

NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

2021 FINAL REPORT:
COLLABORATIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Executive Summary

02

**List of Compiled Collaborative
Recommendations**

03

Session One Recommendations

04

Session Two Recommendations

05

Session Three Recommendations

06

**Appendix: New Jersey Higher Ed-
ucation Collaborative Members**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Brian K. Bridges, the New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education, formed the New Jersey Higher Education Collaborative in Spring 2021 through a partnership with The Hunt Institute and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). Secretary Bridges and Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey served as Co-Chairs of the Collaborative and guided the discussions while they identified areas of consensus among members. 26 distinguished Collaborative members attended three in-person sessions in June, August, and October 2021 to discuss the following themes and topics, and offered input into the recommendations contained in this report:

Session One: Meeting the Needs of Students

- Support Students by Understanding Their Needs
- Stakeholders' Roles in Overcoming Enrollment and Persistence Barriers

Session Two: Opportunity and Innovation

- Federal Stimulus Funding and New Jersey Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge Grants
- Strategies to Drive Progress toward the "65 by '25" Postsecondary Attainment Goal

Session Three: Strengthening Pathways Into the Workforce for All Students

- The Importance of Early Exposure to Postsecondary and Career Pathways
- Removing Access Barriers that Prevent All Students from Participating in Career Training and Retraining Opportunities

At each meeting, Collaborative members heard framing presentations from subject matter experts who provided background information on both the national and New Jersey context for each discussion. The following speakers either presented or participated as panelists to frame the sessions:

- **Sheila Y. Oliver**, Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey
- **David Socolow**, Executive Director, New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority
- **Dr. Marcheta Evans**, President, Bloomfield College
- **Dr. Barbara Gaba**, President, Atlantic Cape Community College
- **Dr. Harvey Kesselman**, President, Stockton University
- **Mayra Jackson**, Student, Hudson County Community College
- **Joelle Motley**, Student, Atlantic Cape Community College
- **Kristine Osuji**, Graduate, Youth Transition to Work Program
- **Karen Bussey**, Policy Advisor, New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
- **Diana Pasculli**, Executive Director, Division of Educational Services, New Jersey Department of Education
- **Lourdes Valdes**, Director of Workforce Development and Grants, RWJBarnabas Health
- **Brendan Collins**, Local Outreach Program Manager for New York City, Google
- **Leo Faneuf IV**, Senior Manager of Human Resources and Talent Acquisition, Lockheed Martin
- **Jackie Luciano**, Vice President, Zago Manufacturing
- **Dr. Stefani Thachik**, Director of Policy and Outreach, New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
- **James Mikolowsky**, Director of Higher Education, The Hunt Institute

After the framing presentations, Collaborative members held in-depth discussions and identified actions that they believe Secretary Bridges and the OSHE staff should prioritize. The final recommendations reflect the consensus of all Collaborative members, who had multiple opportunities to provide feedback.

LIST OF COMPILED COLLABORATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

As Secretary Bridges and OSHE work to drive progress toward higher education policy goals over the coming years, the Collaborative recommends that OSHE consider using the following strategic priorities to inform their efforts:

01. Convene experts and practitioners for the purpose of identifying strategies to remove barriers that prevent students from successfully transitioning into higher education – especially students from communities that lack access to resources that would support the development of social capital.
02. Create outreach plans for communicating with under-resourced students about options for covering the costs associated with pursuing higher education.
03. Develop guidance on how higher education institution leaders can redesign wraparound student supports in ways that account for the full lived experiences of students and ultimately narrow equity gaps in degree persistence and completion.
04. Provide feedback on plans that detail how institution leaders will use Open Educational Resources as a strategy to reduce costs for students.
05. Leverage the innovative best practices that institution leaders seeded through the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge (OMIC) program by analyzing the impact of different initiatives and authoring recommendations on how to scale promising efforts.
06. Re-engage with the “some college, no degree” population in New Jersey that has taken postsecondary coursework but not completed a credential – and, therefore, have not experienced the associated earnings increase that comes with higher levels of attainment.
07. Facilitate deeper collaboration between institution leaders and workforce training providers across New Jersey in ways that will narrow equity gaps in postsecondary attainment.
08. Create a regularly updated guidebook resource that students at all levels can use to learn more about the full range of postsecondary and career pathway options available in their schools and communities.
09. Provide support to school counselors and other educators who can help middle and high school students learn more about higher education and career training options as well as navigate the process of enrolling in such programs.
10. Establish lines of communication between K-12 educators, high school counselors, community college leaders, regional employers, and philanthropic groups that are used to identify new opportunities for collaboration around career pathways as well as share information on strategies for overcoming common barriers to developing and scaling workforce pathway programs.

