



New Law Allows Private Firms to Build On-Campus Facilities

Legislation sponsored by Senator Lesniak and Assembly Speaker Roberts, S-2299 and A-4048, and signed in late July by Governor Corzine, will help colleges partner with private firms to build, economically, needed structures on campus, adding to educational service, creating new, private capital, and stimulating jobs and economic growth.

The legislation enables state colleges and universities to employ a private entity to assume full financial and administrative responsibility to do construction of on-campus facilities. The new law is a breakthrough long sought by the Association in the interests of keeping institutional debt in check, while providing long-needed facilities ~ such as residence halls and parking areas ~ to accommodate increases in student demand. To illustrate this demand: over the past decade, full-time undergraduate student enrollment at the nine state colleges and universities has increased by 14,000, 90% of whom are state residents. The legislation will also help create or sustain jobs in the design and construction industries as colleges embark on projects that have revenue streams attached, and are "shovel-ready," but have been on hold until now because of the lack of public funding. ■

Using Federal Stimulus, Governor & Legislature Spare Institutions from Funding Cuts

With the state facing plenty of harsh economic news, Governor Jon Corzine released in late March his spending plan for the next (2009-2010) fiscal year, which included substantial cuts to state colleges and universities. Shortly afterward, Association leaders ~ and over 1,000 members of the New Jersey College Promise Action Network ~ asked Trenton to spare institutions from such cuts and any additional reductions.

For FY 2010, the governor originally recommended that direct state appropriations to the state colleges and universities be decreased by nearly \$14 million, or 5%. For most institutions, this would result in a funding level approximately that of a decade ago, without adjustment for inflation. Direct state appropriations to the nine state colleges and universities would decrease to \$259 million ~ well below the peak of \$300 million in FY 2006.

Assembly and Senate Budget hearings on higher education in late April were largely positive, and Senators Buono and Sweeney vigorously advocated for appropriate use of federal economic stimulus funds to protect college affordability.

Good news. An encouraging development occurred in late May with the Treasurer's release of a revised budget that utilizes some of the federal stimulus monies to replace proposed cuts to public institutions in order to keep college affordable for all students, consistent with federal stimulus goals and guidelines.

Based on this information, the presidents of New Jersey's nine state colleges and universities reached a unanimous agreement on June 5th that they would recommend to their boards of trustees tuition increases of no more than 3%, pending the anticipated outcome of the FY 2010 budget process. This would be the smallest percentage increase in state college tuition in over two decades.

The 3% increase compares very favorably to rates of increase in other financially strapped states. For example, Florida is increasing tuition 15%; California will raise costs 10%-20%; South Carolina State University will see an 8.4% increase; and public universities in Oregon will raise tuition 7-13%.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

State Colleges Win \$100,000 ACE/Wal-Mart Grant	2
Trustees are Key to College and Association Accountability	3
Grassroots Program Now Over 4,000 Strong	4
Association Monitors Progress Toward "College Promise" Goals	5

State Colleges Win \$100,000 ACE/Wal-Mart "Success for Veterans" Competitive Grant *Operation College Promise* Expects to Serve Thousands of Veterans

The nine state colleges and universities have been awarded a \$100,000 American Council on Education/Wal-Mart "Success for Veterans" grant ~ one of only 20 such grants awarded nationwide. Funding derived from the grant will establish *Operation College Promise* ~ an expansion of the existing Operation Promise for Servicemembers (OPS) initiative. The OPS program was established by ASCU in the Fall of 2008 to ease access to programs and services essential to the transition from soldier to student.

The group's consortial application was coordinated by the Association, and submitted by the Ramapo College Foundation. The two primary goals of the new *Operation College Promise* program are to provide greater access to information that assists servicemembers (both active and separated) in utilizing their education benefits and hence, ease transition from service to study, and to share best practices in meeting the needs of servicemembers with all institutions of higher education.

The first goal will be achieved through outreach efforts targeting these potential students and making them aware of the *Operation College Promise* program. Outreach will be provided through a statewide collaborative marketing effort aimed at attracting students to education, and providing them with access to programs and services through the enhancement of the existing OPS website. The site will have links to services for veterans experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) or other service-connected health issues, as well as a list of model campus programs.

Workshops planned. The second goal will be met through an advisory panel's evaluation of programs throughout the state and the destination of best practices, based on direct input from students who are servicemembers and veterans. The selected best practices will be shared with all New Jersey institutions of higher education through seminars held each year, over a two-year period, throughout the state. These workshops will assist all campuses prepare for the unique needs of servicemembers.

Thomas Edison State College will play a lead role in hosting meetings of the statewide advisory group, to be chaired by the Director of Military Education, Louis Martini, at TESC, and in outreach to servicemembers groups and veterans organizations. TESC, specializing in distance learning for adults, enrolls 7,000 active duty service persons from within and outside of New Jersey.

