Dear NJASCU Colleagues/Friends:

Welcome to this week’s edition of NJASCU’s "Noteworthy" compilation of a feature story, advocacy report, and news item(s), reflecting the interests and happenings among New Jersey’s senior public colleges and universities.

We would love your feedback and suggestions. Please keep sending press releases, many of which will be included in our "Noteworthy" compilation.

Thank you,

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NJASCU Features

Thomas Edison State University Foundation to Offer Tuition Assistance for Coast Guard Members Affected by Government Shutdown

Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president of Thomas Edison State University (TESU), announced today that, despite the suspension of federal tuition assistance caused by the partial government shutdown, Coast Guard students will be able to remain enrolled in TESU courses. The University’s Foundation is stepping in to help enrolled Coast Guard students by deferring their tuition until their tuition assistance is once again available.

"TESU has always stood by our military students and we stand with our Coast Guard students today in their time of need," Dr. Hancock said. "I’m delighted but not surprised by the generosity of the TESU Foundation Board in its support of our students. These Coast Guard members are facing serious hardships through no fault of their own. We would like to give them peace of mind when it comes to their education."
The School of Applied Science and Technology at Thomas Edison State University is launching the Journal of Women and Minorities in Technology, an open access journal that provides quality peer-reviewed articles written by academics and professionals in the fields of aviation, nuclear technology, cyber-security and information technology. The authors are interested in providing both technical and soft-skills information needed to perform successfully in the field of technology, with a special emphasis on women and minorities.

Noteworthy: NJASCU Colleges and Universities

Mind the Gap in Higher Education
www.NJSpotlight.com

Higher education in New Jersey is failing its black and Latino students, according to a new report. And, if that inequity is not addressed soon, the state’s economy will suffer, the authors say.

The report, from progressive think tank and advocacy organization Education Reform Now (ERN) is titled "Locked Out of the Future: How New Jersey’s Higher Education System Serves Students Inequitably and Why It Matters." In a deep dive into the state’s higher education system, it found harmful gaps between the way the state serves its white students versus its black and Latino students.

The report shows that a black student in New Jersey is nearly 30 percent less likely to enroll in an in-state public four-year college than his or her white peer while a Latino student is 18 percent less likely. What’s more, those students are also less likely to attain the necessary degrees the workforce demands. According to the report, New Jersey’s white population earns bachelor’s degrees at a rate needed to keep up with job demand (43 percent), whereas black and Latino degree attainment rates (23 percent and 17 percent respectively) lag far behind.

![Percentage of New Jersey's 25+ Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher](chart.png)

Data: 2016 American Community Survey 5-year Average, job demand estimated from Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, "Recovery 2013" state-level report.
These gaps, the authors say, effectively funnel minority groups away from economic achievement. Moreover, the college affordability solutions presented by Gov. Phil Murphy and other state leaders may not be enough to address these issues.

Because of the importance of the subject matter, we have reproduced the complete article, as well as the complete NJASCU response below.

NJASCU RESPONSE: Public Colleges and Universities Are Working to Unlock the Future for Their Minority Students but Need Legislative Reform and Partnerships to Succeed

www.njascu.org/Alert

The recently released "Locked Out of the Future" report http://bit.ly/NJLockedOut from the progressive think tank and advocacy organization Education Reform Now (ERN) described a problem: Higher education in New Jersey is failing its black and Latino students. The ERN report, however, offered no solutions. New Jersey’s senior public institutions of higher education have been aggressively working on creating and implementing solutions that have gone unrecognized in this "Locked Out" report. Comprehensive success will require continuing close cooperation with the governor, legislature, business, labor and others on an integrated set of policies tied to a statewide opportunity/prosperity agenda, in addition to innovative leadership from university leaders, governed by citizen boards of trustees.

New Jersey’s public universities have been vigorously pursuing policy options to enhance opportunity, equity and accountability within the context of socio-economic and ethnic diversity. The public institutions all provide a wide range of programs focused on the ERN-defined problem, such as: combatting food insecurity; replacing expensive textbooks with online materials; providing individualized skills-enhancing tutoring; ramping up fundraising for need-based scholarships; partnering with businesses on mentoring and internship opportunities; restructuring the path to attaining a BA degree with increased partnerships with community colleges; and implementing strategies for debt-free education.

