

**State College/University Association Promises Solution  
to College Affordability Problem  
Will Recommend Both College/University and State Policy Change**

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**Press Release  
May 23, 2007**

Today, the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASCU) announced that it will lead an effort by its members to create a "viable long-term plan to help New Jerseyans afford college," which will require these public colleges to move from third, nationally, in efficiency to become *the most effective, cost efficient institutions of their kind in the nation.*

According to Association head, Dr. Darryl G. Greer, nothing short of this will be acceptable as long as the state's investment in higher education continues to falter.

The ASCU effort, called "New Jersey College Promise," will bring to New Jersey some of the nation's best thinkers about college governance, finance, opportunity, and public accountability. It will include public opinion polling and analysis (currently underway); making public more data about member institutions; releasing comparative information pertaining to peer colleges in other states; and constructing a solution to the affordability challenge based on recommendations tested with citizens' values and needs. As part of the project, ASCU vows to open up direct dialogues with the public about higher education issues characterized by a spirit of openness, willingness to listen, responsibility and accountability.

"The Association is committed to transparency and accountability in all of its public education activities," says Henry A. Coleman, chair of ASCU.

Once the New Jersey College Promise is fully constructed, ASCU will ask others to join in a campaign to build public support for a policy agenda to fulfill it.

The Association believes that public colleges must continue to take the lead in responding to citizens' strong desire for college access at an affordable price and public expectations for greater accountability, during a time of closer scrutiny of some higher education policy and practices. ASCU believes this is a time when public colleges need to be even more resourceful, resilient and innovative in cutting costs, and raising private funds to supplement college opportunity, quality and services not funded by the state. The Association asserts that colleges need to be accountable, but with greater, not less, autonomy to achieve their goals, and to protect trustee governing boards from political intrusion.

Says ASCU executive director Darryl G. Greer, "There has been more than enough hand-wringing about lack of state investment. Given New Jersey's long-standing fiscal challenges, now it is time to find the means to keep New Jersey's public colleges and universities affordable and responsive. Presidents and trustee boards are ready to step forward on this agenda, one critical to the future hope and prosperity of New Jerseyans."

ASCU's nine members are: The College of New Jersey, Kean University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Rowan University, Thomas Edison State College and William Paterson University. *As a group they are rated third most productive among the 50 states based on analysis of enrollment, student progress, funding, and regional salary differentials by the National Center on Higher Education Management Systems.* During the past decade, ASCU has documented, using national peer data, its member institutions' significant progress on goals of opportunity, diversity, quality, reputation, and accountability under nonpartisan trustee governance.

**Bilateral changes needed with citizen support.** Greer says both college and state policy must change. For example, while he agrees colleges must find new rigor to cut costs while preserving quality, he maintains that Trenton policy of capping tuition offers false hope. "It pushes the problem along to the next year to give the illusion that we are preserving affordability." "In addition," he says, "this approach to

holding down tuition is criticized by bond rating firms as antithetical to responsible management of public higher education debt. Conversely, with our tuitions among the highest in the nation, we can't continue to simply pass on legitimate costs to students and families."

ASCU will make recommendations on ways the colleges become more efficient and effective to reduce the tuition burden. It vows to present, each year, a set of specific policy steps the state can do in partnership with the colleges to make costs more affordable, including allowing campuses greater administrative flexibility.

The Association will report throughout the year on progress toward the goals of the New Jersey College Promise.

*New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities was created by the State in 1985 as a policy advocate for the state colleges and higher education.*