

Retrospect and Prospect: Continuity and Change at New Jersey's State Colleges and Universities 1985-2011

A Journey with Purpose

I joined the struggle for greater institutional autonomy during February 1986, following the statutory creation of the New Jersey State College Governing Boards Association (GBA) in July 1985. The state colleges, at that time, were just that – colleges, not universities – a designation regulated by the State Department and Board of Higher Education (DHE/BHE).

Fresh off of the report on the Future of the (NJ) State Colleges (1984), failed prior attempts to accelerate the colleges' transition from teachers colleges to more comprehensive colleges of distinction, and seeking greater freedom from state control, the mission of the GBA, was to advocate the collective interests of the colleges and to protect, and advance, their autonomy. Organizationally, the Governing Boards Association was modeled somewhat after the New Jersey School Boards Association, founded in 1914.

The purpose of the Association became more concrete by June 1986, when law was enacted granting transfer of significant authority from the state to the colleges' boards of trustees, to set policy to govern the institutions. This law made it explicit that the colleges should have greater freedom from state control, in order to develop more distinctive missions, and to provide for direct trustee accountability for educational and financial policy.

To make a long story short, the principle of autonomy has worked. The Association has been a significant part of the institutions' success. Today, the state colleges and universities are among the most diverse and productive in the nation. They have used their autonomy well while remaining committed to their fundamental public purpose – providing quality higher education to serve the public good. Empirical information to back up this assertion has been regularly published by NJASCU, through our annual *Sourcebook* and other means.

While the Association's mission was clear from the start, a vision and plan for how it would accomplish its mission, was not. By the late 1980's, with the successful transfer of authority under autonomy law (a three-year process), I firmed up the staff structure, based on a nonpartisan policy research model, secured the Board of Directors' commitment for long-range funding of the organization, and offered a vision for the Association – to be the principal information resource about the state colleges, and a leading voice on public policy affecting New Jersey higher education.

Given the still strong presence and powers of the DHE and BHE, this was a particularly bold vision. The means of achieving it was fairly simple: stick to the facts; depend on institutions for expert help; bring a national perspective; be bold (without taking unnecessary risks); get ahead of some issues; above all, be responsive; and, as much as possible, be right more often than wrong (especially in advising the governor and legislature)! This was, and remains the formula for the success of NJASCU.

The Association stands out nationally as the only organization of its kind in any of the 50 states. It is viewed not only as the leading voice for the collective interests of its members, but also as the leading voice for higher education public policy in collaboration with others in New Jersey. Some important old-fashioned values have helped to make NJASCU

“The association shall encourage and aid all movements for the improvement of state college education.”

New Jersey Statutes Annotated
18A:64-50

successful: hard work, cooperation, aspiration, anticipation, responsiveness, integrity, legitimacy and tradition. These values, some reflected in our *Public Policy Agenda*, need to continue to be an explicit part of the future development of the Association. More success will follow.

I recently reviewed notes that I made in 1985 to prepare for the challenge of serving as the Association's first CEO. It is interesting, after 26 years, how many of the issues to be tackled remain the same. For example, the need to: continue to refine missions to serve opportunity and excellence; define a predictable means of financing the institutions; balance autonomy and accountability; minimize conflict and encourage cooperation with the state and others; and promote the value of the colleges in serving the state. Above all else, well into this century, New Jersey and the state colleges continue to engage the important matters of who goes to college, how it gets paid for, and the benefits reaped from investment in it, especially those related to jobs and the economy.

During the past, eventful 26 years, NJASCU has had many successes, indicating that there has been more continuity than discontinuity in service to its members and the state. At the macro-level, these achievements can be summarized as:

1. **Extending New Jersey's commitment to college opportunity and excellence.**
2. **Protecting and extending trustee autonomy.**
3. **Sustaining and expanding cooperation, collaboration and public accountability.**
4. **Strengthening understanding and recognition of the value of the state colleges/universities as the state's engines of baccalaureate educational opportunity.**
5. **Defining the public conversation on key policy issues, including capacity, need for investment, trustee governance, mission differentiation, and college affordability.**

There are many specific milestones that mark these accomplishments. Here are a few and some of the important events and individuals who provided the leadership to define success:

A New Beginning - Winning Autonomy – 1986-1989

Even though autonomy law was enacted during early summer 1986, under a memorandum of understanding with the DHE, authorities were transferred to the colleges over a three-year period. Key individuals advocating autonomy law included: Trenton State College President Harold W. Eickhoff; George Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College; and William Maxwell, President of Jersey City State College, together with leading trustees including: Erna Hoover (Trenton State College) and John Moore (Jersey City State College).

