



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

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QuickTakes!

Symposium at William Paterson University Launches the Propel Paterson Initiative

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From left, William Paterson University President Richard Helldobler and Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh participate in a panel discussion at a Propel Paterson symposium. The program is a revitalization effort between the university and the municipality.

William Paterson University hosted meetings Friday, February 15, as part of Propel Paterson, a partnership with the city intended to revitalize it through economic development, learning and research.

William Paterson University President Richard Helldobler explained that federal entities will sponsor research and the university is seeking grants. The university is also diversifying its revenue stream, which is keeping the price of tuition from rising, and Propel Paterson is providing jobs for students. “Applying the intellectual capital of the university allows

faculty and students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations,” Dr. Helldobler said. “If we can figure out how to create better cities for our kids, it gives other cities a blueprint.”

President Helldobler said that a revitalized Paterson keeps its graduates in the state, and he noted that 30 percent of New Jersey high school graduates do not seek post-secondary education.

“As the city of Paterson improves, our associate brand improves,” Dr. Helldobler said. “Given our social justice effort, increasing the quality of life is an important endeavor What is a university? We exist to support our students The single most important aspect regarding the educational attainment of a child is the health and educational attainment of the mother. Today is the beginning of a new chapter in our storied history.”

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Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh believes Paterson is poised for progress, noting the city has accrued \$130 million in tax credits.

“Wherever I go, I say I am from Paterson where Hamilton set the stage,” Mayor Sayegh said. “.... We were the first planned industrial city in the nation. Very often we operate in silos. We are looking to create synergies. We are looking for research and resources. Paterson is going to rely on analytics’, so we can measure what we are offering to our residents: police, fire, and EMS response time.”

Propel Paterson seeks to improve the quality of life in Paterson in terms of education, the arts, economic development and sustainability. Paterson is a manufacturing center and is nicknamed the Silk City and is also known for its mills.



Tim Sullivan, chief executive officer of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, spoke on February 15 at a Propel Paterson symposium.

Tim Sullivan, chief executive officer of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, said Gov. Phil Murphy is fond of saying, “If we do not get Paterson right, we do not get New Jersey right.”

“When you think about it and take a step back, we are here to celebrate linking economic development and higher education,” Mr. Sullivan said. “Everywhere around the country where you see a strong economy, you see a strong link between economic development and education.”

“You think about New Jersey’s economic development prospects,” Mr. EDA’s Sullivan said. “There is no better place than New Jersey But location without infrastructure does not get you anywhere. That is why it is important to support Gateway [bridge and tunnel reconstruction between New York City and New Jersey].

EDA’s Tim Sullivan also called for investing in workforce development programs and apprenticeship programs.

“From 2007 to 2017, New Jersey was 42nd in wage growth,” he said. “That is troubling because it shows the gaps between those who are doing well and those who are doing less well is growing One out of two people in New Jersey is taking home less pay than they were 10 years ago. Thirty-seven percent of New Jersey residents report not being able to afford basic necessities: housing, food, and health care. As the governor laid out, there are five goals in our economic development plan. We want to create 325,000 new jobs by 2025. We want to see a meaningful wage growth. We think we have a chance to be the most

equitable innovation economic ecosystem in the country. Close the racial and gender wage gaps. That is unacceptable yet solvable.”

Michael Powell, director of economic development for the city of Paterson, said this is the hardest project he has undertaken. These plans are to be implemented, rather than discussed.

Jessica Gerrity, vice president of consulting firm McAllister & Quinn, spent days on campus working with William Paterson University faculty. She said that every federal dollar that is invested wants to be multiplied by federal funders. “Our purpose is to recognize ideas that are fundable,” Ms. Gerrity said.