
New Jersey Commission on Higher Education

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Commission Gears Up for \$10 Million Grant

Thanks to a \$10 million federal GEAR UP grant, the Commission on Higher Education and six institutional partners are dramatically expanding collaborative programs proven to help start disadvantaged youngsters on the path toward college.

The five-year grant, awarded to the Commission in August, will build on existing state-funded College Bound programs at Mercer County Community College, New Jersey City University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University, Rutgers– Newark, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The NJ GEAR UP state project will focus on ten middle and seven high schools in four of the state's urban centers: Camden, Jersey City, Newark, and Trenton.

New Jersey's state project is one of 21 funded under the new GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) initiative.

The participating programs will provide students with after school and Saturday tutoring, summer programs, mentoring, counseling, and college visits to improve academic performance and encourage students to pursue undergraduate education. Each participating student will have his or her own personal education plan.

In addition to early intervention, the project will have a strong scholarship component. Following award of federal and state 21st Century Scholar certificates, students will be eligible for financial aid workshops and individual application assistance. Students may also participate in the state's Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program which provides scholarship assistance and support services, including a bridge program between high school and the freshman year in college.

Research indicates that without this sort of intervention, students from the lowest income brackets are seven times more likely to drop out of high school than students from the uppermost income brackets.

"This collaboration between institutions and the state will make a positive difference in the lives of urban youngsters. It will help them acquire the academic skills, and it will provide the essential support services they need to prepare for college," said James E. Sulton, Jr., executive director of the Commission.

Over 550 low-income students will be enrolled in the first year of the program. GEAR UP will be expanded each year, doubling its enrollment by 2003-04.

The Commission is in the process of hiring a state coordinator for the program, as well as a mentor and publicity coordinator. Campus programs are recruiting and hiring over 275 tutors, instructors, and mentors to work directly with the students.

The Commission developed this program in collaboration with the selected institutions, the state Department of Education, the state Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, and the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund. The state will receive \$1.4 million in the first year of the grant; a total of \$10 million will be awarded to the state over five years.

In addition to the state grant, Rutgers-Camden, NJIT's Center for Pre-college Programs, and the Englewood Public Schools also won awards through a separate grant competition.

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FY 2001 Budget Policy Proposed

Recognizing the essential contribution that higher education makes to New Jersey's overall economic and societal vitality, the Commission's [FY 2001 Budget Policy Statement](#) calls upon the Governor and Legislature to make an increased investment in excellence at New Jersey colleges and universities.

Building upon the recommendations in [New Jersey's Long-Range Plan for Higher Education: 1999 Update](#), the draft statement recommends supplemental state funding to help institutions achieve prominence in targeted areas that reflect state priorities. The proposed initiative would help selected institutions enhance their strongest

programs to make them competitive with the best in the region, the nation, or the world.

“The Commission firmly believes that New Jersey must start to push its higher education institutions farther along the path to excellence, and the colleges and universities have significant areas of strength on which to build,” the budget statement says. “An investment in excellence is an opportunity to move New Jersey higher education into the upper echelon nationally, which will reverberate favorably on the state’s competitive position.”

As in past years, the annual budget policy statement also emphasizes the continued need for adequate state support for institutional operating costs, facilities, student assistance, and programs to meet special student needs. It continues to support performance funding and calls for increased state funding to cover negotiated and incremental salary increases at the senior public institutions. It also calls upon the state to move toward the statutory funding level for independent institutions.

The budget statement recognizes the state’s strong commitment to capital needs and recommends funds to cover ongoing maintenance at senior public institutions and renewal of the Equipment Leasing Fund. It also seeks state funding to maintain the statewide telecommunications network backbone and to implement ARTSYS, an electronic transfer and articulation system.

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Virtual Business Gives Mercer Students Real Experience

Students at Mercer County Community College are getting real business experience even though the company they run exists only on paper and in cyberspace.

Mercer is the first community college in the nation to use the [International Business Practice Firm](#) (IBPF) model as a way to teach students about business strategies by linking them with a network of virtual companies that compete and conduct transactions in countries around the globe.

The program was launched three years ago with help from a federal grant through the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). A similar grant from the European Commission funded the participation of colleges and universities in eight European nations in a growing international network of over 2,500 business practice firms operating in Asia, Europe, Australia, and Canada.

