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Governor Christie Receives Higher Education Task Force Recommendations, Signs Executive Orders to Create Governor's Higher Education Council and Advisory Committee on Graduate Medical Education

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Trenton, NJ – Today, Governor Chris Christie received the recommendations of the Higher Education Task Force chaired by former Governor Tom Kean and signed two new Executive Orders focused on implementing and further pursuing the Task Force's recommendations to strengthen New Jersey higher education. Executive Order 52 will create the Governor's Higher Education Council and Executive Order 51 forms an advisory committee to develop specific recommendations for graduate medical education. The report, delivered to the Governor in accordance with Executive Order 26 signed in May 2010, provides a critical review and assessment designed to improve infrastructure, increase accessibility and promote excellence in New Jersey's institutions of higher learning.

Governor Kean was joined on the Task Force by Dr. George Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College; John McGoldrick, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Association of State Colleges and Universities; Peggi Howard, Vice President of Administration, Drew University and Robert E. Campbell, former Vice Chairman, Johnson & Johnson.

Governor Chris Christie thanked Governor Kean and the Task Force for their work, while calling for improvements to the current higher education system. "I want to thank Governor Kean and all the members of the task force for their hard work and insightful recommendations. In many ways, this report confirms what we all know - New Jersey's higher education system is in need of focused improvement if it is truly going to serve our students and prepare our state for the future. After twenty years of declining State funding and increasing tuition, it is time to put in place a short and long term strategy that recognizes our current fiscal challenges while taking achievable steps to strengthen higher education in New Jersey.

"I am prepared to take these recommendations into consideration as we determine what change to the system can happen now, considering the serious fiscal constraints facing our State, while also looking toward the future." Governor Tom Kean said, "There is no doubt that New Jersey must have a competitive system of higher education that is affordable and also equips our students with the tools they need to thrive in today's workplace. Our findings show that there is a way forward that takes into consideration the fiscal challenges our state is facing and can make New Jersey a leader in higher education."

The Task Force has outlined ambitious goals for New Jersey's system of public higher education, which includes exploring private partnerships, updating regulations and improving governance. At the same time the Task Force acknowledges throughout the report and recommendations that New Jersey faces significant fiscal challenges, and that the state does not currently have the resources necessary to fund some of the recommendations.

Governor Christie emphasized that there are critical reform measures which can be implemented right now and called on the Legislature to pass the remaining higher education tool kit bills. "One thing that can be done immediately and without further delay is passing the remaining higher education tool kit bills. This package of reforms was delivered to the Legislature 239 days ago and there is no reason these bills shouldn't have been acted upon already."

Governor Christie's Higher Education Tool Kit Proposals include the following:

- Making Collective Bargaining Reform at State Colleges and Universities Consistent.* Under current law, the Governor (through the Office of Employee Relations) conducts negotiations on behalf of the nine state colleges and universities with the state employee's bargaining units. This legislation designates each state college and university as the employer of record of its employees and would make the collective-bargaining laws for public higher education consistent. (S-2626/A-2963 and S-2337/A-3219)
- Removing Bureaucracies by Exempting State College*and University Employees from Civil Service.* Between 25% and 45% of the state college and university employees are in Civil Service and each institution's board of trustees must assign duties, determine salaries and prescribe qualifications for all employees in accordance with New Jersey's Civil Service law. Having different rules for difference employees creates administrative and managerial concerns and creates a system that is difficult to apply to state college or university environment. Rutgers, NJIT, UMDNJ and the county colleges do not have employees classified under Civil Service titles. This legislation would remove classified employees of the state colleges and universities from Civil Service status. (S-2026/A-2963 and S-2338/A-3220)
- Bringing Tenure Qualifications at State Colleges and Universities in Line with National and Private Standards.* The proposal would authorize the boards of trustees of the state colleges and universities to establish a probationary period for tenure that is consistent with the needs of the institution and with national practices. The current probationary period is five years, with tenure achieved in the sixth year, which means review for tenure is only based on four years of work. (S-2172/A-2964/A-3357)
- Requiring Fact-Finding on Impact on Students, Tuition Rates and State/Local Finances During State College Collective

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Bargaining Process. *The Governor's proposal would require individuals retained by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) to institute impasse procedures for collective negotiations involving public institutions of higher education to consider several factors when formulating their opinions and recommendations for settlement. This would include the impact of any reductions in State or county funding, likely impact of a recommended settlement on tuition rates and the cost of benefits provided to affected state employees. This proposal mirrors the Governor's "tool kit" proposal regarding municipal arbitrations. (S-2027/A-2962)

Attached is a summary of recommendations from the Task Force.

The entire report can be found [here](#)

Executive order No. 51

Executive orders No. 52

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