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News Release

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For Immediate Release

Governor and Legislature Remove NJ STARS Income Cap

TRENTON, N.J. — Governor Jon Corzine and legislative leaders have reached an agreement to remove a proposed New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Rewards Scholarship (NJ STARS) income cap limitation from the FY2009 state budget.

Under the initial proposal, students graduating high school this month whose families earn \$100,000 or more a year would be ineligible for the scholarship. Statewide, about 40 percent of the coming fall's entering eligible freshmen would have been affected, according to the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, the state association for New Jersey's 19 community colleges.

“With the Governor and legislative leaders in agreement on NJ STARS, we can now reassure the high-achieving students in New Jersey that they will receive the scholarship if they apply for it, qualify and enroll at their local community college,” said Council President Dr. Lawrence A. Nespoli.

“We are grateful to Governor Corzine and the members of the state legislature for

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preserving NJ STARS,” Nespoli added. “Because of their support, thousands of students throughout the state – who worked hard to maintain their NJ STARS eligibility in high school – will receive this merit-based reward.”

After an Assembly Higher Education Committee public hearing in early May, Committee Chairman Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan urged the Governor and other legislative leaders to fully fund NJ STARS during the 2008-2009 academic year. He also recommended that a special panel be appointed by the Governor to come up with solutions to the increasing costs of NJ STARS to the state and participating colleges.

NJ STARS is the first state-sponsored, merit-based scholarship program in the country that covers community college tuition and approved fees for students who graduate in the top 20 percent of their high school class. Since its inception in 2004, nine other states have approved or are considering similar programs.

NJ STARS II covers tuition and approved fees at any New Jersey public four-year college or university for community college NJ STARS students who have earned their associate degrees with 3.0 grade point averages or better and are transferring to earn their bachelor’s degrees.

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges is the state association representing New Jersey’s 19 community colleges. As an independent, trustee-headed organization that joins the leadership of trustees and presidents, the Council is the voice of the community college sector before the state legislature and other branches of government.