunities should be identified to stack credentials and redesign non-credit workforce training programs to embed them within degree programs on the academic side. Colleges should explore ways to grant credit for prior learning to accelerate progress toward a degree. Adult learners who have military service, work experience, or relevant certifications, are already recognized for college credit at Thomas Edison State University.⁶⁴ New Jersey’s other colleges and universities should recognize the prior learning of their students in a similar fashion.

Taking too few courses each year has also proven to be a serious and unnecessary obstacle to on-time graduation for many students. To address this, colleges should develop structures and strategies to help students accelerate course progression and take at least 30 credit hours each year.

The Role of Students

Students must play an active role in their own success. They should prepare for placement exams and ask college administrators whether their school has widely available credit-bearing alternatives to development courses, such as co-requisite math and English courses. Whenever possible, students should take 30 credit hours per year to help facilitate on-time graduation. They should also be sure to show up for appointments with academic and financial aid counselors to assist with critical decisions. There is no shame in asking for help. Students should never be afraid to speak up and request assistance or support.



**BUT AN EQUALLY
IMPORTANT QUESTION IN
TODAY’S MARKETPLACE
IS WHETHER COLLEGES
ARE READY FOR THEIR
STUDENTS.**

VISION IN PRACTICE: PROMOTING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

#9 New Jersey students should have safe, supportive, and inclusive campuses.

#10 New Jersey students should have a voice in the decisions that affect their education.

All students deserve to feel safe, supported, and included in their chosen learning environments. Policies should be in place to remedy cases of bias, sexual assault, or any form of violence. The state and colleges must work together to ensure campuses across New Jersey provide the support services necessary to address student needs and give students a voice in the decisions that impact their education.

The Role of the State

All types of students should be welcomed within higher education institutions and provided with the appropriate services to continue their education. Whether they are on campus or online, educated while incarcerated or undocumented, living with a disability or going back to school for the first time in decades, students should be appropriately supported and encouraged in their academic pursuits. In particular, the “Dreamer” population remains vulnerable in New Jersey. To help support these students, the state recently passed legislation granting “Dreamers” access to student financial assistance⁶⁵—in addition to the in-state tuition already available. Only by addressing the special needs of specific populations can New Jersey provide a truly inclusive postsecondary experience for all.

The state should build upon efforts already underway to create safe and inclusive learning environments. In July 2018, Governor Murphy signed legislation establishing a Transgender Equality Task Force “to assess legal and societal barriers to equality” and make future recommendations to strengthen laws preventing discrimination.⁶⁶ The Secretary of Higher Education will have a seat on this task force, and will work with other state agencies to ensure adequate protections and recommendations for college students are included in the final report.

ONLY BY ADDRESSING THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF SPECIFIC POPULATIONS CAN NEW JERSEY PROVIDE A TRULY INCLUSIVE POSTSECONDARY EXPERIENCE FOR ALL.

The state should also monitor the progress of institutions in implementing the recommendations of the New Jersey Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault and determine whether additional state action is needed in light of changing priorities at the federal level.⁶⁷

In addition, the state should give students a voice in shaping higher education policy. New Jersey’s financial aid agency, HESAA, already requires two positions on its board to be filled by students from different collegiate institutional sectors—but more can be done across the state. To further elevate student voices, the state should appoint student representatives to state-level boards as a model for how colleges should engage students in inclusive campus decision-making. The state should also encourage colleges to regularly schedule student campus climate surveys and act on the collected data to help foster environments in which student sentiments are taken seriously. Processes like these can be used to better inform state and institutional policies to ensure they best protect students.

The Role of Colleges

New Jersey’s colleges have a responsibility to ensure their students are physically safe, able to access to high-quality support services, and included in campus decision-making processes. Colleges should ensure their campus safety and emergency

operations management plans are up to date and feature best practices.

