

Press Release  
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## Panel Seeks Solutions to State College Affordability

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How can New Jersey's nine state colleges and universities -- 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 and William Paterson University -- continue to make gains in access, productivity and affordability despite state under-investment?

How can these public universities and colleges meet the state's most pressing educational needs and use trustee autonomy to enhance public trust and accountability?

These are major questions before a 20-member panel of New Jersey financial and policy leaders, and national experts convened today by the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASCU) for the first in a series of day-long meetings.

The New Jersey College Promise Advisory Council is led by Rich Novak, vice president of public sector programs and head of the Ingram Center for Public Trusteeship and Governance of the Washington, D.C.-based Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Novak is a nationally recognized expert on higher education who is well-versed in the evolution of New Jersey's colleges and universities.

The Council's purpose is to advise the Association and others on means by which the state colleges and universities can improve productivity and contain costs, thereby enhancing affordability for students and families, and strengthening public accountability and trust.

Advice will be shared with ASCU members and others as part of the NJ College Promise Project. Underlying the project is New Jersey's need to expand capacity to serve more college-bound students, critical to workforce and economic development. The panel will meet again in October and Spring 2008, but initial advice stemming from two meetings this fall may be publicized by year's end. A list of Advisory Council members can be found at [www.njcollegepromise.com](http://www.njcollegepromise.com).

Of today's panel meeting, Mr. Novak said, "We expect a great deal of robust and thoughtful discussion on a wide array of challenges. Our starting point is not simply the status of higher education in the Garden State, but the broader challenges facing New Jersey evident from available data, and how higher education might help achieve the overall public agenda."

"Clearly, this group is highly accomplished and thoughtful, and is enthusiastic about making some recommendations that will be helpful."

According to ASCU chief executive, Darryl G. Greer, "If we are successful, these nine institutions, already very productive, can become the most productive public colleges in the nation."

In looking at productivity, the panel may consider recommendations that include new ideas and areas in which some institutions have already reaped savings, such as:

- Assumption of functions currently handled by the state. For example, ASCU believes that colleges could administer workers' compensation claims more efficiently than the State of New Jersey, saving millions of dollars annually.
- New partnerships with private sector. Many public and private institutions across the nation are realizing savings on construction and operations by partnering with private companies in nonacademic areas.
- Strategizing with other organizations, one example being William Paterson University's partnership with New Jersey Transit and nearby St. Joseph's Hospital on bus routing.
- New approaches to facilities construction. ASCU has advocated a more economical approach to managing construction projects called "design-build," enjoyed by all other segments of New Jersey higher education.

■ Greater energy cost savings. For example, New Jersey state colleges and universities have already saved hundreds of thousands of dollars per year using geothermal installations, cogeneration plants, and high efficiency lighting while reducing their carbon dioxide "footprints."

■ Staffing realignment and reallocation of resources from lower to higher priority areas. The College of New Jersey, for example, saved \$700,000 permanently by reorganization of staffing functions.

According to Greer, these are examples of some of the things that the group could consider as a way to build a stronger partnership with the state to help rein in costs, educate more students, and keep in check growth in what students or their families ultimately have to pay for college.

The panel will meet again in October to focus on more accountability and governance issues, while deliberations on affordability and productivity continue, Novak said.