Some specific examples of student-success strategies being implemented within New Jersey’s community of senior public colleges and universities (New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities - NJASCU - member institutions) include: (NJASCU schools provide similar versions of all or most of the below initiatives.)

- New Jersey City University has instituted a program is to eliminate the need for students to take out loans to cover the cost of tuition and fees. All New Jersey
residents who are admitted to NJCU from high school and attend full-time, with a family household income of $60,000 or less, will be offered a scholarship in lieu of having to take out a loan (after federal and state financial aid is awarded).

- Stockton University just this past week announced its collaboration with two local high schools to close the math gap among incoming university students.
- Kean University, which is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, offers an innovative Spanish Speaking Program that provides two years of instruction in Spanish while developing students' language skills for English instruction.
- The College of New Jersey’s PRIDE Mentoring program, now in its sixth year, has seen tremendous success in helping minority students fulfill their academic goals. Student mentors, leadership development, academic advising and transitional programming are among the initiatives that have led to increased levels of student engagement and increases in retention and graduation rates.
- The Rowan University Success Network, a student tracking and communication system, allows students to receive regular feedback from faculty, learn about campus resources, and make appointments with key academic support personnel. Faculty participate by providing encouragement and support to students; enabling advisors and staff to take a holistic approach to success by obtaining an overview of the student’s academic life.
- Montclair State University is one of two NJ institutions (the other is Rutgers-New Brunswick) to participate in the APLU “Powered by Publics” initiative, a collective effort of 130 state colleges and universities to apply best-practice approaches to improving student outcomes. This project is believed to be the largest effort in the nation to increase access, close the achievement gap and award hundreds of thousands more degrees by 2025.
- William Paterson University of New Jersey has the New Student Experience department that identifies and provides solutions for roadblocks to student success in the first year; it provides a solid foundation necessary for new students to develop the skills needed to engage in the rigorous academic challenges of higher education.
- Ramapo College, thanks to an enterprising Student Government Association, has a Food Pantry and the Student Emergency Relief Fund for emergency aid to students to cover non-tuition related expenses. Both of these efforts are wrapped into a campus wide program/initiative entitled "WeCare".
- Thomas Edison State University is creating a Military Student Reserve Fund to assure the continuous education of enrolled students who face exigent circumstances that may prevent them from continuing with their education through no fault of their own.

It should be noted that the schools have managed to keep the annual tuition and fee increases in the 2 to 2.5 percent range for the past several years. This has been accomplished, even though state aid to state college and university operating budgets has dramatically decreased (state operating appropriations to NJ state colleges and universities between FY 1991-FY2019 has decreased $8.4 million - actual dollars, no adjustment for inflation). In addition to the outdated operational funding formula, the schools are dealing with erratic state support for new capital projects, no support for deferred maintenance, an outdated State College Contracts Law that costs the schools millions of dollars, and expensive legislative mandates to provide tuition discounts or free tuition for different groups of citizens.

The best ways to unlock the future for our state’s Latino and African-American youth is to implement rational and student-focused funding for operational support, capital support, and tuition aid grants. The state is working on a higher education master plan that we
hope provides the direction and resources necessary to truly reform the system. But helping the public colleges and universities provide more affordable education in the very near future may require no additional state resources, if legislators considered the fiscal burdens of mandates, some of which are unnecessary and outdated. The most glaring example of this is the 35-year-old State College Contracts Law. Reform of the law would save the schools a significant amount of money that would be targeted for programs to produce better student outcomes. The New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities looks forward to working with our state’s leaders to transform the problem into a solution benefitting all the residents of New Jersey.

Is This Higher Education’s Golden Age?


