

Voters Give State Colleges High Grades

Poll shows citizens trust them to make progress, worry about Trenton interference, and underestimate share of New Jersey students enrolled.

New Jersey likely voters give high grades to educational quality at the state colleges and universities, but incorrectly assume that many who attend are not state residents, and indicate that state financial aid programs are not likely to benefit them. These are among the conclusions based on a poll released by ASCU in October 2009 and conducted by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates.

Besides the quality question, the poll also asked likely voters other questions tied to accountability and opportunity. Voters were asked where to place the burden of responsibility for past tuition increases, and their views about where responsibility for future progress and fiduciary investment in state colleges should be placed. Some of the key results are enumerated below. For more information, go to the www.njascu.org website.

On matters of trust regarding higher education, Penn, Schoen's Washington-DC principal Robert Green had strong words: "It is clear from our poll that voters don't like state interference in state college operations; they see Trenton as an impediment to affordable college opportunity and

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Deregulation Looms Large in New Governor's Effort to Make College Opportunity a Priority

Governor Chris Christie may be the chief executive who will bring more energy and attention to higher education as a means of helping New Jersey prosper. State college/university leaders urge less regulation and elimination of unfunded mandates for consideration by the new Administration.

The Star-Ledger reported on January 18 that the incoming governor said he will take a more active role in higher education, including designation of a member of his staff to be a liaison to New Jersey's colleges and universities. Christie also said that he plans to meet with college presidents on a regular basis and that he would take quick executive action in several areas including higher education. Meanwhile, the new governor's website lists higher education as one of his six "key initiatives."

Funding cautions and cuts. In December, then governor-elect Christie had sobering words for anyone expecting immediate, new investment in higher education. He said that given the dire fiscal situation the state faces, he was not ready to rule out cuts to higher education. Still, state college officials were disappointed to hear his mid-February announcement of a current-year budget cut of \$62 million to public higher education institutions ~ amounting to \$17 million for the nine state colleges and universities.

Agenda emphasizing higher education. Christie's campaign platform featured an 88-point plan that included nine items which directly pertained to higher education, among them improved communication with college leaders and increased investment in some areas.

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Take These Steps to Preserve College Opportunity Now ~ ASCU Chief

The promise of higher education opportunity can be kept but it may require states to depart significantly from the 20th century model for financing this enterprise, according to Dr. Darryl G. Greer, Chief Executive Officer of ASCU.

Greer and leaders of the ASCU-member institutions, are working on a new model that makes sense for New Jersey and respects the diverse missions of the state colleges and universities. Meanwhile, Greer says, steps can be taken now to continue progress and help address the current financial challenges facing state colleges and universities "... even amidst the staggering fiscal challenges facing our new governor and legislature." These steps, summarized from a recent op-ed published in the New Jersey news media are:

- Free up the state colleges from unproductive regulation ... including unfunded state mandates that tie their hands in contracting, purchasing, construction and personnel management and that drain time, energy and money that could otherwise be used to improve service and accountability.
- Expect and encourage colleges to use their freedom (from state control) to improve productivity, keep costs in check, build new programs to serve the state, and eliminate unproductive ones. Colleges should also be supported by policy that helps them continue to make strides in raising private funds to augment student financial aid programs, install academic technology, and construct buildings in ways that encourage new partnerships with business, schools, labor and local communities for mutual benefit.
- The state should fund state-mandated costs such as labor contracts it negotiates, or eliminate such unfunded mandates. Where state law requires colleges to provide certain services to citizens free of charge (vs. services provided as part of a voluntary partnership), the state should reimburse colleges in full. Editor's note: Otherwise, student tuition and fees must subsidize these unmet costs, as philanthropic support for such mandates is highly unlikely.
- The state and its universities can create, immediately, a blue-ribbon study panel to examine the unmet infrastructure needs of the state's public colleges and universities, and what might be done to meet them to better position New Jersey to increase its business vitality, research activity, and professional workforce in critical fields such as teaching, nursing and other health fields, and environmental sustainability.

The full text of Dr. Greer's article can be found at www.njascu.org under "News and Opinion." ■

Enrollment in NJ College Promise Action Network Surges Past 6,000

The number of individuals participating in the New Jersey College Promise Action Network, the grassroots program in support of the state colleges and universities, is now about 6,200 statewide. The increase is the result of a successful registration drive at Montclair State University, a continuing effort has brought the number of registrants beyond 2,600 at MSU.

