



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608 Phone (609) 989-1100 Fax: (609) 989-7017

**Assembly Higher Education Committee
September 18, 2014
Assembly Bill No. 2802**

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to testify on this bill, which would require each public institution of higher education to establish and enter into a statewide reverse-transfer agreement under which at least 30 credits that a student earns at a four-year public college or university toward a baccalaureate degree would be transferrable to any county college for credit toward an associate's degree.

Several state colleges and universities already have reverse-transfer agreements in place. A complete list of these agreements is attached. As you know, under the New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement, the senior public colleges and universities essentially already have traditional transfer agreements with every county college in New Jersey.

Moreover, under the leadership of Thomas Edison State College, the New Jersey Prior Learning Assessment Network (NJPLAN) was established on July 17. Under NJPLAN, students can earn college credits by taking tests or preparing portfolios of their work. Thomas Edison State College, with its historic expertise and pioneering work in prior learning assessment, will serve as the anchor for the NJPLAN consortium, which includes New Jersey City University, Rowan University, NJIT, and Essex County College. Among other benefits, NJPLAN will promote the use of established program methods at Thomas Edison State College, thereby eliminating the need for other institutions to expend their own time and limited resources on such initiatives. Research indicates that students who earn PLA credit are more likely to complete their degrees, complete their degrees in a timely manner, and take more courses with their home institution.

With regard to the specifics of the bill, we have significant concerns with Section 2, which would require the Secretary of Higher Education and each public institution of higher education to develop and implement incentives for students to obtain an associate's degree prior to enrolling in a four-year public institution of higher education. Studies indicate that students who are capable of starting at a four-year institution but enroll instead in a two-year institution are less likely to graduate. This phenomenon is known as "undermatching."

Undermatching occurs when students enroll at less-selective colleges—or no college at all—than their academic qualifications, such as grades and test scores, suggest they could have attended. As a result of undermatching, academically qualified students attend colleges that do not match their abilities, and therefore do not provide levels of rigor that will challenge them. Undermatching has a greater negative influence on graduation rates than previously thought, according to one prominent study, referenced below (Bowen, McPherson, Chingos, 2009).

This study also suggests that undermatching affects a disproportionate number of minority and low socioeconomic-status students. Identifying students who are most at risk for undermatching and

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*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*

encouraging them to apply to schools that are the best fit for them could lead to better graduation rates.

Reference: William G. Bowen, Matthew M. Chingos, & Michael S. McPherson (2009), *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America's Public Universities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Other prominent study: Caroline M. Hoxby, Christopher Avery (2012, December). *The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students*. National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper No. 18586.

Reverse-Transfer Agreements and Other Innovative Partnerships with County Colleges

The College of New Jersey

- TCNJ have articulation agreements with Mercer County Community College and Burlington County Community College. There are departmental agreements as well. For example, Engineering has an articulation agreement with Bergen County Community College.

Kean University

- Kean University and Ocean County College's partnership, established in 2005 and called Kean Ocean, allows students completing their associate's degree to continue their studies with a Kean bachelor's degree with Kean courses offered on the OCC campus. The program currently offers 28 baccalaureate degree programs and five master's degree programs, and it launched a Ph. D. in Nursing Educational Leadership in the Fall of 2013. More than 1,500 students are enrolled in the Kean Ocean programs.

New Jersey City University

- NJCU and Hudson County Community College (HCCC) signed a reverse transfer articulation agreement in July 2013 to increase educational opportunity for students in New Jersey. The agreement assists students who earned at least 30 credits towards an associate's degree at HCCC, but did not complete sufficient credits to earn an associate's degree prior to enrolling in NJCU. The agreement is designed to allow these students to transfer credits earned at NJCU to HCCC, providing them with an opportunity to complete their associate's degree.
- In addition to expanding dual admission agreements with Hudson County Community College (HCCC) in the areas of Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Geoscience, Management, Mathematics, Nursing and Physics, NJCU has an on-site advisor located at HCCC to facilitate advisement and seamless transfer.
- NJCU is partnering with Hudson County Community College in a combined effort to bring greater efficiencies and results for Hispanic students who will attend both institutions and complete both associate's and bachelor's degrees. NJCU received \$1.5 million as a partner in "Picking Up the Pace: Ensuring Hispanic Degree Completion" provided through a U.S. Department of Education Title V Cooperative Grant.
- NJCU is in the third year of a five-year plan that will enhance science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs and bolster articulation initiatives with nearby community colleges, allowing students holding associate-level degrees to complete baccalaureate degrees in STEM programs at NJCU. Thanks to a \$9-million Title V Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, NJCU is focusing on twin program goals: increasing the number of science majors and improving the persistence, retention, and graduation rates of science majors at the University. NJCU has hired an on-site transfer counselor at Hudson Community College to facilitate seamless transfers into NJCU's STEM program; hired a director of developmental math to focus on gatekeeper math courses at NJCU; increased the number of math credit-based sessions in the Supplemental Instruction program; purchased software for lecture capturing for online posting and increased multimedia technology in the classroom; offered intensive faculty

development sessions on pedagogy, technology, and methods of getting students to succeed in STEM.

