

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STATE INVESTMENT:

### Governor Murphy Must Increase Support to New Jersey's Community Colleges which are the Engines of Economic Growth, Opportunity, and Equity for NJ Residents

At this critical moment in our history, New Jersey must find new solutions to the myriad of challenges that confront our state while seizing opportunities to create a more resilient and equitable society and economy. With over 1 million residents unemployed, a rapidly changing economy and labor market, and systemic racial injustice and inequality, the time for action, innovation and transformation is now. New Jersey's Community Colleges, the essential partner in this urgent time, will provide open and affordable access to all New Jerseyans, offering all residents the tools to transform their lives. With increased state investments, a brighter future is possible for New Jersey.

For the past ten years, the state has provided \$134 million annually in operating support to its 18 community colleges. This amount has not increased in more than ten years AND the state decreased funding to Community Colleges by \$34 million during the past nine months. State operating aid for Community Colleges now amounts to less than 15% of the total cost of operating Community Colleges.

New Jersey's 18 Community Colleges, as the only educational institutions with statewide reach, provide essential opportunities to more than 300,000 residents each year including the most vulnerable. 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. Also, the community colleges enroll nearly 100,000 students in non-credit programs and partner with thousands of businesses to meet their training and workforce needs. Further, over half of the total undergraduate enrollment in New Jersey Community Colleges are non-white students.

Now, more than ever, New Jersey's future and that of its residents depend on a strong network of Community Colleges, bolstered and transformed by increased state investment. Increased state investment in Community Colleges will ensure New Jersey (1) increases the number of people who earn post-secondary credentials or degrees, (2) has an efficient and effective education system that prepares individuals, of all ages and at all stages, for a family-supporting career, (3) has the most skilled, innovative, and talented workforce in the country, and (4) addresses the systemic racial injustice and inequality in our state and communities.

With increased investment, New Jersey's Community Colleges can be critical in helping our state and communities respond to and recover from this crisis. New Jersey's 18 Community Colleges have worked together to develop a framework for the future (*Vision 2028* - <https://www.njccc.org/vision-2028> and *Vision and Action: Community Colleges as Leaders in*

*Building Pathways to New Jersey's Future* - <https://www.njccc.org/pathwaystonifuture> ) to advance the priorities of the *State Plan for Higher Education*, and are, in this moment, uniquely positioned, with statewide reach like no other network of institutions, to lead a broad effort, with many education, industry, workforce, community and government partners, to transform the state's strategic approach to:

- Expand access to high quality post-secondary programs for the state's most vulnerable residents;
- Prepare students to succeed in four-year institutions;
- Train residents in accelerated, industry-valued, and stackable workforce training programs to meet labor market demands; and
- Support economic development and civic engagement.

The Council's state budget request to the Governor for FY2022 includes the critical and strategic investment in New Jersey's Community Colleges to support equity, access and student success, their students, communities, and the state. The requested increase in state operating aid of \$10 million is a start to achieve matching our state's priority with our values.

New Jersey's 18 Community Colleges will position New Jersey to recover from this public health and economic crisis by (1) building a skilled workforce that can adapt to the changing economy, (2) assisting the significant number of individuals who have lost their jobs and careers, (3) reducing the cost of higher education for parents and students, (4) providing adults the opportunity to obtain new skills and careers, and (5) building strong industry-driven education and training pathways that will be the foundation of the state's economy for years to come.

Community Colleges deserve greater state investment in the Governor's FY 2022 Budget and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges on behalf of New Jersey's 18 Community Colleges have asked him to do just that.

Join us as we urge the Governor to provide greater support to Community Colleges by sending him a message today using our Legislative Action Center at <https://www.njccc.org/legislative-action-center>. That's all it takes for all of us to make our voices heard by Governor Murphy in support of increased state investment in New Jersey's Community Colleges.

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