The boost in registration comes at a fitting time. A Network "Call to Action," will take place shortly. It will urge constituent communication with the new governor and leadership in the legislature.

Stronger registration means we should get a significant boost in response to forthcoming calls to action, says Network

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The State College/University Accountability Sourcebook is due out in April 2010.

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efficient governance by nonpartisan trustee boards. Ironically, what voters tell us is in direct contradiction to what many lawmakers have been espousing. With new leadership in the executive and legislative branches, it's time to view state college independence as consistent with state college efficiency, quality, and accountability."

The poll consisted of online interviews with 671 likely New Jersey gubernatorial election voters from September 30 to October 5, 2009. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.78 at the 95% confidence level.

Do students get an excellent, good, fair or poor education at the nine state colleges and universities?

Excellent	18%	(May 2007=15%)
Good	64%	(May 2007=56%)
Fair	16%	
Poor	2%	

What is the cause of recent increases in state college tuition?

Bad economy and state budget cuts	45%
State mandated costs and regulations	19%
Rising costs of new programs and technology	19%
Inability of colleges to cut back on spending	18%

Which comes closer to your view? Financial aid to New Jersey state colleges and universities

Benefits others, but not me or my family	69%
Benefits people like me and my family	31%

What do you think is the correct percentage of out-of-state students attending the nine state colleges and universities?

Less than 10%	16%*
11-20%	39%
21-30%	33%
31-40%	10%
41% or more	2%

* correct response

Whom do you trust most to assure future progress at the state colleges in terms of affordability, accountability, and quality?

Governor of New Jersey	12%
NJ state legislature	17%
Presidents and nonpartisan trustee boards	71%

If the state was going to invest more money in higher education, who would make the best decision about how to use funds?

Governor of New Jersey	11%
State agencies in Trenton	10%
Presidents and nonpartisan trustee boards	79%

Would more control over state colleges by Trenton mean less or greater political interference?

Greater	87%
Less	13%

Would less government regulation of state colleges and less government bureaucracy help colleges be more efficient and serve students better?

Agree	81% (Among those w/children under 25, 88%)
Disagree	19% (Among those w/children under 25, 12%)

Editor's postscript: The survey points to considerable potential to boost the public's already-positive assessment of the nine state colleges if residents can be brought to the realization that the colleges serve *nearly one-third* more New Jersey students than the average citizen estimates. ■

Deregulation Looms Large - Continued from page 1

State college officials participated in the deliberations of the Christie transition team, including a special meeting on reducing unproductive state regulation with Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno. Guadagno will lead the new administration's "red tape review" initiative. Some of the regulation holding back college effectiveness and service requires legislative change.

Currently, the governor is reviewing the reports of his transition team subcommittees. Both the education and economic development subcommittees have recommendations for change within higher education. (See article on page 4.)

Early response by ASCU. ASCU looks forward to working with the new governor and legislature and will ask for support for a specific agenda to improve the relationship between the state and the public colleges. Citizens will be kept informed about progress through the New Jersey College Promise Action Network, composed of thousands of New Jersey residents who support college opportunity in the Garden State (see article on the Network in this issue). ■

Christie Transition Subcommittees Support Bold Moves in Higher Education

On Friday, January 22, the Governor's office released the reports of his transition team's 19 subcommittees. Two of the reports pertained to higher education: those of the subcommittees on education and on economic development. The education report contained provocative statements about the current state of higher education policy in the Garden State and suggested some very bold changes.

The reports are expected to generate long-needed debate at the state level and in higher education circles, and could lead to new policy direction departing from that of recent past administrations. ASCU CEO Dr. Darryl G. Greer says the reports "appropriately point out the need for a stronger relationship between higher education and economic development; how New Jersey's progress in both areas is hampered by overregulation; and the need for a plan for investment in higher education as a priority in the interests of future students and the state's economic prosperity."

Over the coming weeks, the Governor and his staff, higher education leaders and lawmakers will be reviewing and digesting the contents of the report and deciding which ideas should be pursued.