Wendy A. Lang, Project Director for Operation College Promise, said the project highlights the value of collaboration among institutions, noting "The diversity in our member institutions' demographics and constituencies is reflected in their broad range of expertise meeting the needs of servicemembers. Each is committed to providing these students with the services and programs necessary for them to succeed in attaining their higher education objectives. We are proud to take the lead in serving those who have so courageously served our country." ■

**Post 9/11 GI Bill
takes effect
August 1, 2009**

Keeping the Promise - Meeting the Needs of NJ's Servicemembers

A Statewide Conference on Providing Access to Higher Education for Veterans & Servicemembers

September 15, 2009 - Trenton Marriott, Lafayette Yard

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Keynote Address: Major General Glenn K. Rieth, Adjutant General

To register go to www.operationcollegepromise.com

NJASCU.ORG

www.operationpromiseforservicemembers.com

Spare Institutions from Funding Cut

Continued from page 1

Student aid funding. Under the FY 2010 budget, Tuition Aid Grants will increase by \$32.7 million or 13 percent. According to ASCU CEO Darryl Greer, "One positive aspect of this budget is the effort to increase funding for New Jersey's key student aid program that reaches many low and middle-income students: the Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) program." However, he noted that, "unfortunately, only about 20% of state college students receive TAG, so student aid should not be viewed as a cure-all for college affordability."

Infrastructure and the stimulus. ASCU's CEO and state college presidents were disappointed that the spending plan did not include any federal stimulus funds for higher education infrastructure projects. ASCU has compiled a list of potentially eligible projects, totaling \$500 million, immediately ready to create or support 9,000 jobs and strengthen the economy. Unlike most other states, New Jersey does not provide ongoing appropriations for facilities. Facilities improvements for the past 20 years have been funded principally by student tuition and fees, helping to make public college student costs in New Jersey among the highest in the nation.

Despite some disappointments, as the legislative session came to a close at the end of June, many of the Association's budget-related priorities were achieved: They include:

- enhance student financial aid;
- no further operating cuts to state colleges and universities, and restoration of operating funds to maintain quality, broader access and minimize tuition increases;
- increase flexibility in contracting and facilities construction to save money to serve more students and keep talent in New Jersey;
- increased support for partnerships with state and federal government, business and labor on economic stimulus programs to help improve the business climate, protect and create jobs, and foster long-term economic prosperity for New Jerseyans; and
- new legislation to help fund state-owned facilities at the nine state colleges and universities. ■

Trustees are the Key to College and Association Accountability

While the state colleges/universities are accountable for their missions, through numerous levels of policy and financial disclosure and audit, nonpartisan, citizen board of trustees, which govern the institutions, are the key asset in public accountability. Members of the boards of trustees reflect the diversity of the Garden State and are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate based on recommendations from many sources. The Association supports S-1609/A-2345, which would enhance board of trustee accountability. The legislation codifies federal Sarbanes-Oxley best practices as applied to higher education and not-for-profit organizations. Trustees are equally important to the Association's board of directors, which consists of one trustee from each of the nine institutions, together with presidents as non-voting members. In June, the ASCU board elected John McGoldrick, Esq. (Montclair State University), Chair; Frederick Gruel (William Paterson University) Vice Chair; and Clarence C. Hoover (Richard Stockton College), Secretary. Henry A. Coleman (New Jersey City University) serves as immediate past chair. ■

State Colleges' Grassroots Program is 4,000 Strong

New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities announced recently that its grassroots program, called New Jersey College Promise Action Network, now has about 4,000 registered members including students, parents, alumni and state college/university faculty and staff.

So far, the statewide program has facilitated transmission of over 11,000 messages to the governor and individual legislators requesting, in the FY 2010 state budget, better funding of the nine state colleges and universities, and support for student aid and college facilities.

Among those who sent messages are alumni; faculty and staff members; students; and family members affiliated with the nine state colleges and universities.

Those interested in joining the Network can go to www.njcollegepromise.com.

Origin of the advocacy program. The Network was created partially in response to lawmakers who said they wanted to hear more directly ~ from their own constituents ~ about the value of the state colleges and universities. An additional objective addresses the recommendations of an advisory council of national education experts and state policy leaders which concluded that a broader citizen advocacy base for the nine state colleges and universities would both strengthen the institutions and serve the state's interests. It should be noted here that the Association is not a lobbying body; it neither contributes to, nor endorses, political candidates and office holders.

How the program works. The Network does not automatically send letters for those who are registered. Network members must still decide whether or not they want to take action on a given issue. According to Network coordinator Paul Shelly, the staff of the Association is very thoughtful about finding common ground among different categories of supporters. "That is a citizen organizing 101 rule," said Shelly, whose M.S.W. degree is in community organization.

Continued on page 6

WPU Registration Drive Success Tips

When it comes to getting people to register for New Jersey College Promise Action Network, William Paterson University SGA President Jessica Pepe is clearly a standout. During March and April 2009, largely because of her leadership, the Network gained over 100 new registrants from the William Paterson University community, many of them students. Here she explains the elements of her successful registration program.

