

New Jersey Community College Presidents Statements on the Governor's Proposed FY2021 State Budget

The Presidents of all of New Jersey's 18 Community Colleges have issued statements on the Governor's proposed FY2021 budget which would cut state operating aid to their institutions by \$25 million. These reductions would be in addition to \$34 million in cuts that were enacted between April and September 2020.

Atlantic Cape Community College has been the gateway to the middle-class for so many students in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Our diverse student population has prospered by earning degrees and credentials that allow them to contribute to the local economies of both counties. Our college is only able to deliver on our mission of providing an accessible and affordable education through continued and sustained state support. The Governor's proposed budget cuts to community colleges affects not just our students but also negatively impacts the local economies. I urge the legislature to restore operating aid to community colleges to not only preserve the bridge to family-sustaining jobs for so many residents but also to foster the economic growth of the state's economy.

Barbara Gaba, President, Atlantic Cape Community College

A divestment in Bergen Community College deprives the state of an economic engine at a time it's needed the most. New Jersey's community colleges remain part of the state's bedrock - a foundation on which we can rebuild the economy. As such, and although we acknowledge the state's financial challenges, we must fully fund the state's 18 community colleges so our institutions can provide access to higher education, help put people back to work, and craft solutions to specific local challenges. In times of peril or prosperity, community colleges provide a beacon of hope for half of the state's undergraduate students - this remains a time to support these residents, not to add to their suffering.

Anthony Ross, Interim President, Bergen Community College

Brookdale Community College's mission promises access to an affordable and high-quality education. Further, our strategic plan pledges to reduce the overall cost of higher education, to address student basic needs such as food and transportation insecurities, to reduce achievement gaps and deliver a more equitable education, and to improve student services so that more students can achieve their goals. The Governor's proposed budget challenges the College's ability to deliver on these promises. We will not sacrifice the quality of a Brookdale education; our concern is that State budget cuts will ultimately result in rising educational costs which we find equally unacceptable.

David Stout, President, Brookdale Community College

Camden County College, like many of our peer institutions, are facing significant enrollment declines heading into the Fall Semester and possibly beyond. Couple this reality with the increased reduction in State aid and there is no question that there will be repercussions for our students in the form of increased tuition costs and a significant decrease in student services and support due to reductions in staff. This decision is catastrophic for the students most in need of our support during this difficult time and will have long-term negative implications for the regional economy.

Donald Borden, President, Camden County College

County College of Morris (CCM) has an \$484 million economic impact on Morris County and the surrounding region. We are the primary provider of nurses, radiographers, respiratory therapists, manufacturing professionals, technologists, and more that business and industry rely upon to operate. We make college affordable for thousands of people every year who, upon completion, transfer into four-year universities and go on to become doctors, teachers, business owners, lawyers and more. Funding schools like CCM is the pathway to a strong economy and opportunity. We are the gateway to the American dream.

Anthony J. Iacono, President, County College of Morris

Prior to, and throughout the COVID-19 period, the NJ Community Colleges have stayed strong to maintain high quality education and training. Unfortunately, the pandemic has slashed our enrollment into all-time low and created big financial gaps. As much as we appreciate the Governor's effort to support higher education, his FY2021 appropriation to the Community Colleges will cripple us from providing the educational offerings and helping economic recovery.

Augustine Boakye, Acting President, Essex County College

Hudson County Community College (HCCC) serves 18,000 students and 1,000 employees annually and provides life-changing and transformational opportunities for the citizens of Hudson County. We are proud to be one of the most diverse colleges in the United States, serving the most diverse city in the United States. One-third of our students speak English as a Second Language, one-third have emigrated to the United States from a foreign country, and the majority of our students are the first in their families to attend higher education. Most of our students are enrolled in Foundations coursework in order to become college ready and succeed in completing their goals. When students complete their programs at HCCC, they are immensely successful. Many are first responders, on the front lines of the health care community. Many students transfer to our state's four-year universities and many complete graduate degrees. With this success come transformational outcomes for our community as our students become community leaders, taxpayers, and give back to others in so many ways. HCCC is proud to be among the top 5% of colleges and universities nationally for providing upward social mobility for our students. Our ability to provide these transformational outcomes for people requires an investment, however. Community

colleges are the most efficient institutions in all of higher education while serving the broadest constituencies in our state. They are also funded at significantly lower levels than other higher education sectors. We cannot serve our students and our missions with draconian reductions in state appropriation. And we cannot place the burden of this budget challenge on the backs of students who are commonly working long hours and raising families while attending college for a better life. We implore our legislature to restore our state appropriation to level funding for the rest of the state's fiscal year. There is no better investment of taxpayer dollars.