Many of the recommendations mirror those made by ASCU for several years, especially those related to expanding public college opportunity to keep talented residents in the Garden State. According to Greer, the Association will join others in carefully reviewing the panels' recommendations and advocating those that support highly effective and accountable colleges and universities, and service to New Jersey.

Among the steps suggested, paraphrased for brevity:

- Develop a rational framework for future funding of college/university operating budgets.
- Review regularly the array of student financial aid programs to ensure alignment with clear policy objectives and to eliminate unfunded elements which pose a financial burden on institutions.
- Prepare a long-term plan to support capital facilities at the state's higher education institutions.
- Revise regulations and laws that impede timely, cost-effective construction of higher education facilities.
- Eliminate the Commission on Higher Education and create a small coordinating agency reporting to the Office of the Governor.
- Establish a NJ Council of Education, convened by the Governor, to integrate education, higher education and the business sector to enhance education opportunity and help attract and retain business.

The preceding are from the education subcommittee, chaired by Montclair State University President Susan Cole. The following are from the economic development subcommittee.

- Provide a seat for higher education on a proposed "Economic Growth Council" and other state economic development councils that may be established, and involve higher education in state business recruitment and retention efforts.
- Explore the feasibility of offering tax credits to: parents as an incentive for their children or dependents who matriculate at a New Jersey college or university; graduates of New Jersey institutions who become employed in targeted industries in New Jersey; and corporate business tax credits based on internships available to students, jobs provided to graduates, or initiatives involving shared resources.
- Track outcomes for graduates of New Jersey high schools and colleges, including participation in the New Jersey labor market, and make use of such information to guide program and policy decisions. ■

News Note: New York is among states reconsidering the fairness to students, its systems' policy of keeping tuition amounts unchanged for years, then enacting a jolting increase when additional tuition/fee revenues are critically needed. This is another piece of evidence that tuition decisions are best left to local trustee boards.



Operation College Promise Greet Returns, Informs Hundreds on Veterans' Higher Education Needs

In the Summer of 2009, *Operation College Promise (OCP)* launched its outreach efforts by participating in the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program for the more than 3,000 members of the 50th Infantry Brigade of the New Jersey National Guard (NJNG), who returned in June 2009.

Representatives of all nine ASCU member institutions attended the two-day conference in Atlantic City and had the opportunity to personally welcome home the members of the 50th while offering them guidance on pursuing their higher education objectives. The program has been asked to join forces with The G.I. Go Fund (an OCP partner) in a similar program being planned for the members of the 1-150th Aviation Battalion NJNG in March 2010.

The program kicked off its workshop series in September with a full-day conference entitled, "*Keeping the Promise - Meeting the Needs of NJ's Servicemembers*," featuring interactive panel discussions on contemporary issues facing student veterans and college administrators alike. Jim Selbe, Assistant Vice President at the American Council on Education (ACE), provided the opening remarks with a national perspective, while Major General Glenn K. Rieth, the Adjutant General for the State of New Jersey National Guard, provided the keynote address to the 200 attendees.

In November, OCP held its second workshop, which was hosted by Kean University. *The Post 9/11 G.I. Bill "Progress, Potential and Pitfalls - What You Need to Know,"* was a comprehensive tutorial on the complexities of this vast legislation. The workshop was led by Dorothy Gillman, Veterans Administrator at Ramapo College and Vice President of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA). Approximately 100 attendees participated in the program, which also included the launch of the OCP "*Thank a Veteran*" project. Ed Gorman and Thomas Mahoney, Normandy and Pearl Harbor survivors respectively, were the 2009 recipients.

Learn more about recent OCP activities at www.operationcollegepromise.com.

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coordinator Paul Shelly. "Parents and students, which compose a large share of 2,600-plus Montclair State registrants, are among the most likely to respond to calls to action."

Participation has increased 50% in less than one year; in summer 2009, *Policy Outlook* reported that there were about 4,000 Network participants. ■

"The New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities and its member presidents demonstrated insightful leadership in recognizing, early on, the need to prepare their campuses for the arrival of this latest generation of returning veterans."

Jim Selbe

American Council on Education

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Association of State Colleges and Universities
150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608 (609) 989-1100

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DARRYL G. GREER, Executive Editor
PAUL R. SHELLY, Editor-in-chief
CHARLENE R. PIPHER, Associate Editor

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