



NEW JERSEY

# Association of State Colleges and Universities

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**Assembly Higher Education Committee  
October 2, 2014  
Assembly Bill No. 2801**

We support the concept that most baccalaureate degrees should be structured to be capable of completion within four years. Our schools are already taking steps to enable students to graduate in a timely manner. Examples of the ways the state colleges and universities have streamlined students' time to degree are listed at the end of this testimony.

Flat-rate tuition is just one idea that can accomplish the same goals as this legislation without creating a legal mandate. For example, Richard Stockton College and New Jersey City University each offer flat-rate tuition for full-time undergraduate students, which provides the opportunity for significant cost-savings and an earlier graduation timeframe. Flat-rate tuition means that any full-time undergraduate student enrolling for classes between 12 and 20 credits will pay the same rate. If students take 16 credits per semester, they can graduate in four years. Students can take advantage of the larger flat-rate class load and graduate in three years. A shorter timeline to graduation saves housing or commuting costs, in addition to tuition and fees.

As a matter of policy important to our institutions, the bill infringes on the legal authority of board of trustees that has been in place for 20 years. NJSA 18A:3B-6.d. states that the governing board of each public institution of higher education has the general powers and duties "to establish admission standards and requirements and standards for granting diplomas, certificates and degrees."

Finally, we appreciate the exceptions for certain degrees that have different accreditation and/or certification standards. For example, the Bachelor of Architecture is accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which qualifies graduates for the Architect Registration Examination (ARE). NAAB-accredited B. Arch. programs must include at least 150 credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, of which at least 45 credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, are in general studies.

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**[www.njascu.org](http://www.njascu.org)**

*The College of New Jersey  
Kean University  
Montclair State University*

*New Jersey City University  
Ramapo College of New Jersey  
Richard Stockton College of New Jersey*

*Rowan University  
Thomas Edison State College  
William Paterson University*

## **Streamlining Students' Time to Degree**

### **The College of New Jersey**

In 2012, The College of New Jersey restructured its Enrollment Management Division realigning the area to streamline the experience for students and enhance overall effectiveness of enrollment management – from prospect to graduation – by bringing undergraduate and graduate admissions, student financial services, records and registration, the Equal Opportunity Fund, and Student Success under one umbrella.

### **Montclair State University**

Montclair State University has removed two interdisciplinary core course requirements, thereby enabling students to more easily use transfer credits as electives and facilitate the completion of minors.

The university offers self-paced 100-level math courses through the Red Hawk Math Lab.

The university encourages enrollment in summer and winter courses at the university or at a community college.

### **New Jersey City University**

NJCU established a new general studies curriculum which reduces the number of general studies credits required for degree completion from 66 to 44, thereby reducing tuition costs and financial responsibilities, accelerating degree completion time, and allowing undergraduates to broaden their academic experience by incorporating study across the disciplines to foster critical thinking, enhance communications skills, and encourage teamwork, all of which will be essential in the workforce of the future.

To streamline progress towards graduation, a uniform class scheduling model was implemented in spring 2014 semester. Courses are scheduled to meet twice a week in 75-minute blocks. The uniform schedule minimizes time conflicts related to class offerings and as a result provides a wider selection of courses, while maximize classroom space. Interest in nursing, science, and pre-health studies is soaring. To accommodate the demand for NJCU's Accelerated B.S.N. Program, students may pursue studies in Jersey City, starting every September, or at the NJCU at Brookdale campus in Wall beginning in May each year. NJCU's 12-month Accelerated Nursing Program is showing remarkable success for its graduates who pursue advanced degrees or enter the workforce.

Over 20 searches are underway at NJCU for faculty hires in areas identified as critical to meeting academic needs in high-demand fields of study. The larger faculty pool will enable the University to increase the variety and number of courses offered, thereby shortening time needed to enroll in classes required for degree completion. These positions are available because funds were reduced by 2 percent in administrative cost centers and shifted to the academic budget to cover needed faculty hires.

Using survey information gleaned from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), NJCU is identifying ways in which student engagement with faculty can be strengthened. By implementing the recommendations, NJCU will increase learning outcomes as it moves towards achieving a two-part strategic goal of increased retention and graduation rates.

