

New Jersey's Community Colleges Big Ideas Implementation Updates

For the past 45 years, New Jersey's community colleges have helped thousands of students pursue higher education to gain skills, earn college credentials and better their lives. Created by state statute in the 1960s, New Jersey's community colleges now enroll over 400,000 students each year, across 70 campuses throughout the state, fulfilling a core mission: expanding access to higher education opportunities. Today, more than 60 percent of all New Jersey public undergraduate students are enrolled at the state's 19 community colleges.

New Jersey's community college trustees and presidents joined forces throughout 2010 and into 2011 to identify the best and boldest ideas to improve student success – especially associate degree and certificate completion. Designated the Big Ideas Project, over 150 campus leaders spent 18 months engaged in numerous work groups, each co-chaired by community college presidents. These work groups conducted research and made recommendations in the following eight areas: Transforming Developmental Education; Aligning Expectations Between K-12 and Community Colleges; Creating Student Success Data; Promoting Adjunct Faculty Development; Expanding Joint Purchasing Practices; Building Academic Consortia; Building Alternate Learning Delivery Systems; and Using Core Student Learning Outcomes and Common Assessment Tools. What follows is a brief summary of our progress with the Big Ideas Project as of April 2012:

- 1 Transforming Developmental Education – New Jersey's community college presidents charged our chief academic officers with recommending a common framework with key principles for transforming math and English developmental education across our colleges. These recommendations were delivered to our presidents in May 2012 and, based on these recommendations, the presidents plan to approve at their June 2012 meeting a statewide game plan for transforming developmental education in our state. Then in the Fall 2012 semester, supported by grants from the Fund for New Jersey and Public Service Electric and Gas Company, we are convening a first-ever statewide Student Success Summit to engage faculty teams in implementing these important statewide recommendations.
- 1 Aligning Expectations Between K-12 and Community Colleges – New Jersey's community colleges, in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Education, have developed a proposal called "Speed Up / Catch Up." New Jersey high school students will take the community college placement tests (Accuplacer) during grade 11. Students who do not meet the cut scores will take appropriate bridge courses during the summer and/or their senior year. Students who achieve college-ready status in 11th grade will be offered the opportunity to take college-level course work while still in high school through enhanced dual enrollment courses. This "Speed Up / Catch Up" program was included in major K-12 reforms proposed by Governor Chris Christie in May 2012.
- 1 Improving Student Success Data – As directed by New Jersey's community college presidents, our institutional research officers delivered a new Student Success Model several months ago. More recently, the community college presidents approved enhancements to this model to enable our colleges to better understand student preparedness prior to enrolling in college and to track their progress after they enroll in college. These enhancements will be field tested in a pilot project by seven of our NJ community colleges starting in Summer 2012.

- 1 Promoting Adjunct Faculty Development – We have done a comprehensive statewide survey to determine what adjunct faculty development programs are in place at each of our colleges. This information will be used as the foundation to create better adjunct faculty orientation programs, create a statewide adjunct credential program, develop a job bank for adjuncts, design an adjunct mentoring model, and improve professional development opportunities for adjuncts.

- 1 Expanding Joint Purchasing Practices – New Jersey’s community college presidents recently approved a business plan developed by our chief business officers for a Joint Purchasing Consortium that will serve as a statewide vehicle for promoting and achieving substantial savings for all of our colleges.

- 1 Building Academic Consortia – Our chief academic officers are developing new protocols to ensure that regional and statewide consortial approaches are always considered as new programs are proposed by our colleges. And consortial approaches will be actively considered for existing programs, too. We are also exploring distance learning components to this Big Idea. For example, the New Jersey community college presidents recently directed our distance education professionals to assess the interest in moving forward with a statewide Learning Management System (LMS) initiative.

- 1 Building Alternate Learning Delivery Systems – New Jersey’s community colleges are also exploring how we can utilize technology to support alternate learning delivery systems. For example, we are examining how we can deploy mobile devices and social media to improve instruction and student support services.

- 1 Using Core Student Learning Outcomes and Common Assessment Tools – We have identified the 10 highest-enrolled community college general education courses in the state, and have collected the course syllabi for all of them. Through statewide surveys of our colleges, we are identifying common student learning outcomes, appropriate teaching methods, and core assessment tools for these courses and plan to promote their use across the state. Surveys have been completed for: Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Psychology, English Composition I, English Composition II, and Public Speaking. Additional surveys are planned for: Introduction to Computers, Western Civilizations, Contemporary Math, Statistics, and Anatomy and Physiology.

5/21/2012