Christopher M. Reber, President, Hudson County Community College

The pandemic and economic crisis has had a significant negative impact on the students of Mercer County Community College. Half of our students are unable to pay for college this year due to lost jobs and income. At the same time, we are seeing more African-American young adults enrolling in the college. Community colleges are a lifeline and path to opportunity for so many New Jersey residents. The devastating cuts to state operating aid will fundamentally hurt our mission to provide a high-quality affordable education, to open doors of opportunity to all, and to build a skilled workforce.

Jianping Wang, President, Mercer County Community College

The reduction in State support limits Middlesex County College's (MCC) ability to serve as an economic driver in New Jersey during this difficult time where every dollar counts, as every dollar invested by the State in MCC leads to the generation of \$6.70 in added taxes and public sector savings. It forces us to focus on providing only essential services and to follow in areas where we should be leading. It also curtails our ability to innovate and to provide extra support at key moments for New Jersey citizens who need it most. Finally, and of most importance, it forces our institution to increase our tuition and fees which will require our students to shoulder an even greater percentage of our operating expenses, many of whom are facing enormous challenges, including unemployment, food insecurity, and homelessness, along with the uncertainty stemming from a public health crisis that threatens their lives daily.

Mark McCormick, President, Middlesex County College

New Jersey community colleges and their students are facing unprecedented financial challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and their families are finding it necessary to prioritize their spending, and many students are having difficulty paying their tuition. With the loss of tuition revenue, Ocean County College's accounts receivable debt is increasing. The loss of additional State aid will further affect the College's ability to meet the needs of its students, especially at this time when community colleges provide the means by which students will be able to find success in this current economic environment.

Jon Larson, President, Ocean County College

Passaic County Community College, like most community colleges, spends less than half per student than any other educational sector in New Jersey. Other than limited fixed costs, salaries account for most spending. Delivering this highly cost-efficient model necessitates operating with a very “lean” budget. With the need to keep tuition affordable, and very limited financial reserves, any cut in revenue means reducing student support services. A 30 percent cut in state support will mean less support for students in a year they most need it.

Steven Rose, President, Passaic County Community College

The proposed budget for New Jersey’s community colleges threatens our economic recovery and ignores the inspiring and transformative dreams of our students. If we are to address the very real and urgent challenges of access, opportunity, and justice, then New Jersey’s dynamic community colleges will prove to be our most valuable resource. This budget puts this future on hold. These county colleges will continue to serve their communities, continue to be beacons of opportunity for our most vulnerable neighbors. They deserve better.

Michael McDonough, President, Raritan Valley Community College

Over the past several months, colleges have faced unexpected, but necessary, expenses to protect our communities, and we have done everything possible to prevent passing these costs on to students. We have already heard from students who cannot afford to continue their education. A further reduction in state support will drive a bigger wedge between those who can access education and those who cannot and serve as a reminder to state leaders that reducing support for community colleges will unfairly affect those who most need help.

Michael A. Cioce, President, Rowan College at Burlington County

Rowan College of South Jersey has worked proactively, and is ready and positioned to serve our students and residents with affordable and accessible higher education opportunities as we transition out of the current pandemic and economic crisis. However, the proposed state aid cuts will greatly hinder our forward momentum at a significant point in our history when there is the greatest need to facilitate the mobilization of educated, career-skilled individuals, prepared to enter the workforce that will revitalize the economy placing our students, residents and businesses on the pathway to a thriving recovery.

Fred Keating, President, Rowan College of South Jersey

Community is literally our middle name - Salem “Community” College. Throughout this COVID-19 crisis, we have worked tirelessly to serve our students and constituency in spite of rolling furloughs, supply reductions, and layoffs. Current budget proposals ask us to do even more with even less. At a point, this is simply unrealistic, and certainly counterproductive. SCC and the entire community college sector remain an integral part

of economic recovery and long stability, but only if we have the resources. A modest investment can go a long way.

Michael Gorman, President, Salem Community College

Public higher education is one of the foundations of well governed societies. Reductions in essential funding almost always have downstream effects on economic growth, tax burdens, social progress, and citizen engagement. The current reductions in community college funding will impact the most vulnerable populations in the state, and will also impair prosperity and advancement for absolutely everyone in New Jersey.

Jon H. Connolly, President, Sussex County Community College

The proposed operating cut isn't about the impact to Union County College. It is about the impact to our students, and this will hurt them: by forcing us to increase tuition, cut services, and make other concessions. Earning a college degree is transformative for individuals, their families, and the whole community. It provides opportunity and economic prosperity. In this climate of unemployment and uncertainty, the State should be investing in community colleges as the most affordable source of training and higher education. Not instituting cuts that make a college degree even more out of reach.

Margaret M. McMenamin, President, Union County College

Governor Murphy's proposed budget once again demonstrates community colleges, the only public education sector in New Jersey to be cut, perceived level of importance from the perspective of state policymakers. At Warren, we will now look for places to cut even deeper, ensuring that we cannot contribute fully to the economic recovery efforts.

Will Austin, President, Warren County Community College

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