Scholars have joined in the joyless chorus. For many of them, American universities have transformed themselves into market-oriented enterprises, barely different from corporations: They charge exorbitant fees, effectively excluding students from the bottom half of the socioeconomic hierarchy; they shortchange students’ educational experiences by obsessing over the bottom line; they have created a caste system with low-paid adjuncts doing most of the teaching. In the scramble for dollars, these critics assert, universities have forsaken their social and cultural responsibilities.

The truly puzzling feature of this narrative is how little relation it bears to reality. Far from supporting this gloomy perspective, the statistical evidence suggests that American universities have never been stronger or more prominent in public life than they are now. At major research universities, from 1980 to 2010, research expenditures grew by more than 10 times in inflation-adjusted dollars, while high-quality publications catalogued in the Web of Science grew by nearly three times. Few, if any, sectors were as important to the emerging knowledge economy as universities, and the federal government supported their development with high, if never fully sufficient, funding. Federal R&D funding, estimated at more than $30 billion in 2017, is largely responsible for the explosive growth of research during this period. The federal financial-aid system provided essential fuel for higher education’s expansion, dolling out about $65 billion in Pell Grants, work-study funds, and tax benefits in 2015 - not counting the hundreds of billions of dollars in loans that are also available through federal lending. Both support systems have trended sharply upward in inflation-adjusted dollars since the 1980s, including during recessionary periods.

Tax Law’s Effects on Colleges Unfolding

Colleges have more information about complying with the new tax law than they did a year ago. That means new bookkeeping practices, new taxes on highly paid employees, and, maybe, eliminating reserved parking spaces.
At least 10 American universities have moved to close their Confucius Institutes in the past year as political pressures over the Chinese government-funded institutions for language and culture education have intensified.

The Confucius Institutes have long been controversial. The centers vary somewhat across different campuses, but they typically offer some combination of Mandarin language classes, cultural programming and outreach to K-12 schools and the community more broadly. They are staffed in part with visiting teachers from China and funded by the Chinese government, with matching resources provided by the host institution. The number of U.S. universities hosting the institutes increased rapidly after the first was established at the University of Maryland College Park in 2004, growing to more than 90 at the peak.

In earlier years the main criticism of Cis, as the institutions are known, came from professors and centered on concerns about academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Concerns about the importation of Chinese state censorship - as in the case of the reported censorship of materials at a Confucius Institute-sponsored conference in Europe in 2014 - dominated the conversation. Emblematic of this strain of criticism, the American Association of University Professors issued a report in 2014 urging colleges to close their Cis or renegotiate the agreement to ensure academic freedom and control. The AAUP report asserted, "Most agreements establishing Confucius Institutes feature nondisclosure clauses and unacceptable concessions to the political aims and practices of the government of China. Specifically, North American universities permit Confucius Institutes to advance a state agenda in the recruitment and control of academic staff, in the choice of curriculum, and in the restriction of debate."

Largely, the concerns of the professors were ignored by institutions, which continued existing institutes or started new ones up. But over the last year and half, the locus of the debate over Confucius Institutes has shifted from academe to the political sphere as the Cis became tied up in a larger narrative in Washington about Chinese government-influenced activities and espionage-related threats on American campuses.

Colleges vying to recruit more low-income students need to be aware of unique issues they face, including food insecurity, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office that cites research indicating more than 30% of college students lack adequate access to food. Many colleges and students aren't aware of or don't understand the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the report notes, with more than half (57%, or 1.8 million) of low-income, at-risk students who would likely qualify for the program not participating. The report calls for the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, which oversees SNAP, to clarify its eligibility information, and for state agencies administering it to provide more guidance to students.

While students who attend college part-time generally aren't considered eligible for SNAP, the report notes there are several ways they can meet the criteria to receive support, including if they receive other forms of public assistance, work at least 20 hours
per week or have a dependent under the age of 6. While many students may be unaware of such assistance, experts say students are often embarrassed to report they are struggling.

The National Conference of State Legislatures last spring cited a study that showed nearly half (48%) of college students report food insecurity and called for states to take several steps: align SNAP with financial aid eligibility; allow college enrollment to be considered part of SNAP’s employment requirement; and make the SNAP eligibility and applications easier; and assist colleges in developing food assistance programs.

