



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608

Phone (609) 989-1100

Senate Higher Education Committee
Senate Bill No. 3192
Requires Public Institutions of Higher Education to Offer Course on Stress Management
May 18, 2017

The state colleges and universities share the sponsors' concerns with the ability of our students to manage the stresses that accompany going to college.

Our institutions already offer courses, services, and programs to support our students' mental wellbeing. These include:

- mindfulness-based stress reduction workshops, sessions, presentations, and eight-week courses led by recognized experts in Mindfulness Meditation;
- mental health services and strategies at Counseling Centers, at no additional cost, to help students deal with the challenges they are facing. Our institutions have specific web pages such as [Coping with Stress](#), [I'm Feeling Stressed](#), [The 10 Commandments for Managing Stress](#), and self-care for [Stress](#);
- a mediation resource center to help students manage interpersonal conflicts;
- suggestions for [coping with stress during the holidays](#); and
- de-stress nights at their recreation centers.

The bill raises academic questions and concerns. The statutory requirement to offer a course on stress management would conflict with our boards of trustees' statutory duties to establish "requirements and standards for granting diplomas, certificates and degrees" (N.J.S.A. 18A:3B.6d.) and to "determine the educational curriculum and program of the college" (N.J.S.A. 18A:64-6.b).

Although the bill does not mandate that students take the course in stress management, it still raises important questions regarding the place of the course in the students' academic programming. For example:

- Would the student earn academic credits for taking the course? If so, our academic officers and faculty would need to determine how to fit the course into existing programs, which could raise accreditation concerns.
- If the student would not earn credit from the course, they will need to take an extra course toward their degree, costing them additional tuition and time toward their degree.

As always, our foremost concerns are the health of our students, and the support we provide them to complete their degrees as quickly and as cost-effectively as possible. This bill would duplicate the services we already provide to help students manage their stress while potentially negatively affecting their academic programming.

www.njascu.org

*The College of New Jersey
Kean University
Montclair State University*

*New Jersey City University
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Rowan University*

*Stockton University
Thomas Edison State University
William Paterson University*