Colleges should do their best to implement the recommendations of the New Jersey Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault. Key recommendations include:

- Facilitating evidence-based education and training to staff, faculty, students, and all university officials responsible for responding to sexual violence;
- Developing survivor-centered policies that are easily accessible to students and widely publicized; and
- Working to continuously promote prevention by cultivating a campus culture of gender-equity and respect.⁶⁸

Many institutions across the state are already doing important work to support the mental health and well-being of their students. For instance, the Counseling and Psychological Services at Stevens Institute of Technology provides free-of-charge individual & group counseling, outreach programs, consultation, and referral services for students.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Office of Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) at Rutgers University offers counseling and advocacy services, educational programming and training, and consultation and policy development services to students.⁷⁰ VPVA also supports student survivors and promotes bystander behaviors in an effort to encourage student safety and success.⁷¹ Programs and initiatives like these should be adopted at all schools in the state to ensure students are supported regardless of the institution they attend.

Steps should also be taken to actively promote inclusivity across all learning environments. Colleges should not release information on undocumented students unless legally required

to do so. Undocumented students in New Jersey should not have to attend class under fear of arrest or deportation. Colleges should also work to create inclusive spaces. The Muslim Life Program at Princeton University, for example, is an initiative by the school and the University Chaplain's Office to provide a place for Muslim students to practice their faith as they attend college. The university has provided Muslim students, and students of other faith backgrounds, private mediation and prayer rooms on campus as well.⁷²

In an effort to improve overall safety and inclusivity, colleges should work to increase student involvement in campus decision-making processes, including having positions available on their governing boards for students to participate in shared governance practices and voice the concerns or ideas of the student body. For example, Montclair State University has an elected position on its board designated as the "Student Trustee" position.⁷³ Every school in the state should have at least one such position. In listening to their students, colleges should make sure they are hearing diverse voices from students of all backgrounds. When institutions prioritize opportunities for students to feel valued and have their voices heard, they foster a campus culture that promotes learning and inclusion.

The Role of Students

Students should strive to make their voices heard through active participation in boards, programs, and other avenues of open dialogue. By working with their peers, as well as college administrators and state policymakers, students can foster campus cultures that are safe, inclusive, and protective for all. By being their own best advocates, students can help bring awareness to important issues and change campus climates.

VISION IN PRACTICE: CULTIVATING RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND TALENT

#4 New Jersey students should have experiential learning opportunities.

#5 New Jersey students should have supportive faculty and staff.

#8 New Jersey students should have high-quality academic programs.

To recapture New Jersey's rightful place as a leader in the innovation economy, New Jersey must accelerate our commitment to research and development, support increased commercialization activity, and invest in training an innovation-ready workforce.

The Role of the State

State agencies should work together to ensure students and institutions are properly informed when making decisions regarding enrolling in, or creating, new academic programs. Relevant data should be used to inform new program development and assist students in planning successful careers. Labor market demand for new and existing programs of study should be assessed by the state, and industry partners should be engaged to provide feedback on the relevance of academic programs. The state should also take an active role in fostering connections between higher education and industry to develop partnerships for research commercialization and job and internship opportunities. These connections should also be utilized to inform students and colleges of labor market realities.

In partnership with agencies overseeing postsecondary education programs, the state should make available to the public all relevant data drawn from the New Jersey Education to Earnings Data System regarding postsecondary outcomes, including job placement and student earnings. Having access to these data will allow students to make informed decisions about their postsecondary options and future careers. Granting other key stakeholders access to this information will also increase transparency regarding post-graduate outcomes for students by program.

State agencies should work to more strategically align higher education and economic development initiatives. In doing so, agencies should collaborate with OSHE and LWD in developing partnerships with businesses looking to create or expand their presence in the state to ensure talent development needs are addressed. Partnerships like these can also be used to foster growth in industries focused on research and development. To this end in 2018, via a collaborative effort between the Economic Development Authority and OSHE, New Jersey launched ResearchwithNJ.com to increase collaborations between academia and industry. This innovative online portal allows entrepreneurs and commercial enterprises around the world to identify New Jersey's experts, facilities, publications, and intellectual property at several research universities.⁷⁴

Going forward, the state should look for ways to increase industry-academic collaboration through existing and new economic development programs. For example, the new incentive programs outlined in the Governor's economic plan proposed bonuses for companies that establish collaborative research partnerships with colleges. And the newly launched NJ Ignite program provides rent subsidies to entrepreneurs who work in academic-based incubators and accelerators.⁷⁵ In March 2018, the Governor also announced the development of 'The Hub,' incubator and research space in New Brunswick.⁷⁶ The state should also launch an annual innovation economy report on New Jersey colleges to gauge and monitor research and development advancements. The report should include metrics on commercialization and technology licensing, research and development activity, and the number of women and minorities in STEM fields.