States such as California and New York have taken action to tackle the problem, the report notes. It also recognized Ohio University for allowing a university venue to accept SNAP benefits and for starting an on-campus food pantry, among other measures. Arizona State University earned a mention for a program that provides students with meal vouchers and then helps them find longer-term solutions, such as access to a food pantry or help with SNAP applications.

North Shore Community College, in Danvers, Mass., found through a survey that nearly 70% of its students struggle with housing for food insecurity. It responded with a market of donated food, emergency loans and food vouchers. And in August, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that by the end of the fall 2018 semester, all colleges in the public State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) systems would have a food pantry or other similar spot for students to access food.

Of the 14 colleges surveyed in the GAO report, all had on-campus food pantries that offered free food, most provided emergency funds for students, and many had centralized services to help students with applications for federal benefit programs such as SNAP.

It also reviewed 31 research studies on the issue, which rated food insecurity among college students between 9% to over 50%. The majority of those studies put the figure at more than 30%.

**Editorial: Mind the Big College Problems When Addressing Campus Hunger**
[www.PressofAtlanticCity.com](http://www.PressofAtlanticCity.com)

When the Legislature returns next week, it is sure to resume work on a bill to address food aid for college students. The hunger-free campuses bill would provide funding for schools that set up programs with several designated services.

This is a good initiative and makes sense. Attending college is a financial challenge that leaves some students in difficulty just sustaining the basics of the rest of their lives. Worrying about making ends meet and getting enough to eat, or worse still enduring poor nutrition, only distract from higher learning and make it less effective.

Legislators and college administrators, though, should take care that the food aid programs they set up don’t unduly contribute to the bigger problems colleges face.

Food aid fits well with outreach programs to help lower-income students into the college track. Stockton University recently announced a state-funded program that will help 100 Atlantic City and Pleasantville students enroll at its city campus this year. Promising high school students will get summer enrichment courses, mentoring, and career- and financial-aid counseling. A hunger-free campus could help them stay focused on advancing their lives with a college degree.
Alongside administration officials, Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bill into law establishing a STEM Loan Redemption Program within the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). This program will provide graduates of New Jersey colleges and universities employed in STEM fields with $1,000 each year for a maximum of four years towards their student loans, which will be matched by the participant's employer. The Governor proposed STEM Loan Forgiveness during his gubernatorial campaign, in his Budget Message as part of his vision to grow the innovation economy and had previously announced the initiative at the Stevens Institute of Technology.

"Providing relief to graduates of our world-class STEM degree programs has been a priority of mine since I began my campaign for elected office," said Governor Murphy. "I am pleased that the Legislature agreed with us on the need to ensure that current and future generations of highly-skilled workers and innovators are incentivized to live and work in New Jersey." For eligibility in this program, applicants will need to:

- Be a resident of the state and maintain residency during program participation;
- Be a graduate of an approved STEM degree program at an institution of higher education located in New Jersey;
- Have an outstanding balance on a qualifying student loan and not be in default on any qualifying student loan;
- Have been employed full-time in a designated high-growth STEM occupation for a minimum of four years prior to initial application to the program and be employed thereafter for an additional one to four years in a designated high-growth STEM occupation;
- Provide certification that the applicant's employer has agreed to annually provide the applicant at least a 100 percent match of the loan redemption benefit under the program during the applicant’s participation in the program and employment in a designed high-growth STEM occupation; and
- Satisfy any additional criteria the authority may establish.

Sponsors of the bill include Senators Paul Sarlo and Joseph Lagana and Assemblymen Andrew Zwicker, Raj Mukherji, and James Kennedy.

**Note:** General Category

**State of the State Speech: Gov. Murphy Doubles Down on Pushing to Fix the Economic Incentive Program and Proposes No New Initiatives**

In the Governor's State of the State Speech (Tuesday, January 15, 2019), higher education got mentioned only briefly in the context of affordability. The Governor talked about how the high cost of college and the high debt incurred by those who want to go to college are hurting young people individually and New Jersey’s economy/workforce needs holistically. He mentioned the need to "work together" for a "stronger, fairer" higher education system that provides opportunities for those who work hard, but are not financially well off. The American Dream currently is out of reach, because of the high
cost of a college education. Governor Murphy mentioned free community college as one strategy for attaining affordable college education.