The legislation, faced strong opposition from labor, and would never have been enacted without the leadership of Governor Tom Kean, Senators Matty Feldman and Jack Ewing, and invaluable guidance from one of New Jersey's premier advocates, Harold Hodes. Chancellor T. Edward Hollander provided top leadership, and Assistant Chancellor Jim Wallace played a very supportive role in defining the transition process.

Even so, the new Attorney General, Cary Edwards, advised strongly that the Association and its members remain vigilant in protecting newly won autonomy from usurpation by numerous state agencies. This was advice well taken.

Through the enactment of autonomy law and the creation of the Governing Boards Association, Mike Fernandez played a unique, unselfish role in helping to build a fledgling organization. Throughout this time, not enough can be said in praise of John Moore (Jersey City), who served as the Association's first Chair. Without John's leadership, the Association may have folded before it got started, especially given the legal challenge by labor immediately after my hiring on the grounds that the Association had exceeded its legal authority in hiring me and Harold Hodes, and was in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act. Under John's leadership, the Board of Directors rose to the occasion, defended itself, won the suit at the Superior Court level, and then decided, voluntarily, to follow the spirit of the Open Public Meetings Act. Back in 1986, this was a big deal. Another Moore legacy was publication of the first *Trustee Reference Guide* containing information on trustees' lawful responsibilities. Marion Epstein (Kean) followed as Chair, setting new traditions.

Survey and Recommendations of Future Needs – 1990

With autonomy powers successfully transferred to each state college by 1989-1990 (documented by NJASCU, annually), I decided to survey member institutions' Boards of Trustees regarding the efficacy of transferred authority and future needs;

in other words, identifying authorities that Boards of Trustees needed that were not included in law. Valerie Brown, one of my first hires for policy analysis, and a bright young attorney, did an excellent job in conducting the survey and writing a report, in 1990.

While Boards of Trustees were largely satisfied with authorities that had been transferred from the state, many reported that they felt stymied by the continuing influence of the DHE/BHE on issues such as regulation over budget, program approval, faculty promotion, executive compensation and appointment of trustees. Indicative of the strong influence of the DHE at that time, it was the only coordinating board in the nation to be involved in the trustee appointment process, a questionable practice for an agency with regulatory powers.

Furthermore, the Chancellor or his representative continued to sit on each institution's Board of Trustees. Among several staff recommendations from the survey, one was to resolve this apparent governance conflict. Recommending so did not win delight with the DHE/BHE or some NJASCU members. Fortunately, a NJASCU Board led by Bob Solomon (Glassboro) and, later on, Bonnie Watson (Stockton) was supportive.

Dramatic Resolution: Higher Education Restructuring and Elimination of the DHE/BHE – 1994

During the early 1990's, tension between the DHE and some of the state colleges and universities continued to escalate, with Trenton State, which had made some enterprising but controversial moves, at the top of the list. Another example of the growing independence of the state colleges was the \$100 million gift to Glassboro State College by Henry and Betty Rowan in 1992. By 1993, with the November election of Christie Todd Whitman to succeed Governor Jim Florio, the long-standing tension between centralized state coordination and local trustee autonomy came to a decisive point.

During Governor-Elect Whitman's transition, David Kehler, who would become Deputy Treasurer and who had longstanding interest in higher education policy, began to work on a plan to deregulate the DHE/BHE. I was asked to conduct research on other states' coordinating agencies and to suggest what type of model might replace the command-and-control, regulatory character of the existing structure. Within the weeks following the Governor's inauguration, her new administration had enough information to allow the Governor to decide to move forward with a plan to abolish the DHE/BHE and to replace it with a less regulatory coordinating agency, and a Presidents' Advisory Council. Harold Eickhoff and I worked closely with Kehler on final details of the plan, which remained a complete surprise to policymakers, legislators, and higher education leaders until the Governor announced her decision in March 1994. With no leaks leading to the announcement, this was another very big deal in Trenton.

To help rationalize and refine the plan, the Governor, on advice from policy chief Jane Kenny, appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel to study implementation of the proposal. In the meantime, Assistant Council David Hespe took the lead on the very difficult job of crafting legislation to revise hundreds of statutes and to transfer even greater authority to the Boards of Trustees, including the power to establish missions, give final approval of programs, name the college, appoint and compensate the president, engage independent counsel, and control investments without prior state approval. The Governor took, head-on, strong opposition from the *Newark Star Ledger*, the DHE/BHE, labor, and other groups, but prevailed in the end with enactment of the Higher Education Restructuring Act. What many thought would never happen, did.