Per a March 2018 announcement, OSHE will work with LWD and leaders in higher education to overhaul and strengthen NJ PLACE (New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education), the state's program linking apprenticeships to postsecondary degrees.⁷⁷ Through NJ PLACE, students can get an apprenticeship certificate and earn their college degree at the same time. Apprenticeships offer terrific opportunities for students to supplement their ongoing education with workforce learning—making graduates even more valuable to prospective employers. Updating NJ PLACE will ensure the program continues to offer these important opportunities to a new generation of working learners in New Jersey. The state should also provide support for the NJ Career Accelerator Internship Program, a paid internship run by LWD focusing on STEM industries.⁷⁸

The Role of Colleges

Colleges should continuously evaluate their academic programs for viability, eliminating programs that are no longer useful and moving resources into those that need to be strengthened to better align with institutional, student, and state needs.

To ensure students are ready to enter New Jersey's innovation economy, colleges should engage with employers to tailor their academic offerings more towards workforce needs and student career aspirations. Doing so will require colleges to prioritize experiential and work-based learning programs, and develop broader research and development partnerships. An example of this type of effort is the "Veterans Launching Ventures" certificate course at Fairleigh Dickinson University, which builds on the knowledge and skills of veterans to help them start their own business.⁷⁹

Colleges should work to expand opportunities for students to make connections to the workforce while they are still in school. Although institutions have broad missions for knowledge creation and student development that go beyond any one job or specific economic environment, feedback from

potential employers can help ensure colleges are equipped with the best and most up-to-date knowledge of local labor market demand. This kind of feedback can be utilized in a wide range of programs, such as the engineering partnership between Rowan University and Lockheed Martin or the communications program at Montclair State University and broadcast networks in New York City.⁸⁰ All academic programs should be informed by the current market and potential options for student employment upon graduation. The more proactive colleges are in these areas, the better prepared their students will be to enter the workforce.

New Jersey's colleges also play an important role in supporting the state's innovation economy goals through research, development, and commercialization. In addition to ongoing efforts to secure more federal research funding, colleges should investigate and implement best-in-state and best-in-class models for supporting research commercialization. Increasing the flow of ideas out of academic research labs and into the state's economy will help spur the creation of new companies and increase job growth. Colleges should also continue to invest in innovation and create space on campus, such as co-working offices, incubators, and accelerators, to support entrepreneurs and allow for increased interaction between start-up and academic communities.

The Role of Students

Students can take an active role in shaping their future careers by asking prospective colleges about job placement rates and career opportunities. While in college, students should take advantage of at least one work-based learning opportunity, such as an apprenticeship, an internship, a service learning experience, or a co-op. These experiences provide an opportunity to gain relevant work-based skills and learn whether a potential future career is the right one. Students should also be sure to engage with career services centers throughout their entire collegiate experience—not just upon graduation.

ENSURING PARTICIPATION THROUGH WORKING GROUPS

The state, colleges, and students are not the only stakeholders who have a vested interest in the future of higher education in the Garden State. Business, industry, nonprofits, foundations, and other community organizations can all play a vital role in carrying out this strategic vision for the state. Their voices and input will be important for the work ahead. To that end, in addition to the specific recommendations outlined in the prior section, the creation of a corresponding set of working groups is also proposed to help develop strategies to increase support for students at New Jersey's colleges and achieve the statewide goal of 65 by 25. These working groups will focus on a discrete set of issues and report their findings within a year.

