

The Governor's Revised FY2021 Budget Lacks the Necessary Investment in New Jersey's Community Colleges which are the Engines of Economic Growth and Opportunity for New Jersey Residents

Over one million New Jerseyans are unemployed. The state needs real, meaningful solutions to the systemic racism and inequality in our state. However, Governor Murphy's proposed FY 2021 budget includes a substantial reduction of \$25 million in state operating aid for community colleges. This proposed reduction is in addition to a reduction of \$34 million in state operating aid between April and September 2020.

This total reduction of \$59 million in state aid will undermine the ability of community colleges to provide open and affordable access to a college education and to economic opportunity for our residents. These reductions, if enacted, will threaten the viability of some community colleges, lead to tuition increases for students, and will limit the ability of colleges to provide industry-relevant training to those who are unemployed. Funding from the federal CARES Act has been helpful but because of its restrictions does not make up for the loss of state operating aid.

At this unique moment in our state's history, New Jersey should not disinvest in community colleges and the future of New Jersey residents and our economy. Instead, we must make investments that will expand economic opportunity for all and build a skilled workforce to propel economic recovery.

New Jersey's 18 community colleges, as the only educational institutions with statewide reach, provide essential opportunities to more than 300,000 New Jersey residents each year. Over 200,000 students – more than half of all undergraduate students in public colleges and universities in the state – are enrolled in credit and degree programs at New Jersey's community colleges. New Jersey's community colleges have an impact of \$9 billion on the state's economy.

Quite simply, New Jersey's community colleges are instrumental in creating a more resilient and equitable New Jersey. State support of community colleges is critical.

Now, more than ever, New Jersey's future and that of its residents depend on a strong network of community colleges that build pathways to new opportunities and renewed economic growth. In this increasingly global, connected and digital world, New Jersey's community colleges help students and residents prepare and thrive. Community colleges are indispensable institutions in creating a stronger and fairer economy. New Jersey's 18 community colleges will position New Jersey to recover from this public health and economic crisis by building a skilled

workforce that can adapt to the changing economy, by assisting the over one million residents who have lost their jobs,

by reducing the cost of higher education for parents and students, by providing adults the opportunity to obtain new skills and careers, and by building strong industry-driven education and training pathways that will be the foundation of the state's economy for years to come.

If the FY 2021 budget continues a pattern of significant disinvestment that began in April 2020, it will threaten to undermine the critical and indispensable role of community colleges to our state, to our communities, to our residents, and to our economy.

We ask the legislature to fund New Jersey's community colleges at pre-pandemic levels for the FY 2021 state budget.

Further, we ask the legislature, the Governor and his administration, county government leaders, businesses, educational institutions, and community-based organizations to join with the state's community colleges in a sustained effort to create a more equitable and resilient state for all our residents. We must, with adequate state investment and new partnerships and innovations, build a pathway to a better future for our state.

For more information on the current efforts of the state's 18 community colleges, please click on the links below:

[Vision 2028: Framework for the Future of New Jersey Community Colleges](https://www.njccc.org/vision-2028)

<https://www.njccc.org/vision-2028>

[Vision and Action: Community Colleges as Leaders in Building Pathways to New Jersey's Future.](https://www.njccc.org/pathwaystonjfuture)

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Contact: Catherine Starghill, Esq.
Director of Strategy, Outreach & Communications
(609) 392-3434 or cstarghill@njccc.org