SESSION ONE RECOMMENDATIONS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Session Overview

Today, students experience postsecondary education differently than previous generations. While more students are attending college, the costs associated with tuition and fees, and other auxiliary costs, such as textbooks, have risen tremendously, creating barriers to access for many. Further, recent data shows that the “traditional” four-year experience is rare for many postsecondary students, and technology has further changed how and where students can access education. Most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic upended the landscape in new ways and exacerbates existing inequities. By better understanding the students of today, their needs, and ways affordability creates barriers, New Jersey can create a postsecondary education system that supports all those who want to pursue higher education.

Collaborative Recommendations

01. Convene experts and practitioners for the purpose of identifying strategies to remove barriers that prevent students from successfully transitioning into higher education – especially students from communities that lack access to resources that would support the development of social capital.
 - a. OSHE could bring together partners who play key roles in this transition process to discuss:
 - i. How school and district leaders in the K-12 space can create college-going cultures that allow students to develop the social capital they need to pursue higher education; and
 - ii. How higher education leaders in New Jersey – as they evaluate which potential students could find success at various institutions – should consider different asset-based approaches that incorporate a realistic understanding of how gaps in social capital affect postsecondary readiness.
02. Create outreach plans for communicating with under-resourced students about options for covering the costs associated with pursuing higher education.
 - a. By facilitating partnerships with local community groups and superintendents, OSHE could partner with other stakeholders to support the rollout of creative marketing strategies to spread information about resources for higher education students – including those related to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – in ways that provide prospective students with some certainty on the question of whether they can afford to pursue a credential.
 - i. Groups that work with students may consider promoting strategies such as messaging campaigns through various platforms (SMS text messages, TikTok, Facebook, and commercials), partnerships with County Superintendents to embed information on the college-going process into their messages to students, and FAFSA completion activities developed in partnership with community organizations.
03. Develop guidance on how higher education leaders can redesign wraparound student supports in ways that account for the full lived experiences of students and ultimately narrow equity gaps in persistence and completion.
 - a. OSHE could work with IHE presidents to create mechanisms that connect students with social safety net resources in their communities – while simultaneously working to establish on-campus support structures such as childcare facilities.



- b. State leaders should also work to explore sustainable funding source options for emergency grant aid programs that students can use for costs including housing, food, and medical expenses.
 - c. Additional examples of wraparound service policy options include:
 - i. Campus food pantries (or other solutions to food insecurity);
 - ii. On-campus child care facilities;
 - iii. Advising and student success services;
 - iv. Career preparation services;
 - v. Support for transfer students;
 - vi. Accessible transportation options for reaching campus; and
 - vii. Creation of a holistic resource center that includes a wide array of wraparound student services.
- 04.** Provide feedback on plans that detail how IHE leaders will use Open Educational Resources as a strategy to reduce costs for higher education students.
- a. OSHE's input and guidance will support efforts by higher education leaders across the state to generate savings for their students by leveraging the potential of open textbooks and commercial digital learning materials.

SESSION TWO RECOMMENDATIONS: OPPORTUNITY AND INNOVATION

Session Overview

In early 2021, Secretary Bridges and Governor Murphy announced the awarding of \$28.5 million to fund the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge (OMIC) grants, which provide funding to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to implement best practices that support student success and increase higher education attainment. The second NJHEC meeting focused on the roles that different stakeholders can play in building on innovations that have been seeded by federal stimulus funding – as well as opportunities to raise postsecondary attainment by supporting individuals in the “some college, no degree” population.

Collaborative Recommendations

- 01.** Leverage the innovative best practices that IHE leaders seeded through the OMIC program by analyzing the impact of different initiatives and authoring recommendations on how to scale promising efforts.
 - a. OSHE could support efforts to maximize the impact of federal stimulus funding on higher education policy in New Jersey by collecting and promoting information about how IHE leaders have successfully used OMIC funding to support students who have been harmed by the pandemic.
- 02.** Re-engage with New Jerseyans who are in the “some college, no degree” group of people that have taken postsecondary coursework but not completed a credential – and, therefore, have not experienced the associated earnings increase that comes with higher levels of attainment.
 - a. OSHE could lead efforts to collect and report more information on “some college, no degree” students in ways that would inform policy initiatives to target supports at these individuals.



- b. In addition, OSHE could work with partners to provide guidance on how IHE leaders can develop policies that allow incoming students – especially those in the “some college, no degree” category – to receive meaningful credit for things such as prior higher education coursework or military experience.
 - i. Examples of initiatives that stakeholders could promote to help students receive the credit they deserve include prior learning assessment frameworks, stackable credentials, reverse transfer agreements, and the standardization of program requirements and course catalog numbering.
- 03. Facilitate deeper collaboration between IHE leaders and workforce training providers across New Jersey in ways that will narrow equity gaps in postsecondary attainment.
 - a. OSHE could encourage additional partnerships between postsecondary and workforce stakeholders in order to build on existing educational programs by supporting the unique, intersectional needs of today’s higher education students.
 - b. It will also be important for OSHE and other stakeholders to ensure that workforce training opportunities – including work-based learning programs and apprenticeships – maintain alignment with regional economic needs.

