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**New Jersey Commission on Higher Education**

**◆ Highlights ◆**

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**5-Year Restructuring Assessment and Long-Range  
Plan Guide NJ Higher Education's Future Course**

The Commission on Higher Education is expected to adopt in June two reports that together will guide the future course of higher education in New Jersey.

**New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education: 1999 Update** and **New Jersey's Higher Education Restructuring Act: Five-Year Assessment** contain complementary recommendations to move New Jersey toward its vision of higher education excellence, access, and affordability.

The statutorily required assessment of the state's higher education governance structure found the tripartite arrangement to be workable and desirable, although there are operational aspects that can be improved.

In its first five years, the tripartite structure spurred institutional autonomy, collaboration, and innovation within the coordinated higher education system, according to the committee of institutional presidents and current and former Commission members that drafted the report. Together, presidents, trustees, the Commission, and other partners within the higher education community made considerable progress toward state and systemwide goals.

For example, reduced state regulation enabled boards of trustees to focus on institutional goals and be more responsive to student and community needs. At the state level, the Commission and Presidents' Council worked together to improve systemwide coordination, collaboration, and accountability.

The two bodies jointly developed important policy recommendations as well as the first long-range plan for higher education since 1981. Among the successfully implemented recommendations from the 1996 plan are:

- Enactment of a \$55 million Higher Education Technology Infrastructure Fund;
- A significant increase in operating aid for community colleges, as well as an increase in the bonding limit for capital projects within the sector;
- Introduction of a \$550 million bond proposal for four-year college facility improvements;
- A \$1 million grant program to improve graduation and transfer rates for minority or low-income students;
- Creation of a State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services; and
- Development of a broad-based transfer and articulation agreement.

In addition to its extensive review of activities and accomplishments since the new structure was implemented in July 1994, the Restructuring Assessment Committee's draft report was informed by a survey of various higher education constituencies as well as a statewide conference on higher education restructuring.

Recommendations for enhancing the structure focus on continuing to improve communication and collaboration among the Commission, Presidents' Council, and college and university trustees, as well as among sectors and individual institutions.

Both the five-year assessment and the long-range plan recommend increased emphasis on systemwide advocacy to heighten awareness of higher education's substantial contributions to New Jersey and build support for continued investment. Both reports also emphasize the important role of trustees in the tripartite structure.

The updated long-range plan, which will be considered concurrently with the five-year assessment, renews the state's commitment to the vision for higher education excellence and focuses on specific strategies that will enable the state to achieve it.

Recognizing that access and affordability are directly affected by the amount of operating aid the state provides, the long-range plan update reaffirms the importance of achieving a balanced funding partnership for public institutions and maintaining the state's commitment to funding for independent colleges. It also seeks funding for college and universities facilities and ongoing technology costs.

In addition, the update calls upon institutions to build upon their individual areas of strength to develop regionally, nationally, and globally recognized programs. It recommends that the Commission develop funding strategies to assist institutions in their pursuit of excellence.

The Commission received extensive input on the draft long-range plan update during April and May and has incorporated many suggestions into the document it will consider for adoption on June 25. The five-year assessment is scheduled for adoption on the same day.

Click on the title of the report below to view:

- [\*\*The 1999 Update of New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Five-Year Assessment of the Higher Education Restructuring Act\*\*](#)

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## Students CHEER About Richard Stockton Program



Helping elementary and secondary school students to value cultural differences is part of the public service mission at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, where more than 750 people participated in the sixth annual statewide CHEER conference this spring.

The acronym CHEER stands for civility, harmony, education, environment, and respect. The annual conference brings students together with teachers, college leaders, community relations groups, law enforcement agencies, and others to break down cultural barriers and eradicate prejudice, violence, and bigotry.

Stockton's commitment to advancing human rights extends beyond the CHEER conference to include a Center on Hate and Extremism, established in 1996, and a Master's Degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Part of what makes the CHEER program so successful is that it is fun as well as educational. Each year, the conference incorporates a science fiction theme with interactive games that teach valuable lessons on teamwork, trust, respect, and valuing differences in a multi-cultural society. Rather than focusing overtly on racial and ethnic differences, the science fiction theme serves as a backdrop in which teams of "humans" and "extra-terrestrials" grapple with their fundamental differences.

Through games and physical activities, participants work on skills such as peer-to-peer mediation, problem-solving, and teamwork techniques, while emphasizing respect for the individual. The students also participate in small group discussions about the more down-to-earth problems students confront in their daily lives.

According to Brian Levin, founder of the Center on Hate and Extremism, the goal of the varied activities is encouraging students to work as a community toward a common goal.

"One thing we know from research on hate crime and violence is that the more kids have meaningful contact with others who are different, the less likely they are to engage violently or in a hateful manner," Levin said. "CHEER sets forth a lifetime framework for dealing with differences. It sends a message that diversity is a positive thing about America."

Interest in the daylong conference has increased each year. Stockton officials say it is difficult to accommodate all of the schools that want to participate because of the limited size of the college gym. This year, K-12 students from 36 schools throughout New Jersey participated in the event, along with

college-age students enrolled at Stockton and several other institutions.

CHEER is not intended to be a one-day event that is quickly forgotten. Participants are encouraged to share the day's lessons in their home schools, and many of the districts that send groups to the conference have local CHEER clubs to further advance the principles of the program.

