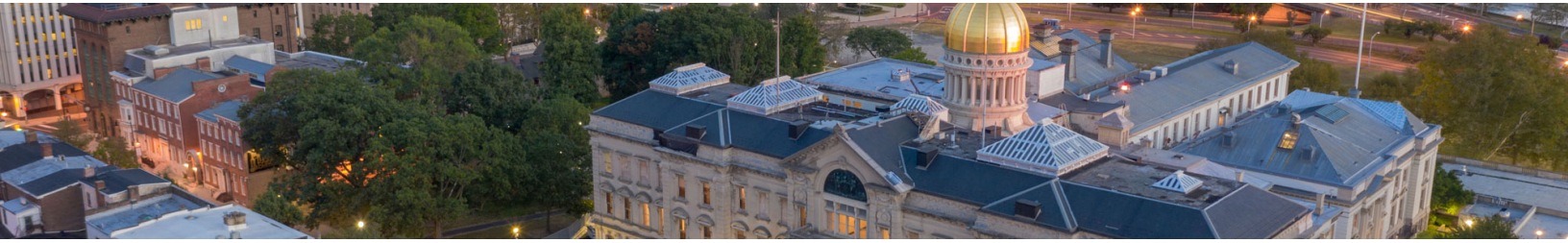


Governor Phil Murphy



Governor Murphy, Secretary of Higher Education Smith Ellis Announce Vision for a Student Bill of Rights, New Plan for New Jersey Higher Education

03/26/2019

NEWARK - Governor Phil Murphy and Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis today announced the release of "Where Opportunity Meets Innovation: A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education," an expansive plan to ensure higher education meets student needs and to galvanize New Jersey's innovation economy. Governor Murphy and Secretary Smith Ellis unveiled the plan at Rutgers University-Newark, surrounded by students, state officials, and other higher education stakeholders

"Today, New Jersey's great colleges and universities set course to make our state the hub for American innovation and economic opportunity," said **Governor Murphy**. "My Administration has committed to growing New Jersey from the middle out and lifting communities from the bottom up. There's no better way to achieve those goals than strengthening our state's institutions of higher education. In a knowledge-based global economy, what New Jerseyans know will matter a lot more than who they know."

"New Jersey is the state of innovation. And higher education is where opportunity meets innovation," said **Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis**. "The plan we release today seeks to ensure that every student, no matter their life circumstances, has the opportunity to obtain a high quality education that prepares them for life after college. Since taking office, I have had countless meetings with those invested in the state's postsecondary education future. Most importantly, I have talked to students from colleges and universities all around the state, and learned firsthand their passion for learning and the challenges they encounter on the way to getting a college credential. The plan released today represents the collective wisdom of those conversations. I am proud for the state to have this student-focused vision to chart the path forward."

Governor Murphy and Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis outlined the objectives of the state plan, affirming the central goal of achieving 65 percent postsecondary attainment by 2025 and committing the state to its vision – that every New Jerseyan, regardless of life circumstances, should have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality credential that prepares them for life after college.

Underpinning the Governor and Secretary's vision is a Student Bill of Rights that outlines things that all New Jersey students should have access to. The plan organizes these rights into five main objectives for the state to take action on:

- Expose students to postsecondary pathways through enhanced partnerships and access to fee-free college-preparatory programs;
- Ensure college access and affordability by examining new partnerships between the state and institutions to meaningfully reduce higher education costs for students and their families;
- Build support systems necessary to make sure students thrive in college and get across the graduation stage;
- Ensure students feel safe, supported, and included in their chosen learning environments; and
- Cultivate research, innovation, and talent to deepen and recapture our place as a leader in the innovation economy and effectively prepare students for success after college.

Earlier today, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order No. 61, which creates a Task Force on New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education. The Task Force will be divided into five Working Groups: 1) Creating On-ramps to College; 2) Making College Affordable; 3) Student Success; 4) Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments; and 5) Research, Innovation, and Talent. Each Working Group will be led by two co-chairpersons, appointed by the Governor, and is to issue a final report on its subject area within 9 months. The state plan released today noted the need for these Working Groups to increase the support for students at New Jersey's colleges and achieve the statewide goal of 65 percent postsecondary attainment by 2025.

"We look forward to continuing to work with our partners at Higher Education and Education to ensure that every student experiences the high-quality, career-relevant programs that lead to success. Our collaborative efforts, which include enabling students to earn college credits for apprenticeship and expanding opportunities for work-based learning throughout New Jersey's higher education system, are the foundation on which our stronger and fairer economy is being built," said **Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**.

"Attending college can provide students with immense opportunities for personal and professional growth, allowing them to make greater contributions to their communities and the state," said **Senator Sandra Cunningham**. "We all benefit from institutions of higher education which are financially accessible and providing the resources students need to be successful upon graduation. I look forward to seeing how this initiative strengthens our schools, our workforce, and our state."

"We want all New Jersey college students to succeed and achieve excellence in their career pursuits. That's for certain. We also know that more of our students not only struggle to simply get into college but also to leave college with the ability to compete in an innovation-driven economy," said **Assemblywoman Mila Jasey**. "It's time for us to strengthen the pathway to college and refocus the process of ushering in the next generation of college students in New Jersey. The state's aim to both reduce debt and expense for students as well as helping higher education institutions smooth pathways into their doors and into a career is a welcomed plan."





In concert with the plan, Governor Murphy's proposed FY2020 budget included \$20 million in new higher education operating aid, along with a redistribution of \$15 million in current operating aid, for an outcomes-based funding formula. This \$35 million will be distributed based on the total number of degrees awarded in a fiscal year; the total number of under-represented racial/ethnic minority degrees awarded; and the number of low-income students using student financial aid proxies (e.g., Pell Grants, TAG). In exchange for receiving formula funding, institutions would have to: commit to the principles of the state plan for higher education; adopt a Financial Aid Shopping Sheet for all undergraduate students; participate in good faith in conversations led by the Secretary of Higher Education to shape future iterations of the funding rationale tied to state priorities; and share program-level spending information to inform future iterations of the funding rationale.

To further his commitment to higher education, Governor Murphy also proposed the following investments in the FY2020 budget:

- Expansion of Community College Opportunity Grants (CCOG) by \$33.5 million;
- Increase in Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) support by \$2.25 million; and
- Boosted support for Tuition Aid Grants by \$5.03 million.

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