



NEW JERSEY

# Association of State Colleges and Universities

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## Senate Budget & Appropriations Committee December 15, 2016 Senate Bill No. 2623

The state colleges and universities recognize that the language in S-2623 is permissive, and, therefore, no four-year institution is required to create a “three plus one” program with a community college. Institutions that do, however, face obstacles including questions over licensure and accreditation.

Three-plus-one programs may have unintended consequences regarding operating and capital funding. Such programs could wind up de-obligating counties from funding their community colleges, passing the costs onto the senior public institutions and, therefore, the State. Under “Chapter 12” (P.L. 1971, c. 12; C. `8A:64A-22.1 et seq.), county colleges receive debt-financed funds for construction and maintenance, with debt service shared equally by the State and the counties. How these funds will be factored into the cost of three-plus-one programs is problematic. In addition, having county colleges providing a third year of upper level classes would necessarily create significant need for new construction at the county colleges, ultimately making education less affordable and placing greater strain on State resources.

More broadly, we have concerns about the unintentional consequence such programs could have on the quality of the workforce.

The state colleges and universities fully recognize the importance of affordability of higher education opportunities, but affordability is meaningful only if it assures access to high-quality education. The point of higher education is not just to earn a credential. Rather, it is to earn a credential that provides the quality of knowledge and skills that will be of lifelong value to an individual’s ability to achieve professional excellence and contribute to society, a credential that enhances the strength of the state’s workforce and assures the commitment of an informed citizenry.

There are reasons why it is more costly to attend a four-year institution than it is to attend a community college, and almost all of those reasons have to do with the broad range of resources that are available to a student at four-year institutions that are not available at a community college. In many ways, the lower-cost community college can provide the first two years of a college education. However, once a student enters the advanced study levels of the third and fourth year, it would be, in most disciplines, virtually impossible for a community college to provide an equivalent educational experience without taking on the considerable additional costs necessary to provide the resources required to provide advanced study. For example:

- Study in the sciences requires extremely expensive state-of-the-art equipment housed in modern research and instructional laboratories. Four-year institutions make major, regular investments to keep these laboratories equipped with things like atomic force microscopes, inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometers, and DNA sequencers. Lists of scientific equipment and laboratory facilities in the sciences available at four-year institutions, but not at community colleges, would fill a book. Additionally, students in third and fourth year science study are routinely working with faculty who are

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*The College of New Jersey  
Kean University  
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Thomas Edison State University  
William Paterson University*

actively engaged in research, both in laboratories and in the field, and have the opportunity to participate in that research.

- Study at advanced levels in the business disciplines in accredited programs requires, in today's world, major investments in site-based software licenses to facilitate the quantitative analysis that is critical to many of the courses a student will take in the third and fourth years of study. Software, such as IBM SPSS Statistical Software, Standard & Poor's Compustat Database and Software, and University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Research Data Services, just to name a few, costs hundreds of thousands of dollars in license fees. Additionally, in the business disciplines, students in the upper levels work with faculty on projects in collaboration with corporations and businesses, and engage in global experiences necessary to today's business environment.
- Study in psychology at advanced levels requires the equipment, laboratories and research experiences necessary for courses in the cognitive sciences, and it requires the elaborate, federally regulated infrastructure the institution must maintain in order to conduct human subject and animal research.
- Study at advanced levels in communication and media disciplines requires major investments in a variety of expensive resources, such as professional level broadcast and production studios, control rooms, post-production audio and video, projection and capture capabilities, and dedicated computer servers. Faculty in these disciplines offer the kind of mentorship that involves hands on knowledge of leading edge technologies and industry development.
- Study at advanced levels across all the disciplines of the four-year institution requires vast collections of electronic databases and digital formats, textbooks, copyrighted materials, books, periodicals, reproductions, microfilms, musical scores, maps, charts, recordings, films, video and magnetic tapes, and so forth that represent an investment of millions of dollars annually.

This quality of advanced education could, of course, be reproduced at a community college, but *not* without the costly investments that have already been made by the four-year colleges in scholarship and research-active faculty, laboratories, scientific and other specialized equipment, massive learning resources, internship opportunities, and other programmatic opportunities. *Without* those costly investments, the education might be affordable, but it certainly would not be equivalent in quality and in some cases, the programs would not be accredited. The impact on the students' future opportunities could be devastating.

We concur with need for strategies to assure that New Jersey students are provided affordable higher education, but it must be affordable, excellent, and conducive to student success in the workforce, graduate education, or whatever suits the student aspiration. In short, an education at a state college or university is more expensive than at a community college because of the depth and breadth of educational resources provided by the four-year institution.

If the committee wishes to make a baccalaureate degree more affordable for New Jersey students, the way to do it is not to provide a cheaper, but diminished, education. The way to do it is to relieve students and their families of the heavy tuition and mandatory fee burden that they carry by providing reasonable funding to the four-year institutions and reforming the TAG program so that it better supports needy students in the state's public four-year colleges and universities.