The Mercer students operate Radiant Care, Inc., a personal care products company whose market niche is child-friendly bath products. With its own website, product line, and price list, the company seems like the real thing. Under the mentoring eye of a faculty member, the students are responsible for financing, purchasing, shipping, and marketing their line of children’s shampoo

and soap products, which are modeled after those manufactured by Johnson & Johnson's Personal Products Division. While they don't actually produce and bottle shampoo, the students do have to grapple with overhead costs, human resources issues, competition, and other real-world business problems.

Radiant Care was launched by Mercer students a year and a half ago. Each semester, a new group of 12 to 15 student managers builds on past experience, trying to expand operations and improve the company's bottom line.

"It's a very unusual kind of classroom," said Professor Carol Weber. "The students in this environment are asked to constantly think and solve problems. I expect them to take what they know about business and apply it."

According to MCCC President Tom Sepe, in addition to reinforcing business skills, the experience also develops the "soft" skills potential employers look for — problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and communication.

"The students get really turned on and begin to live this business," said Dr. Sepe.

The president is pretty turned on about the project himself and is developing a U.S. network of business practice firms. Dr. Sepe has invited colleagues from throughout the nation to participate in a November orientation and subsequent training program to demonstrate the value of the IBPF model and equip other colleges with the tools they need to set up their own virtual businesses.

While the business practice firm model has been widely used in Europe for about 30 years, this is the first time a connection has been forged with students in the United States, Dr. Sepe said. Students do business within a closed economic network, purchasing goods and services from other simulated companies. Each student employee receives a salary, which also must be spent within the network, creating an international market for consumer products.

Email, the Internet, and videoconferencing software enable the students to communicate and conduct business in real time, just as a commercial firm with global operations might. A major project for this semester is adding online purchasing to Radiant Care's website. The students are studying e-commerce and researching the software needed to make their products available online.

Recognizing the value of face to face communications, Mercer and the European institutions provided funds for student exchanges during the first two years. Fifteen Mercer students went to Europe last year, and about 50 students have come over to visit the New Jersey college.

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Governor Whitman Enacts \$550 Million Capital Fund

Governor Whitman got the new academic year off to a great start on September 21 when she signed into law the \$550 million Higher Education Capital Improvement Grant Fund. The grant program will fund the improvement of facilities and technology

infrastructure at eligible New Jersey institutions.

The Higher Education Capital Improvement Fund was established by legislation sponsored by Assemblymen David Wolfe and Joseph Malone and Senators Robert Martin and Bernard Kenny. The fund will help four-year public and independent institutions address longstanding maintenance and renewal needs by providing grants for the renovation, improvement, expansion, construction or reconstruction of facilities and technology infrastructure. It builds on the state's commitment to higher education capital improvement, including the increased bonding capacity for the community college sector enacted last year.

The capital improvement fund allocates amounts to each public research institution, the state college and university sector, and the independent institutions eligible to receive state aid. The Commission adopted institutional allocations and, in September, proposed regulations governing the approval of grant-funded projects. The Educational Facilities Authority (EFA) will issue up to \$550 million in bonds, notes or other obligations for a maximum term of 30 years. Public institutions receiving grants will be required to repay one-third of the annual debt service on bonds issued to finance their projects and eligible independent institutions will repay 50 percent of their debt service.

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NJVU Focus on Faculty Will Enhance Distance Learning

The New Jersey Virtual University begins the fall semester with a new look, new resources for students and faculty, and a statewide faculty development initiative to increase the quality and quantity of online courses and programs in New Jersey.

The [NJVU website](#) was launched by Governor Christine Todd Whitman in January to provide a user-friendly index of over 1,000 distance learning courses and programs available through 42 participating New Jersey higher education institutions. The redesigned site features enhanced search capabilities to make it easier for users to find the offerings that best meet their education and training needs.

The expanded NJVU website also helps potential students determine whether distance learning is suited to their educational needs and goals. It includes an interactive questionnaire to help users assess whether online courses are right for them, as well as general information about distance learning quality.

NJVU's new [Faculty Center](#) is a valuable online resource for faculty developing web-based and web-enhanced courses. It serves as a clearinghouse for materials promoting the effective use of technology in teaching and learning.

In addition, Governor Whitman and the Legislature earmarked \$500,000 for a three-pronged faculty development initiative to enhance the quality of online teaching and learning and increase the number of courses available. The first component of this statewide effort is a series of regional workshops for college and university administrators involved in policy and planning for faculty development and technical support for online education. The first two workshops were held in September at Camden County College and NJIT; a third, postponed due to Hurricane Floyd, was

held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick on October 13.