SESSION THREE RECOMMENDATIONS: STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS INTO THE WORKFORCE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Session Overview

Completing a postsecondary credential or workforce training program can mean a better life for New Jerseyans and their communities. While we know that attaining a bachelor’s degree allows graduates to earn significantly higher lifetime wages, it is important to note that there are also economic benefits that come with earning associate degrees and non-degree credentials – which are often the focus of workforce training programs. There are over 30 million “good jobs” nationwide that require less than a bachelor’s degree, and studies have shown the specific value that comes with certificate attainment: young certificate holders experienced dramatic earnings increases, while older certificate holders – often displaced workers – experienced more of a gradual rebound as they worked to regain their previous level of earnings.

In order to create and maintain strong pathways into the workforce, a variety of partners – including leaders from business sectors, K-12 districts, IHEs, community organizations, and multiple levels of government – must come together to navigate this difficult task. Adopting an equitable approach to expanding career training opportunities would allow New Jersey students– and the state economy – to prosper.

Collaborative Recommendations

- 01. Create a regularly updated centralized hub of information that students at all levels can use to learn more about the full range of postsecondary and career pathway options available in their schools and communities.
 - a. OSHE could work with partners – such as the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development, and more – to ensure that this resource serves as a centralized hub that includes comprehensive information on all career training opportunities across the state.



- b. State leaders and educators should conduct targeted outreach to ensure that the information about career pathway options reaches certain groups of students who might not otherwise hear about such opportunities, including “some college, no degree” adult learners, displaced workers, students of color, and other students from under-resourced communities.
- 02. Provide support to school counselors and other educators who can help middle and high school students learn more about higher education and career training options as well as navigate the process of enrolling in such programs.
 - a. In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education and other K-12 leaders, OSHE could work to ensure that counselors – especially those who work in under-resourced schools with high caseloads – have access to clear, up-to-date information about the college-going process and workforce training programs that they can use to advise students on their options.
 - b. Higher education and workforce leaders should also develop best practice recommendations on effective strategies for exposing students to career pathway options that can be implemented by counselors or other K-12 educators.
 - i. Examples of potential strategies that OSHE can promote include a manufacturing day focused on K-12 students, reverse interviews that allow students to learn more about various employers, information sessions on apprenticeship or externship opportunities (for both students and faculty), integrating information about the college enrollment process into high school curricula, and leveraging currently enrolled higher education students who can share information about their experiences.
- 03. Establish lines of communication between K-12 educators, high school counselors, community college leaders, regional employers, alumni networks, and philanthropic groups that are used to identify new opportunities for collaboration around career pathways as well as share information on strategies for overcoming common barriers to developing and scaling workforce pathway programs.
 - a. OSHE’s central role at the intersection of high school, higher education, and the workforce will allow the office to facilitate these conversations while drawing connections across the career training continuum.



NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Dr. Brian K. Bridges	Secretary of Higher Education	NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
Assemblywoman Mila Jasey	Chair	NJ Assembly Higher Education Committee
Sheila Y. Oliver	Lieutenant Governor	Office of the Governor
Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis	Chief Policy Advisor	Office of the Governor
Laura Console	Education Policy Advisor	Office of the Governor
Cayla Sekuler	Policy Advisor	Office of the Governor
Sen. Sandra Cunningham	Chair	NJ Senate Higher Education Committee
Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti	Member	NJ Assembly
Sen. Teresa Ruiz	Chair	NJ Senate Education Committee
Robert Asaro-Angelo	Commissioner	NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Dr. Jonathan Holloway	President	Rutgers University
Dr. Harvey Kesselman	President; Chair of NJPC	Stockton University
Dr. Marcheta Evans	President	Bloomfield College
Dr. Barbara Gaba	President	Atlantic Cape Community College
Tim Sullivan	Chief Executive Officer	NJ Economic Development Authority
Jon Harmon	President	African American Chamber of Commerce
Carlos Medina	President	Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Dr. John Kennedy	CEO	NJ Manufacturing Extension Program, Inc.
Christina M. Renna	President & CEO	Chamber of Commerce Southern NJ
Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan	Acting Commissioner	NJ Department of Education
Dr. Javaid Siddiqi	President & CEO	The Hunt Institute
Robert Anderson	President	SHEEO
Tiyanni McClary	Student	Union County College Student
Anusha Kemburu	Student	Rutgers University - New Brunswick Student
Ebelia Hernández	Professor; Higher Education	Rutgers University
Michele Cascardi	Professor	William Paterson University
Dr. Demond Hargrove	Vice President for Student Development	Union County College
David Socolow	Executive Director	NJ Higher Education Student Assistance Authority



4000 Centregreen Way | Suite 301 | Cary, NC 27513 | p: 984.377.5200