THE ON-RAMPS TO COLLEGE WORKING GROUP

The On-ramps to College Working Group will work to increase postsecondary access for all students in the state by developing innovative solutions for addressing the equity gaps in college attendance by race and socioeconomic status. Specifically, the group will be charged with:

- ❖ Creating a coordinated approach to offering fee-free dual enrollment and piloting other models for demonstrating college-level mastery, such as the Modern States Educational Alliance, which prepares students for College Level Examination Program exams.
- ❖ Exploring, and then working to address, the factors affecting New Jersey student decisions to attend higher education institutions outside of the state.

THE MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE WORKING GROUP

The Making College Affordable Working Group will be charged with examining potential new state funding models and exploring approaches to more meaningful collaboration among institutions to meaningfully reduce higher education prices for students and families. Specifically, the group will focus on:

- ❖ Identifying best practices and creating a guide for dealing with non-tuition costs faced by students.
- ❖ Creating a reasonable and measurable affordability benchmark for all students, and working to ensure institutional pricing schemes align with this benchmark.
- ❖ Proposing a completion-oriented funding model that prioritizes service to traditionally underserved populations.

THE STUDENT SUCCESS WORKING GROUP

The Student Success Working Group will focus on identifying evidence-based and otherwise promising strategies to boost college completion at New Jersey's colleges. The group will explore opportunities to strengthen student success by scaling and replicating academic, social, and financial interventions that are innovative and effective. In particular, the group will be charged with:

- ❖ Exploring and recommending alternatives to developmental education.
- ❖ Identifying creative strategies that can accelerate student progress to a degree and reduce the impact of student financial challenges.
- ❖ Exploring opportunities to expand and standardize college credit for prior learning models.
- ❖ Investigating multi-intervention models, such as CUNY ASAP, to see what lessons can be applied in New Jersey.

THE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment Working Group will focus on developing best practices to enhance safety and support services on campus, and giving students a voice in these important campus matters. In particular, the group will be charged with:

- ❖ Promoting the practice of data analysis through campus climate surveys.
- ❖ Establishing best practices for creating campus safety and inclusive environments.
- ❖ Drafting an implementation guide for colleges on the recommendations set forth by the 2017 Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault.

THE RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND TALENT WORKING GROUP

The Research, Innovation, and Talent Working Group will focus on creating stronger ties between businesses and higher education by promoting industry-academic partnerships, experiential learning opportunities, and programs to meet market needs. In particular, the group will be charged with:

- ❖ Identifying strategies and best practices to increase research, development, and commercialization activities by our state's research universities.
- ❖ Developing effective industry-academic research and workforce development partnerships that lead to more research and employment opportunities for students.
- ❖ Highlighting successful practices that expand the number of students, especially women and underrepresented minorities, who participate in research and obtain STEM degrees.
- ❖ Determining effective methods for attracting and supporting diverse faculty and staff.

The tasks of these Working Groups should be completed within one year and their work product should be shared publicly prior to the first anniversary of this higher education state plan.



NEXT STEPS

New Jersey's vision for higher education is simple. Every New Jersey, regardless of life circumstances, should have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality college degree or credential.

The Student Bill of Rights encapsulates this innovative vision, yet the rights it contains are not self-executing. Hard work will be necessary to ensure these rights become reality. By making the Student Bill of Rights a central feature in the state's higher education plan, New Jersey can showcase what it truly values: opportunity and innovation.

The state is committed to working with all interested stakeholders to examine the relevant issues and develop the best practices necessary to implement this student-focused plan. Over the next year OSHE will work to put this vision into action by:

- Listening to, and gathering feedback from, stakeholders across the state;
- Partnering with the five working groups to implement this plan;
- Collecting and sharing key data to monitor progress towards the state goal of 65 by 25; and
- Publishing an annual report detailing this plan's progress.

With this plan and vision for the Student Bill of Rights expressed herein, New Jersey has the opportunity to strengthen its economy while becoming a national leader in higher education. If 65% of New Jerseyans are to obtain a postsecondary credential by 2025, the state must continue to focus on increasing college completion and providing higher education access to underrepresented minorities, students from low-income families, and adult learners. Prioritizing student needs is the best way for New Jersey to ensure its workforce will be ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow's economy.



ENDNOTES

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