- NJCU's response to public demands for new educational programs is exemplified by its partnership with Brookdale Community College, where NJCU became a founding member of the New Jersey Coastal Communiversity at Wall.
 - NJCU joined with four other colleges and universities to form Communiversity at Wall, which enables students in southern Monmouth County to earn bachelor's and master's degrees, and graduate certificates, an opportunity which was previously unavailable locally to central New Jersey residents. NJCU's College of Professional Studies offers degree programs at the Wall campus in business, criminal justice, fire science, national security studies, nursing, and a graduate certificate in school nursing.
 - Enrollment in NJCU at Wall grew from 114 students in fall 2004 to 625 students in fall 2009. More than 150 students have graduated from NJCU at Wall in six years.

Ramapo College of New Jersey

- Ramapo College has worked with Bergen Community College to identify students who are graduating in the STEM fields and is creating specific guiding documents to help establish a seamless four year plan for students who begin at Bergen with the intention of ultimately enrolling at Ramapo to complete their four year science degrees.

Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

- Articulation Agreements. Stockton seeks and maintains a variety of transfer articulation agreements with other institutions of higher education. These agreements are with the New Jersey community colleges, as well as both in- and out-of-state four-year institutions. In addition to the New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement, the College has entered into separate agreements with several of the local community colleges in efforts to foster a smoother transition from those institutions that send Stockton the bulk of its transfer students in order for them to complete their Bachelor's degrees most efficiently.
- Dual Degree Programs (DDP). Qualified graduates of Gloucester County College (GCC) are guaranteed admission into Stockton's undergraduate degree program based on a Dual Degree agreement signed by both institutions in 2014. The application fee to Stockton will be waived for transfer students. GCC students who transfer to Stockton before completing an A.A. or an A.S. may also participate in the DDP Program in a "reverse transfer" arrangement. The program requires students to meet the academic residency requirement at GCC by earning a minimum of 32 approved credits there. After earning the rest of their required credits at Stockton, students would be granted their associates' degrees from GCC.
- Stockton also has a Dual Degree agreement with Atlantic Cape Community College and a similar guaranteed admissions agreement signed with Burlington County College in 2013. The college has a variety of other Dual Degree programs, including those with: 13 area high schools, allowing students to take college courses while still in high school and transfer those credits to Stockton; Rutgers and NJIT in Engineering; and with the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers in Pharmacy.

Rowan University

- Rowan University recently formed an innovative partnership with Gloucester County College Rowan College at Gloucester County (RCGC), which became effective July 1, 2014. Under this

partnership, students are allowed to attend RCGC for two years before moving on to Rowan University for a bachelor's degree in participating fields of study. Student may continue either at the university's Glassboro campus or the college's Deptford campus. If students continue at Rowan College, they receive a 15% discount toward tuition, but are required to maintain a specific GPA standards to be eligible to transfer.

Thomas Edison State College

- TESC has a specific agreement with Bergen Community College to facilitate a seamless pathway from the BCC associates degree to a TESC baccalaureate degree in the following areas:
 - BA in Psychology
 - BA in Criminal Justice
 - BSBA in General Management
 - BSBA in Accounting
 - BSBA in Accounting to CPAs
 - BSBA in Marketing

- Additionally, TESC has agreements with numerous community colleges as part of its participation in the National Uniform Nuclear Curriculum which leads to a TESC BSAST degree in Nuclear Engineering Technology.

William Paterson University

- As a member of the NJTRANSFER statewide transfer articulation organization, William Paterson University fundamentally has agreements to accept transfer credit from every New Jersey community college. Additionally, William Paterson University has eighty-one (81) signed program to program articulation agreements with ten (10) New Jersey community colleges. William Paterson University partnered with Mercer County Community College in fall 2009 to offer an on-site bachelor's degree completion program to community college graduates. To date, this highly successful program has produced over 130 William Paterson University graduates.