In addition, Governor Murphy discussed no new programs or initiatives. Typically, a governor uses the address to unveil programs on the drawing board. Instead, Governor Murphy focused on the need to revamp the economic-development tax-incentive programs. He also mentioned programs not yet approved - a $15 minimum wage as well as legalization of adult recreational marijuana. But he didn't use the opportunity to signal where he would go next. In higher education, we probably will have to wait for the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education’s Master/Vision Plan for NJ, as well as the Governor’s Budget Address on March 5, 2019.


**Tis the Season - Already - to Talk Elections 2019 in New Jersey**
www.NJSpotlight.com

New Jersey’s Republican Party is still licking its wounds from the bruising losses it sustained in last year’s midterm elections. Not only did the Grand Old Party lose four of the five seats it had held in the U.S. House of Representatives - some for decades - but it also lost local and county races in unexpected places: the Burlington County Freeholder Board is now under Democratic control; the county clerk’s seat there flipped, as well, and two Democrats won seats on the Somerset County Freeholder Board for the first time since the 1980s.

Some say shifting demographics are at least partly responsible for Democratic wins, but it is clear that the work of grassroots citizens groups with names that include indivisible, Swing Left, Action Together and For Change played an integral part in the victories by mobilizing and energizing voters to work and vote for progressive candidates.

With all 80 seats in the state Assembly topping this year’s balloting, the question is what role such activists will play and whether that could lead to additional Republican losses. Already, the GOP holds just 26 seats in the lower house, matching a low of 40 years ago. Just 18 years ago, Republicans were in the majority, with 45 seats. At the start of this decade, they had 33 seats. In the intervening years, they lost two rounds of the redrawing of district lines, which put them at a disadvantage in several districts.

The Republican’s last two seat losses - one in the 2nd District based in Atlantic County and the other in the formerly red-leaning 16th in Central Jersey - occurred in 2017, when Democratic Phil Murphy won an easy victory to become governor and there was plenty of post-Trump furor in the state. Anti-Trump sentiments led to the growth and strength of the progressive activists’ groups and was also believed responsible for Democrats' ability to flip four House seats last November.

**How Educational Opportunity Programs Graduate First-Generation College Students**
www.HechingerReport.org

Nationally, only 11 percent of first-generation students typically graduate in six years; 55 percent of New Jersey’s educational opportunity program students earn a degree in six years. Educational Opportunity Programs, a feature of university systems in several states across the country, have shown that a carefully structured combination of
demanding academics and intensive supports can launch vulnerable students to success during their first year in college. Students then often go on to graduate at higher rates than their peers. At NJIT, by completing the six-week summer Educational Opportunity Program, students land a golden ticket: a seat at a college ranked sixth in the country for graduating engineers of color.

Op-Ed: A Simple Proposal to Revive the American Dream
www.TheAtlantic.com

Rahm Emanuel, Chicago’s 44th mayor, presents his plan for free community college. He contends that this merit-based program will be transformative and have a positive impact on four-year public institutions. Under the terms of the Chicago Star Scholarship, a program that has already enrolled more than 6,000 students, we tied eligibility to academic achievement. If a student at a local public high school maintains a B average, the city will provide a free associate’s degree at a local community college, regardless of immigration status. Then, through a program we call Star Plus, students who have maintained that 3.0 GPA are eligible to receive subsidized tuition at 18 of the four-year colleges located in Chicago, enabling many to graduate debt-free.

Four Common Lies About Higher Education

Here are the four most common lies you are hearing and some common-sense facts to keep you and your teenager on an even keel while considering and applying for college .... While we are working to innovate in our colleges, high school seniors and their parents need to close their ears to the false, even fraudulent, idea that "college isn't worth it." It is.

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