The second phase of the faculty development initiative will be campus-based training sessions for faculty who want to begin teaching courses online or expand their current capabilities to use the Internet as an effective teaching and learning tool. The training will be customized to meet varying institutional and faculty needs. The final component will be an online "how to" course focused on designing and teaching a web-based course.

"New Jersey colleges and universities already offer an outstanding range of distance education opportunities. By supporting faculty efforts to design effective online courses and make the best possible use of state-of-the-art technology, this faculty development initiative will take us to the next level," said Governor Whitman. "Together with the enhanced NJVU website, it builds on New Jersey's commitment to higher education technology and continuing efforts to move our state to the forefront of distance education."

Each course and program included in the NJVU index is offered by an accredited New Jersey college or university, which is responsible for all aspects of its distance learning offerings, including granting credits, certificates, and degrees. Almost 40,000 visitors to the NJVU website have conducted 60,000 searches of courses and programs since its launch nine months ago.

"NJVU provides a gateway to distance learning resources for people in all lines of business and all walks of life, across the state and around the world," said William M. Freeman, CEO of Bell Atlantic-New Jersey, and a member of both the Commission on Higher Education and the Virtual University Design Team. "With a new emphasis on faculty development, the number and quality of course offerings will continue to grow, responding to the diverse needs of lifelong learners seeking flexible and convenient ways to access higher education."

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Commission Gets 3 New Members

Two new students and the chairman of the [Higher Education Student Assistance Authority](#) were sworn in September 24 as new members of the Commission on Higher Education.

Warren E. Smith, Esq., a member of the student assistance authority since 1991, serves as an ex officio, voting member of the Commission. Chapter 46 of the public laws of 1999 added the chair of the merged Higher Education Student Assistance Authority to the Commission's membership. The addition of a HESAA representative will enhance ongoing communication between the Commission and the student assistance authority on issues of access and affordability. Mr. Smith is an attorney specializing in employment law.

Wilma Velazquez, a student at Kean University, and Heidi White, a student at Burlington County College, will serve one-year terms. Ms. Velazquez expects to earn her bachelor's degree in social work in May. She is active in student government and numerous service organizations at Kean. Ms. White expects to earn her associate

degree in liberal arts in May. She currently serves as president of the state chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for community college students.

While pending legislation to afford the student representatives voting privileges has not yet been enacted, the students will participate fully in Commission deliberations and committee work.

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New Jersey Institutions Score Big on Federal Grants

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"Months of rigorous preparation have paid off handsomely for New Jersey and its institutions," James E. Sulton, Jr., executive director of the Commission on Higher Education, said at the Commission's monthly meeting in Trenton. "These new federal grants will help our institutions enhance the quality and scope of programs in critical areas in order to better meet the needs of New Jersey and its citizens."

Seven institutions across all sectors won a total of nine grants from the U.S. Department of Education under new programs to improve teacher quality, recruitment, and preparation. Kean University was one of two institutions nationwide to win awards in all three competitions. The university is the lead institution in a Teacher Quality Enhancement Program Partnership Grant to align teacher training with the state's new core curriculum standards. Kean also won grants for teacher recruitment and educational technology. Montclair State University was the other New Jersey institution awarded a recruitment grant to attract students to the teaching profession and reduce shortages and teacher turnover.

Five other colleges and universities won grants in the third related competition, Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PTTT). Georgian Court College, Gloucester County College, Ramapo College of New Jersey, and Rutgers University each garnered a one-year grant to help consortia of higher education institutions, school districts, and others develop the groundwork for innovative improvements in teacher preparation programs. Seton Hall University won a three-year implementation grant to incorporate technology training into teacher education programs. The university also won a grant to offer computer training to disadvantaged urban youth.

Rutgers University, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, and Monmouth University each won a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to improve programs in math and the sciences.

Passaic County Community College garnered two grants for institutions serving large populations of Hispanic students — one focused on increasing student achievement and persistence through development programs, and another to help rehabilitate low-income neighborhoods near the campus. Rowan University also won a grant to work with community organizations to enhance economic development and services in Camden.

In the area of advanced scientific and medical research, UMDNJ received its largest grant ever from the National Institute of Health. NJIT won six study grants from the NSF, and Rider University received a grant for cancer research.

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