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## **Commission Welcomes Jim Sulton as New Executive Director**

Dr. James E. Sulton, Jr. assumed the post of executive director of the Commission on Higher Education in early May. He comes to New Jersey from Colorado, where he was the senior academic officer for that state's Commission on Higher Education.

Much of his first few weeks on the job has been devoted to meeting with Commission members and staff, state government officials, and college presidents throughout the state. He also appeared before the Assembly Education Committee on May 20.

"I admire the quality and variety of higher education institutions in New Jersey, their strong commitment to providing access, the emphasis on teaching and learning, and the extent to which the colleges and universities are involved in economic development," Dr. Sulton said. "The institutions, and the talented leaders who guide them, are a tremendous asset to New Jersey."

Dr. Sulton said a major area of emphasis will be improving communication and strengthening the Commission's relationships with the Presidents' Council and institutional governing boards. He also plans to collaborate with the K-12 education community and with New Jersey's business leaders and organizations, building on their existing connections with higher education.

Dr. Sulton's wife, Anne, and their three teenagers will join him in New Jersey at the end of the school year.

### **A Word From the Commission's New Executive Director**



Dear Colleagues:

Greetings! My first month as executive director of the Commission on Higher Education has been busy and exciting. Much of my time has been devoted to getting acquainted with the state and its higher education system, and to meeting various institutional and state government leaders. I look forward to getting around to more campuses and meeting more of you over the summer.

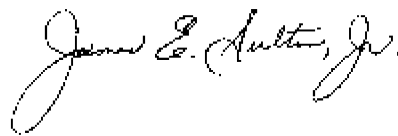
What I have seen in my first four weeks on the job has far surpassed my initial expectations. Certainly, I was intrigued by New Jersey's bold effort to increase institutional autonomy without sacrificing statewide coordination. Although I did my homework on New Jersey before deciding to move my family east from Colorado, I did not fully anticipate the extraordinary leadership that has engendered such a high level of collaboration, coordination, and innovation throughout the system.

I will work hard to increase communication and strengthen the Commission's relationship with the Presidents' Council and institutional governing boards. I also want to collaborate with faculty, students, and other members of the higher education community.

In addition, I deem it crucial for higher education to maintain close connections with the K-12 community as well as with business and industry. After all, none of us works in isolation – our enterprises are interdependent.

Certainly there are many challenges ahead, both for me personally, and for New Jersey's higher education system as a whole. I come to this position respectful not only of New Jersey's tremendous higher education assets, but also of what this state has accomplished. I do not seek change for the sake of shaking things up, but I am not afraid to look for a better process or outcome. I think you will find me to be both straightforward in my opinions, and willing to listen to and learn from others.

I feel well prepared to assume a leadership role in New Jersey higher education, and I look forward to being part of such a dynamic higher education community.



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## **NJ's EOF Program Celebrates 30 Years of Success**

Thirty years ago, in the aftermath of the Newark riots, a freshman legislator named Thomas Kean sponsored legislation to expand higher education access for disadvantaged students.

Since that time, New Jersey has undergone dramatic demographic, economic, and social changes. The state's manufacturing base has given way to a highly competitive information-based economy, making access to higher education a prerequisite for economic success.

The Educational Opportunity Fund has been a key factor in opening the doors of opportunity to economically disadvantaged students. Gradually, EOF has evolved from a program primarily concerned with increasing access by addressing financial barriers into a comprehensive support program focused on improving student outcomes. Today, it is recognized as one of the nation's most comprehensive and successful state-supported efforts to increase access to higher education for disadvantaged students.

The program's 30th anniversary was marked with a series of events including a February retrospective featuring former Governor Kean and several prominent EOF alumni as well as presentations by the EOF community to the Commission and the Presidents' Council. In addition, EOF's 30 years of program success, student leadership, and professional development was the theme of the April Student Day Conference at which 466 outstanding program graduates were honored for their achievements.

The EOF program is income-based; eligibility extends up to 200 percent of the poverty level. It serves a diverse population of approximately 12,500 students. Enrollment in the program is roughly 39 percent African American, 31 percent Hispanic, 18 percent white, and 8 percent Asian.

Each of the 60 programs operating at 41 institutions is distinct. Students must meet institutional admission criteria, as well as financial eligibility. Once enrolled, they must meet the same progress and graduation standards as all other students at the institution.

EOF is a partnership between the state and the institutions. The EOF Board of Directors is appointed by the Governor to set policy, approve program regulations, and develop the annual program budget request. Institutions recruit students and administer the program, contributing an average of 58 percent of the total academic year program as well as all administration costs.

In addition to providing access and supporting success for individual students, the EOF program has proven to be a valuable seedbed for innovations adopted by the broader higher education community. For example, the EOF program successfully piloted strategies such as pre-college articulation, peer counseling and peer tutoring, student leadership development, and outcomes-based program evaluation that are now widely accepted in the mainstream higher education community.

The program remains committed to implementing best practices identified through research. These include linking assessment, developmental activities, student leadership, support services, and financial aid; creating a student-centered, family-type environment; stressing student involvement and responsibility; and active counseling, tutoring, and student monitoring. The EOF program also places a strong emphasis on civic responsibility.

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