



NEW JERSEY

# Association of State Colleges and Universities

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## **RESPONSE: Public Colleges and Universities Are Working to Unlock the Future for Their Minority Students but Need Legislative Reform and Partnerships to Succeed**

The recently released “Locked Out of the Future” report <http://bit.ly/NJLockedOut>

from the progressive think tank and advocacy organization Education Reform Now (ERN) described a problem: Higher education in New Jersey is failing its black and Latino students. The ERN report, however, offered no solutions. New Jersey’s senior public institutions of higher education have been aggressively working on creating and implementing solutions that have gone unrecognized in this “Locked Out” report. Comprehensive success will require continuing close cooperation with the governor, legislature, business, labor and others on an integrated set of policies tied to a statewide opportunity/prosperity agenda, in addition to innovative leadership from university leaders, governed by citizen boards of trustees.

New Jersey’s public universities have been vigorously pursuing policy options to enhance opportunity, equity and accountability within the context of socio-economic and ethnic diversity. The public institutions all provide a wide range of programs focused on the ERN-defined problem, such as: combatting food insecurity; replacing expensive text books with on-line materials; providing individualized skills-enhancing tutoring; ramping up fundraising for need-based scholarships; partnering with businesses on mentoring and internship opportunities; restructuring the path to attaining a BA degree with increased partnerships with community colleges; and implementing strategies for debt-free education.

Some specific examples of student- success strategies being implemented within New Jersey’s community of senior public colleges and universities (New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities – NJASCU – member institutions) include: (NJASCU schools provide similar versions of all or most of the below initiatives.)

- New Jersey City University has instituted a program is to eliminate the need for students to take out loans to cover the cost of tuition and fees. All New Jersey residents who are admitted to NJCU from high school and attend full-time, with a family household income of \$60,000 or less, will be offered a scholarship in lieu of having to take out a loan (after federal and state financial aid is awarded).
- Stockton University just this past week announced its collaboration with two local high schools to close the math gap among incoming university students.
- Kean University, which is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, offers an innovative Spanish Speaking Program that provides two years of instruction in Spanish while developing students' language skills for English instruction.
- The College of New Jersey’s PRIDE Mentoring program, now in its sixth year, has seen tremendous success in helping minority students fulfill their academic goals. Student mentors, leadership development, academic advising and transitional programming

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[www.njascu.org](http://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*

are among the initiatives that have led to increased levels of student engagement and increases in retention and graduation rates.

- The Rowan University Success Network, a student tracking and communication system, allows students to receive regular feedback from faculty, learn about campus resources, and make appointments with key academic support personnel. Faculty participate by providing encouragement and support to students; enabling advisors and staff to take a holistic approach to success by obtaining an overview of the student's academic life.
- Montclair State University is one of two NJ institutions (the other is Rutgers-New Brunswick) to participate in the [APLU "Powered by Publics"](#) initiative, a collective effort of 130 state colleges and universities to apply best-practice approaches to improving student outcomes. This project is believed to be the largest effort in the nation to increase access, close the achievement gap and award hundreds of thousands more degrees by 2025.
- William Paterson University of New Jersey has the New Student Experience department that identifies and provides solutions for roadblocks to student success in the first year; it provides a solid foundation necessary for new students to develop the skills needed to engage in the rigorous academic challenges of higher education.
- Ramapo College, thanks to an enterprising Student Government Association, has a Food Pantry and the Student Emergency Relief Fund for emergency aid to students to cover non-tuition related expenses. Both of these efforts are wrapped into a campus wide program/initiative entitled "WeCare".
- Thomas Edison State University is creating a Military Student Reserve Fund to assure the continuous education of enrolled students who face exigent circumstances that may prevent them from continuing with their education through no fault of their own.

It should be noted that the schools have managed to keep the annual tuition and fee increases in the 2 to 2.5 percent range for the past several years. This has been accomplished, even though state aid to state college and university operating budgets has dramatically decreased (state operating appropriations to NJ state colleges and universities between FY 1991-FY2019 has decreased \$8.4 million – actual dollars, no adjustment for inflation). In addition to the outdated operational funding formula, the schools are dealing with erratic state support for new capital projects, no support for deferred maintenance, an outdated State College Contracts Law that costs the schools millions of dollars, and expensive legislative mandates to provide tuition discounts or free tuition for different groups of citizens.

The best ways to unlock the future for our state's Latino and African-American youth is to implement rational and student-focused funding for operational support, capital support, and tuition aid grants. The state is working on a higher education master plan that we hope

provides the direction and resources necessary to truly reform the system. But helping the public colleges and universities provide more affordable education in the very near future may require no additional state resources, if legislators considered the fiscal burdens of mandates, some of which are unnecessary and outdated. The most glaring example of this is the 35-year-old State College Contracts Law. Reform of the law would save the schools a significant amount of money that would be targeted for programs to produce better student outcomes. The New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities looks forward to working with our state's leaders to transform the problem into a solution benefitting all the residents of New Jersey.