Throughout this very intense period, the Association became the leading proponent for change and established itself firmly as a strong policy advocate and leading voice on higher education policy. Bob Altman (Montclair State) led as Chair, and Marty Grogan, now at Rutgers, contributed much regarding policy analysis.

Dealing with Uncertainty, Report on Investing in the State Colleges – 1994-1995

With the passage of the Restructuring Act, and transfer of greater autonomy to boards of trustees, some member institutions remained uneasy about a brave new world in which they did not have the protection of a state-level agency that had helped on many fronts, and had become part of the internal governance structure. Furthermore, during the early 1990's, New Jersey had started down the road of less financial investment in higher education following the deep recession of 1989-1991, a continuing significant commitment to fund schools, other entitlements, burgeoning debt, and major setbacks in state tax revenue.

Given this environment, I called on Bill Maxwell who had retired as President of Jersey City State College, to convene an Advisory Commission on Investing in the State Colleges and Universities. The Commission, consisting of several prominent

business and policy advocates, completed its work in the fall of 1994. The recommendations of the Commission set the stage for serious work in years to come regarding the value of the state colleges, the level of investment needed to sustain college opportunity and affordability, and how the colleges would be accountable for the investment.

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Mission and Governance of the GBA and University Status – 1995

Complementing the work of the Advisory Commission, and in close consultation with the Board of Directors, then chaired by Robert Taylor (William Paterson), the Association appointed an *ad hoc* committee on GBA mission and governance.

The Committee, chaired expertly by Bonnie Watson Coleman, trustee of Richard Stockton College, was charged, in light of the statewide circumstances in 1994-1995, to make recommendations concerning the Association's mission and governance, and structure and function. George Fricke, NJASCU's longest serving director, and Bob Scott, former Ramapo President, contributed positively.

The Association "has the function of aggregating interests among the state colleges and articulating such interests between the campuses and state government in order to develop and accomplish higher education policy that serves the public good. From this viewpoint, it is more likely that each college can present successfully its interests to state government and others if the colleges vigorously pursue together a collective agenda from which each college may benefit."

Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on GBA Mission and Governance, 1995.

The final report of the Committee was endorsed by the Board of Directors during spring 1995, and it included recommendations to strengthen the Association's mission, viability, and staff and Board structure. Among many substantive recommendations, the Committee's work set the stage for the Association to change its name to the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, following the regulatory door opening to allow Montclair and Rowan to redesignate themselves as universities.

Definition of New Jersey's Capacity Problem – 1996

With renewed confidence in the Association's ability to fulfill its mission, and member institutions exercising authorities granted under law, the Association tackled a significant policy issue, largely ignored by the state – that being New Jersey's capacity deficit, characterized by underinvestment in programmatic and facilities breadth, leading to New Jersey's dubious standing as number one in the nation in net-loss of college bound students.

With sterling work by Paul Shelly, using state and national empirical information, the Association seized the capacity challenge as an opportunity to promote public policy that served enhancement of college opportunity and the value of the state colleges and universities in serving the state. The opportunity to advance the agenda was enhanced by continuing maturation of the state colleges and universities, and the arrival of new leaders with new perspectives, including new presidents at The College of New Jersey, Rowan University and Montclair State University. Jack Marrero (Kean) and Lois Rand (Ramapo) served as chairs during this era.

College Bound 2008, "Fulfilling a Dream Deferred" and Public Opinion Polling 1999-2008

Defining the capacity issue in greater detail allowed the Association to enhance itself as an empirically based policy advocate. Board members, including Steve Weinstein (Rowan), encouraged me to strengthen the Association's ability to speak directly to opinion leaders and citizens by using more modern communications techniques. This included initiating scientific polling to advance an agenda, to build a stronger constituency and to articulate policy solutions that were informed by analysis and public opinion.

Accordingly, after speaking with several New Jersey experts and narrowing down a field of consultants, I engaged Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates' Rob Green to conduct the Association's first scientific poll regarding public attitudes toward higher education in New Jersey. This was a major step in 1999 that meant some risk taking for the Association. No other NJ higher education group had engaged this method to examine and make public a wide array of concerns.

