



NEW JERSEY

# Association of State Colleges and Universities

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**QuickTakes!**

## **Panel Discussion on Economic Impact Features Two NJASCU Presidents**

October 23, 2015

Two of NJASCU presidents – Dr. R. Barbara Gitenstein of The College of New Jersey and Dr. George A. Pruitt of Thomas Edison State College – participated in a Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce panel discussion (October 22, 2015) on “The Role of Higher Education in the Economic Development in the Capital City Region.” Drs. Gitenstein and Pruitt joined the presidents from Rider University and Mercer County Community College with compelling statements about how their respective educational institutions are the economic and cultural anchors of their communities – in addition to serving their primary role as educational institutions for the students enrolled. They emphasized how their schools play a comprehensively positive role in the quality of life of those living in the region.

In addition to the straightforward economic benefits based on such factors as number of employees, number of students, total payroll, payroll taxes, goods and services purchased, real estate purchases, and construction projects, there are the quality-of-life factors contributing to the health and well-being of the residents living near an educational institution. These benefits include visual arts exhibits, music, film, and theater performances, sports events, speakers programs, community volunteer and redevelopment initiatives. Dr. Pruitt described how Thomas Edison has made an enormous contribution to the preservation of Trenton’s heritage and the stabilization of blighted neighborhoods. Dr. Gitenstein noted that TCNJ’s vibrant student volunteer tradition has a significant humanitarian and economic value. (In 2014, TCNJ estimated that the value of service provided to local communities by TCNJ students was \$520,000 – the cost of a service hour in New Jersey is valued at \$25.71 according to the Corporation for National and Community Service.)

The educational leaders, citing the dwindling government support for their institutions, said that partnerships between the business community and the higher education community are in everyone’s best interest. Dr. Gitenstein and others said that the colleges need to continue to partner with business leaders to make sure that the graduates are meeting the needs of employers. The presidents commented on the value to businesses and society in general of educating “competent” “thoughtful” citizens, with not only job skills, but also the ability to innovate, think critically and solve problems.

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