



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608

Phone (609) 989-1100



NJCU, a Leader in Debt-Free Strategies at NJ Senior Public Universities, Hosted Gov. Murphy Highlighting His Proposed Budget that Includes More Student Assistance Funds

April 23, 2018

New Jersey City University (NJCU) on April 18, 2018 hosted a roundtable discussion featuring NJ Governor Phil Murphy, who emphasized his commitment to making higher education more affordable for New Jersey students. The Governor's proposed 2019 budget contains \$8.5 million for the expansion of Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF).

"Our goal is to keep a college degree within reach for working families and those who come from economically disadvantaged areas," said Governor Murphy. "These investments will ensure that students can continue to realize their dreams because no one should be deprived from getting an education based on where they're from, or their background, or current economic status, or their abilities. This is a matter of fairness that will lead to a stronger future for our students and for New Jersey."

The TAG and EOF increased appropriations are in addition to the proposed \$45 million – Community College Opportunity Grants (CCOGs). The CCOGs are "last-dollar" grants that will be used to cover any community college tuition and fees that are not already paid for by Pell Grants, Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) awards, or other funding sources as determined by The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE). During the first year, grants will be limited to those whose average family income is below \$45,000.

Community college in New Jersey is already tuition- and fee-free for 29,600 students, or 20 percent of New Jersey's 150,000 county college students, principally due to Pell grants and TAG.

However, it is appropriate to note that NJCU – the site of the governor's roundtable – is one of the state's leaders among four-year institutions in tuition-free initiatives. The NJCU Debt-Free Promise Program makes college education accessible and affordable for New Jersey residents who are pursuing their first undergraduate degree as income full-time freshman

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students. This program eliminates the need for students to take out loans to pay for their tuition and fees.

All New Jersey residents who are admitted to NJCU from high school and attend full-time, with a family income of \$60,000 or less, will be offered a scholarship in lieu of having to take out a loan to cover the cost of tuition and fees (after federal and state financial aid is awarded). It, like the CCOG proposal, is a “last dollar” scholarship (after the Federal Pell grant and NJ TAG grant), but NJCU rather than the state government, is making up any funding gap.

NJCU students already graduate with the lowest debt and fees of any other public college in New Jersey.

Overall, Governor Murphy’s proposed Fiscal Year 2019 budget allocates \$2.4 billion in total appropriations for higher education, including funding for facilities and capital and represents an overall increase of \$69.9 million over last year’s budget.

“The Governor’s proposed increase in funding for these programs will assist students in need at our New Jersey institutions of higher learning, both two-year and four-year,” said Acting Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis. “This will help to improve affordability and opportunity for those pursuing a higher education.”

Governor Murphy’s college affordability plan strengthens student assistance for Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) by \$7 million and \$1.5 million, respectively.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2019 TAG funding of \$432.9 million is projected to aid more than 67,500 students – an increase of nearly 3,500 TAG awards over the current year.

The \$7 million increase in funding for Fiscal Year 2019 will ensure continued access to need-based financial assistance for qualified students, by increasing award amounts provided to all qualified applicants at levels not to exceed 2 percent above those levels provided in the prior fiscal year.

In addition, the Governor’s proposed budget strengthens EOF by preserving the \$5 million the legislature put into the Fiscal Year 2018 budget for EOF and including an additional \$1.5 million of support to the EOF program. After successive years of cuts, this is the first consistent commitment to this overwhelmingly successful program that has been made in almost a decade.