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New Jersey State Colleges/Universities - Then and Now

	During the Association's Early Years	Today
Undergraduates	57,502 (Fall 1986)	90,841 (Fall 2010)
Graduate/Post Baccalaureate	10,133 (Fall 1986)	13,878 (Fall 2010)
Full-time Undergraduates	36,143 (Fall 1986)	62,100 (Fall 2010)
Total Students	67,635 (Fall 1986)	104,719 (Fall 2010)
Baccalaureate Degrees Awarded	8,750 (AY 86-87)	16,715 (AY 09-10)
Graduate Degrees Awarded	1,590 (1990)	3,380 (AY 09-10)*
Students Residing on Campus	12,400 (1990)	21,174 (Fall 2010)
First-time, Full-time Freshman Applicants	33,188 (Fall 1989)	58,700 (Fall 2010)
Tuition and Fees (average full-time student)	\$1,600 (1986-1987)	\$11,000 (2010-2011)
Total State Grants and Scholarships Received by Students	\$13,200,000 (FY 87)	\$87,740,000 (FY 10)
Full-time Faculty	2,283 (1988)	2,770 (Fall 2010)
Total Aggregate Budget	\$374,246,000 (FY 89)	\$1,505,126,000 (FY 11)
Total Direct State Appropriations	\$230,319,000 (FY 89)	\$243,712,000 (FY 11)
Total Building Replacement Cost	\$602,113,000 (FY 87)	\$4,200,000,000 (FY 11)
Number of Million Dollar (Plus) Gifts Received from an individual donor/family	0	30+

** includes 50 doctoral degrees. No such degrees were granted by state colleges until the 21st century.*

NJASCU Staff

Darryl G. Greer, CEO/Executive Director
 Michael W. Klein, Director of Government & Legal Affairs
 Paul R. Shelly, Director of Communications & Marketing
 Wendy A. Lang, Director of Programs & Policy Initiatives
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 Charlene R. Pipher, Executive Assistant
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Former Staff (1985-2007)

Joan Bucsku (July 1986 - September 2006)
 Michael Fernandez (July 1985 - December 1997)
 Sheila Tkacs (July 1985 - December 1997)
 Martin Grogan (September 1990 - March 1999)
 Linda L. Lashley (September 1999 - August 2007)
 Valerie L. Brown (January 1987 - June 1990)
 Susan Lowe (July 1985 - January 1988)
 Judith Geller (September 2002 - April 2004)

I received invaluable advice from national friends, and from some of New Jersey's opinion leaders that we should share, before the fact, the intent of the initiative with the Governor, Speaker, Senate President, legislative minority leaders, and others. This was very good advice, and helped to secure support for the legitimacy of our polling efforts.

Beyond polling, and to further articulate policy related to the capacity/investment challenge, the Association initiated the College Bound 2008 project based on recognition that between 1998-2008 New Jersey would have the fifth highest increase in the nation in the number of high school graduates. In 2000, the Association issued its recommendations regarding steps that needed to be taken to stem the student outmigration and to keep talented students in New Jersey.

Linda Lashley helped with analysis, and two important reports prepared by Rich Novak (Vice President, Center for Public Higher Education, Trusteeship and Governance, Association of Governing Boards) and Jamie Merisotis (now CEO and President, Lumina Foundation for Education) helped to set the stage for a very substantive engagement of these matters, and helped to define a policy conversation about future expectations about higher education in New Jersey. Among others, two successive Chairs, Henry Pruitt (WPU) and Kathleen Matteo (Rowan), and presidents Speert (WPU), Hernandez (NJCU) and Farish (Rowan) encouraged our expanding policy efforts. Early in the new decade, new presidents took the helm at Richard Stockton, Kean and Ramapo.

More Reform and Defending the Value of Autonomy in Response to the SCI Report – 2007

With progress on this front, there were still bumps along the road. The entire community pulled together to work up a substantive proposal for a \$2.7 billion higher education bond issue (the first since 1988), which gained, then lost momentum during the McGreevey Administration. This outcome was largely because of unproductive debate about restructuring UMDNJ and Rutgers, a thorny issue that continues to be studied by the state.

Along with this disappointment, public higher education faced the challenge of responding to a report of the State Committee of Investigation (SCI) following roughly 18 months of study that found no indictable or unlawful practices at several public universities investigated. Yet the SCI, without warrant, published its findings entitled, "*Vulnerable to Abuse*," which called for significant but ill-advised reform of higher education. The principal accusation made, was that no single state entity was accountable for administrative and financial decisions made by the colleges and universities.

In fairness, the report would have been more misguided if it were not for the steady hand of Cary Edwards who chaired the SCI. Through his good will, Mike Klein and I met with SCI leaders for hours to help make constructive suggestions contained in the final report. The legislature was compelled to respond to the SCI's call for reform. Senator Raymond Lesniak played a leadership role in crafting legislation to enhance financial transparency and accountability at public colleges and universities. Working with Mike, the Senator and other key legislators were open to substantive recommendations made by the Association to place autonomous trustee governance and appropriate Sarbanes/Oxley practices at the center of the reform legislation, which was enacted in 2010. The new law created, too, the cabinet-level office of Secretary of Higher Education. As Chair, Henry Coleman (NJCU), provided insightful leadership at this time.

