

For Immediate Release

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**STATE COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES VOW TO BE
“NINE STRONG FOR A STRONGER NEW JERSEY”**

Presidents Sign Pledge, New Websites Launched

(Trenton, New Jersey) – The nine state colleges and universities of New Jersey today launched a major statewide campaign, “Nine Strong for a Stronger New Jersey,” to underscore the collective value and critical role of the state colleges and universities. As part of this effort, the college and university presidents signed a pledge to the State of New Jersey expanding their commitment to educating the next generation of the state’s students.

The nine institutions – including The College of New Jersey, Kean University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Richard Stockton College, Rowan University, Thomas Edison State College, and William Paterson University – represent nearly one-half of all students who attend a four-year college or university in New Jersey. Together, these nine institutions have grown dramatically in strength and academic excellence over the past two decades years and now produce more than 15,000 graduates a year in New Jersey.

The statewide commitment will be centered around a new web portal: www.njascu.org/NineStrongforNJ, managed by the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASCU), of which the nine institutions are members.

“These nine colleges and universities are determined to elevate higher education to the top of the agenda in this state,” said Ramapo President, Peter Mercer. Rowan University President, Donald Farish added, “The link between economic strength and economic competitiveness is higher education. And these nine state colleges and universities want the public to know that our role is to help make sure New Jersey’s future is stronger and more secure.”

“The next generation of New Jerseyans depends on our nine institutions and our success in meeting each of the six points in this pledge,” said R. Barbara Gitenstein, President of The College of New Jersey. “We have come here today to show the people of New Jersey that higher education in our state is thriving, growing, and now focusing on the challenges presently before us.”

The nine college presidents signed a pledge with the following six components:

1. With renewed determination, find new state and private resources to extend our commitment to serve more New Jerseyans, keep more talented students here, extend and expand academic programs and services, distance learning, and graduate more students in fields important to the vitality to the state.
2. Strengthen our commitment to provide residential housing to traditional age students to help stem net student out-migration and broaden service to adult students.
3. Continue to ensure that our degree programs permit students to graduate in a timely manner, thereby moving graduates more rapidly into the workforce.
4. Improve our collective rank, now number three nationally, in degree productivity for public and tuition dollars invested.
5. Expand and develop new partnerships with businesses for economic and workforce development.
6. Report on graduates' employment status one year following graduation, as an important measure of our institutions' alignment with workforce and economic development needs.

In anticipation of the event, former Governor Thomas Kean released this statement. "Together, New Jersey's nine state colleges and universities are a force for true leadership in our state. However, if New Jersey is going to sustain high quality public higher education into the future, if New Jersey is going to field a home-grown workforce with the skills demanded by the future, then New Jersey families, government and business leaders must recognize the importance of our nine state colleges and universities and invest in them for the future."

Also today the Association launched the New Jersey College Promise Action Network. The network will link people who care about the nine state colleges and universities with those in a position to make these institutions a higher priority – including the New Jersey Governor and Legislature. Participation in the network is purely voluntary and is open to students, their family members, alumni, staff, trustees, educators, and other friends of the institutions. To participate, visit www.njcollegepromise.com.

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