Approach: We set up a wireless laptop in the 'main street' area of the student center every weekday. The laptop was set on a table covered with the SGA tablecloth. The table featured a stop sign that warned "Your Tuition May Go Up," and another sign urging "Register for the Budget Cut Campaign." We also handed out index card-sized flyers labeled "Against the Budget Cuts" with instructions for people to register from home if they don't have time to stop by .. and messages urging them to get others, including faculty, staff, friends, and parents to sign up as well.

We also left our flyers with instructions near some of the campus computers with the hope that some students working at them might register on the spot.

Best times: On Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12:30-1:45 p.m. the University has something called "Common Hour" when there are few classes. Switching up the times each day helped us get different groups of people.

Student leaders signed up for table times and made sure to have on hand some outgoing, bubbly colleagues to bring in passers by. ■

Not Yet Registered for NJ College Promise Action Network?

Register now!

Be ready next fall to respond to new calls to action
to keep college affordable

www.njcollegepromise.com

Association Monitors Progress Toward "College Promise" Affordability/Productivity Goals

Last Summer, ASCU publicized four goals recommended by the New Jersey Promise Advisory Council—a distinguished group of national higher education governance, accountability and finance experts and New Jersey policy leaders that met in 2007-2008. Examples of two of the key goals, based on the Advisory Council's deliberations, are:

- Send more New Jerseyans to New Jersey colleges and make college more affordable; and
- Increase overall institutional academic, administrative, and campus operations productivity, using savings not only to improve services but to slow down the rate of increases in tuition;

The Association is committed to reporting on accomplishments reflecting these goals. Here are some examples of progress toward the goals during the 2008-2009 academic year:

- **The College of New Jersey (TCNJ)** has achieved a 96% freshman-to-sophomore retention rate through its EOF Promise Award program. *Editor's note: By facilitating student retention and timely graduation, institutions such as TCNJ are better positioned to serve larger incoming student cohorts.*
- **Kean University** is making changes to increase utilization of its educational facilities on Friday afternoons and Saturdays. The changes reduce the need for large tuition increases and allows the university to enroll 700 more students without constructing new facilities. They also help improve students' chances of timely degree completion.
- **Montclair State University** is taking a number of steps to increase academic space and residential student capacity. It will open a new residence in 2010 to house 300 more students, and it is currently working with an outside developer to build more student housing off-campus. It is also acquiring additional off-campus space for academic programs.
- To increase utilization of facilities during the summer, increase student affordability, and provide incentive for students to complete their degree sooner through year-round study, **Richard Stockton College** is offering students a discount of up to 20% on tuition for summer courses and a 20% discount on summer session housing charges. Stockton also recently developed a flat-rate tuition model to provide an opportunity for undergraduates to complete a bachelor's degree in four years or less by maximizing their course load.
- **Rowan University** is now enrolling 800 more students than it did three years ago, despite no additional state funding, by doing the following: readjusting the university's class schedule to include more Friday classes; better matching class size to room capacity (across departments); increasing residential capacity; and using income from on-line and Saturday courses to support increased courses or course selections in the regular class schedule.
- **William Paterson University** announced in June offering a new partnership with Mercer County Community College offering the college graduate's the option of earning bachelor's degrees in several fields without leaving the region.
- **Thomas Edison State College** was selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Yellow Ribbon Program. Participation will enable some veterans, depending on the type and amount of their GI Bill education benefits, to earn a college degree with little or no out-of-pocket expense.
- **Ramapo College** is currently focused on strategically building its endowment for scholarships; finding ways to reduce the cost of a degree; and exploring opportunities to make it possible for students to graduate earlier. Specifically, Ramapo College has committed to fully funding the first year of all EOF students to allow each student to focus on his/her academics without worrying about financing their education. The College has in place an incentive scholarship that continues in the second year for those students who have taken 32 credits and achieved a 3.2 GPA. The goal is increasing the affordability of a Ramapo education, and improved retention of EOF students.
- Strengthening the pipeline for Latinos to enter the high-demand fields of science and mathematics is the goal of a new, federally funded partnership between **New Jersey City University** and Hudson County Community College. The partners will cooperate to align science and math programs/courses to create a statewide articulation model. ■



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Policy Outlook

COMMITTED TO COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY FOR NJ CITIZENS

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ASCU MEMBER INSTITUTIONS:

- 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
- William Paterson University

Grassroots Program Over 4,000 Strong

Continued from page 4

Advantages of utilizing the Network. NJ College Promise is certainly not the only vehicle concerned citizens can use to express support for higher education. There are also the options of writing letters to newspapers, arranging meetings with local legislators, making telephone calls, inviting speakers from state colleges to club or business group meetings. What is special about the Network is that it allows the Association to communicate directly with concerned citizens on a voluntary basis and to analyze and report on which registrants, among different categories of constituents, wrote to legislators. ■