NJ College Promise and Building a Stronger Constituency – 2007-2008

As the decade progressed, and disinvestment in public higher education continued, the Association responded with the New Jersey College Promise project. As a response to a very negative environment, with strong support from members and friends such as Phil Kirschner (NJBIA), I impaneled an impressive group of national experts and New Jersey leaders to advise on major steps needed to enhance state colleges/universities' excellence, college opportunity, affordability, productivity, and accountability, tied to a strategic state agenda. The panel, led by Rich Novak, issued its recommendations in fall 2008. These recommendations were even more detailed than those of the earlier College Bound 2008 project, and provided a stronger foundation for the Association to extend efforts to build a constituency to support the recommendations, including the Nine Strong for a Stronger New Jersey campaign and creation of a direct education and advocacy program with citizens supporting the state colleges and universities. An unforeseen but welcome outcome of the project is Wendy Lang's Operation College Promise, a national model for veterans' educational service.

Hope for the Future, the Governor's Task Force on Higher Education – 2010

With the current global economic downturn, deep public uncertainty about the future, and continuing disinvestment in public higher education in New Jersey, a significant hope for the future rests in the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Higher Education, issued January 2011.

"As soon as possible, New Jersey must re-prioritize State resources toward the benefit of New Jersey's college students."

Governor Tom Kean
The Report of the Governor's Task Force on
Higher Education
January 2010

During his first year in office, and following an engaged transition process, informed by NJASCU and by Montclair State University President Susan Cole, who headed the Education Transition Subcommittee, the Governor appointed a five-member Task Force to study the future of New Jersey higher education, led by former Governor Tom Kean. Two members of the Association's Board of Directors- Chair John McGoldrick (MSU) and President George Pruitt - served on the Task Force and, fortunately for everyone involved, Mike Klein served as the principal staff resource. Major themes guiding the

Task Force's 72 recommendations include the need for significant new investment in New Jersey's colleges and universities, the need for mission-based accountability for outcomes, and continued strong support for trustee-based governance of the public colleges and universities. I plan to work on helping to achieve these goals from another venue, beginning next year.

Looking Ahead

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported my leadership ~ presidents, trustees and colleagues too numerous to name. And I especially thank Mike Klein, Paul Shelly, and Wendy Lang for outstanding contributions to NJASCU. The Association would not function without the diligent, loyal work of Pat Stearman, or the sterling assistance of Charlene Pipher, backed up by Terry Toth.

Together, we have accomplished much; and there is much more to achieve through continued engagement of the Association. In my estimation, there are four major objectives that need to be tackled as the Association takes on renewed leadership from Michael Klein, a true star, and the Board of Directors:

1. Continuing to work hard on fulfilling the college opportunity agenda, meaning who will get the chance to go to college; how to help citizens pay for it; and defining the value of investment in a college education in new ways that connect with the needs of individuals and the state.
2. Building a new rationale for financing public higher education in New Jersey in a manner that sustains the core educational enterprise, and also allows for innovation and expansion of new partnerships.
3. Defining educational and governance accountability in ways that are more directly related to measurable outcomes, with the goal of maintaining and strengthening public trust in our colleges and universities.
4. Renewing a commitment to invest in and support cooperation on a common agenda through NJASCU in a new era of dramatic change.

While it is easy to say, about achieving this set of objectives, "this won't be easy;" it nevertheless is true. Yet, given the strength and history of success of NJASCU; the quality of Mike Klein's leadership, the Board of Directors and the staff, partnerships that have been forged over many years, a vision for the future, and the will to address challenges and to embrace opportunities within its mission, I have every reason to believe that NJASCU will continue to prosper.

As I move on after the privilege of nearly 26 years of service to the Association, I look forward to the possibilities ahead, not as a passive observer, but as an active colleague who looks forward to working closely with you and others to assist the state colleges and universities in leading on an agenda to secure the blessings of liberty and prosperity in the Garden State.

"New Jersey, which boasts higher than average graduation rates and, nationally, a top three ranking in state college productivity, can be a model regarding college access, attainment, affordability, productivity, and accountability. We can obtain philanthropic, business, and federal funding to accelerate our success. We can keep talented New Jerseyans here, working, contributing, and helping to retain and attract business, and create jobs. We can serve our diverse population. A strategic policy agenda, a shared vision among leaders, and the will of the citizens can take us there."

Darryl G. Greer, CEO
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Darryl G. Greer, Ph.D.
Trenton
September 20, 2011

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