

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Zakiya Smith Ellis
Secretary of Higher Education
State of New Jersey
Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
P.O. Box 542
Trenton, NJ 08625-0542

Dear Secretary Smith Ellis:

We are writing to request, in the most urgent terms, that the \$300 million in CARES funds be allocated to New Jersey's public institutions of higher education. These one-time funds cannot replace the loss of \$266 million in operating funding or the additional hundreds of millions in lost revenues and costs associated with the pandemic, but they can give us a fighting chance to maintain the viability of institutions that are a powerful economic engine for the state and an indispensable vehicle for social mobility.

Over the past two and a half decades, enrollment at the state's public colleges and universities has grown by 58% while state funding has plummeted by a shocking 41%. Between 2008-2018, New Jersey slashed per student funding by 23.5%. Perhaps most concerning, New Jersey is one of a small number of states in the nation to have made almost zero progress in restoring pre-Recession-level funding. The most recent loss of appropriation during a period of extreme crisis has brought public higher education in New Jersey to a point of desperation.

New Jersey can have no hope for a prosperous future without robust public colleges and universities. It is not accidental that 80% of the nation's college-going population attends public universities; it is, in fact, the cornerstone of our democracy. It is not accidental that 83% of the minorities pursuing a postsecondary education in New Jersey attend public institutions, as do 83% of PELL, 82% of TAG, and 86% of EOF recipients. From a societal perspective, New Jersey cannot afford to be an outlier in the nation in the devaluation of public higher education and the people who need and rely on public higher education. From an economic perspective, New Jersey cannot do without the vital investments these public institutions make in research, in preparation of the state's workforce, in service of all kinds to the state's urban, suburban, and rural communities.

It has taken decades of hard work to build New Jersey's public institutions of higher education, an effort made incredibly difficult by meager support from the state even in the best of times and by having the dubious distinction of being the first target for appropriations cuts in the difficult times.

Dedication of the \$300 million CARES funding to the public institutions of higher education is the right thing to do for New Jersey. We also strongly urge you, in the distribution of the funding, to use the allocation formula utilized by the federal government in the distribution of the original CARES funds. That allocation model is attached to this letter.

We write to you on behalf of, and delegated to write for, New Jersey's 29 public research universities, state colleges and universities, and community colleges.

With respect,

President Will Austin, Warren County Community College
President Joel S. Bloom, New Jersey Institute of Technology
President Susan A. Cole, Montclair State University
President Jon Connolly, Sussex County Community College
President Anthony J. Iacono, County College of Morris
President Harvey Kesselman, Stockton University

c: Chief of Staff George Helmy
Chief Counsel Matt Platkin
Deputy Secretary Diana Gonzalez
Director of Policy and Outreach Stefani Thachik

President Barchi, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
President Borden, Camden County College
President Cioce, Rowan College at Burlington County
President Farahi, Kean University
President Foster, The College of New Jersey
President Gaba, Atlantic Cape Community College
President Gorman, Salem Community College
President Hancock, Thomas Edison State University
President Helldobler, William Paterson University
President Henderson, New Jersey City University
President Houshmand, Rowan University
President Keating, Rowan College at Gloucester County
President Larson, Ocean County College
President McCormick, Middlesex County College
President McDonough, Raritan Valley Community College
President McMenamin, Union County College
President Mercer, Ramapo College
President Munroe, Essex County College
President Reber, Hudson County Community College
President Rose, Passaic County Community College
President Ross, Bergen Community College
President Stout, Brookdale Community College
President Wang, Mercer County Community College

Attachment

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