To support timely degree completion, NJCU has adopted a Fresh Start policy for returning students who had left because of academic difficulty but have demonstrated the potential to succeed; a revised undergraduate re-computation policy by which re-computation is automatic; and a revised grading policy for academic foundations courses that excludes all grades from non-degree credit courses from being calculated into a student's GPA.

### **Ramapo College of New Jersey**

Ramapo College has instituted two academic policies to streamline students' time to degree as well as help keep them on track with their degree goals:

1. All students must declare their major by the time they reach 64 credits. This ensures that after a student has completed his/her general education requirements, they are decided on the degree path they want to pursue and begin to work on meeting the requirements of those degrees.
2. Ramapo College requires all students to complete two core courses as well as any developmental courses attached to those courses to make sure that students have the required skills and competencies to be successful in their upper-level core requirements. These two courses are Critical Reading and Writing 102 as well as General Education Mathematics.

Ramapo College has recommended four-year plans for each of its academic major offerings. These plans, posted on the web and introduced to students during their orientation, are guides for students to clearly understand the requirements of their degree as well as chart out and track their progress on completing all requirements.

### **Richard Stockton College of New Jersey**

**Flat Rate Tuition.** Stockton's flat-rate tuition for full-time undergraduate students continues to provide the opportunity for significant cost-savings and an earlier graduation time frame. Flat rate tuition means that any full-time undergraduate student enrolling for classes between 12 and 20 credits will pay the same rate. If students take 16 credits per semester, they can graduate in four years. Students can take advantage of the larger flat rate class load and graduate in three years. A shorter timeline to graduation saves housing or commuting costs, in addition to tuition and fees.

**Accelerated Degree Programs.** Stockton's Accelerated Degree Programs in Business and Criminal Justice provide students with the opportunity to earn a bachelor's/master's degree quickly and cost-effectively.

Stockton's School of Education has partnered with the liberal arts content areas in English, Social Studies, Math and the Sciences to offer four-year degree completion pathways with embedded teacher certification. These pathways reduce the time to graduation and student teaching from a 5-6 year post-baccalaureate to a more streamlined four years, reducing total credits required and commensurately reducing student debt.

**Vice Provost for e-Learning.** Stockton established a position of vice provost for e-Learning to work closely with the faculty and school deans to foster the development and support of online offerings and to oversee strategic support for the delivery of such programs, including the piloting of emerging academic technology and multimedia. The vice provost works collaboratively with faculty and administrators to integrate technology into teaching

and learning and will provide oversight for the strategic development of online offerings at the main campus and instructional sites.

### **Thomas Edison State College**

Helping students streamline their time to degree has been the mission of TESC since its founding. TESC helps students by:

- Accepting up to 80 community college credits toward their degree.
- Accepting credits for learning which occurred outside the collegiate environment through our PLA and TECEP programs.
- Working with business and industry to review their educational and training programs for the possible award of academic credit.
- Awarding credit for certificates and licenses held by students which have been academically reviewed by the College (i.e. Nursing License, FAA pilots' license, etc.).
- Offering 12 semesters per year (a new semester each month) so students can begin much more frequently than the traditional twice a year option, as well as stagger their academic course load.
- Processing students for graduation on a daily basis.
- Offering a large number of online courses and degrees which offer students much more flexibility in continuing their studies.

### **William Paterson University**

In 2011, WPU decreased the minimum number of graduation credits from 128 to 120. The number of graduates in 2012 and 2013 increased by 20% over 2011 levels.

In 2011, WPU adopted a new Core Curriculum (general education program), reducing the number of general education requirements from 47 to 25. Students can now more quickly move into their majors to graduate more easily.

WPU has diversified course scheduling throughout the entire calendar year. The University offers Winter Session, an intensive three-week session offered entirely online during the students' winter break, and enrolls over 900 students. Summer session offers courses both in-person and online and in multiple formats, enrolling 4,200 students.

In 2011, WPU implemented a Summer Foundations Program, offering students workshops and classes to fulfill basic skills needs during the summer prior to their matriculation. Fulfilling these requirements allows students to start graduation-credit courses as first semester freshmen. This program is offered at no cost to the students. In three years, this program has reduced the percentage of students requiring a basic skills course from 66% to 25%.