



NEW JERSEY

# Association of State Colleges and Universities

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**QuickTakes!**

## **NJ Governmental, Planning and Corporate Leaders Honor Dr. George Pruitt at NJ Future Event**

November 2, 2015

Dr. George Pruitt, who has served since 1982 as president of Thomas Edison State College (TESC), a NJASCU institution, was the honoree at an October 29, 2015 New Jersey Future event (Trenton City Museum, Ellarslie). NJ Future, the state's champion of responsible land use policies, cited specifically Dr. Pruitt's "unwavering commitment" to the capital district of Trenton, bringing the college and the city well-deserved recognition for the important role higher education can play in the revitalization of historic industrial cities.

Ingrid Reed, a founding board member of New Jersey Future and former head of the New Jersey Project at Rutgers' Eagleton Institute, gave specific examples of Dr. Pruitt's leadership and entrepreneurship to revitalize Trenton. She described the important collaboration between Dr. Pruitt and Governor Thomas Kean, who also gave remarks celebrating Dr. Pruitt at the reception.

Below are excerpts of Ingrid Reed's speech.

*We can all talk it (the revitalization of our cities) conceptually. Dr. Pruitt is a person who has done it.*

*At the time the actual work began, we had a governor (Governor Thomas Kean, Sr.) who believe in New Jersey (land use) planning, and (he inspired) the State Plan, the Capital City plan, NJPAC, affordable housing, and acquisition of the War Memorial ...*

*Let me take you on a quick mental tour of six significant projects that are each key pieces in revitalizing the capital district that happened under Dr. Pruitt's leadership.*

- 1) Start with Kelsey building, now on the Historic Register, saved from destruction by another governor and senate president, retrofitted to be the home of TESC, a third or fourth college to be there when others had fled to the suburbs.*
- 2) Thomas Edison needed space and found it by preserving the historic townhouses next door and investing in modern facilities behind it, a place that welcomes others to use it thereby adding life to the street and introducing people to the downtown.*

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Kean University  
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Rowan University*

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Thomas Edison State College  
William Paterson University*

- 3) *Again, Thomas Edison needed space so it acquired and restored the Kuser Mansion, on West State Street just above Calhoun – extending revitalization to new territory, and creating a home for the John Watson Institute for Public Service.*
- 4) *Swing around to Hanover Street between Willow and Calhoun and that is where TESC created space for administrative purposes by building infill properties in scale of the neighborhood and preserving the canal house.*
- 5) *Space was needed for a technology center, something the School for Industrial Design, the original academic institution in the Kelsey mansion, could not have anticipated; the location was the very visible corner of Willow and West State.*
- 6) *Last on my list is the newest and most visible building that TESC is constructing for a new program – Nursing. It is a true urban renewal project – in the way urban renewal was supposed to be – take down a building that is no longer able to accommodate human activity and build something newer and better in its place that enhances the immediate environment ...*

*We did not know from Smart Growth when TESC started its commitment to be a vital part of Trenton – creating walkable areas, spreading new development around to stimulate investment more broadly, mixed use – including uses that engage many different people in different tasks, and design to scale and character of the existing spaces. It is all here.*

*Dr. Pruitt has led the enhancement of our capital district and model for public institutions at the same time that he is leading an institution that has pioneered very successfully higher education for distant adult learners. What we celebrate tonight has its roots 35 years ago, in the administration of Governor Kean, whose staff had the vision, the budget and plans to support TESC. Governor (Kean), you did one of the most important things a governor can do – hire really good people working in the public interest and trust their judgment, in this case to support smart growth and create livable places where people want to be.*

*Dr. Pruitt and Governor Kean, we at New Jersey Future salute you for creating a Better Future for New Jersey and join you in continuing that essential mission.*

