

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4836

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 19, 2020

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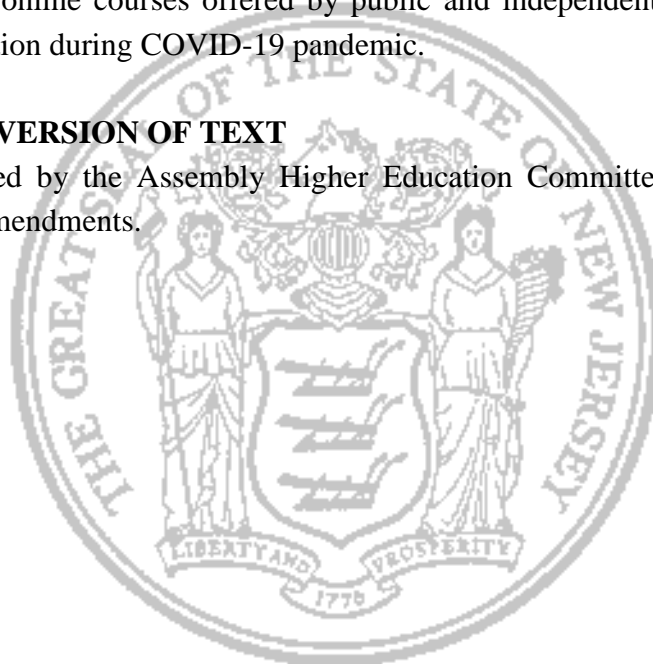
**Assemblywomen McKnight, Lopez, Jimenez, Jasey, Timberlake and
Assemblyman Mejia**

SYNOPSIS

Establishes task force to evaluate quality, efficacy, costs, and educational outcomes of online courses offered by public and independent institutions of higher education during COVID-19 pandemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Higher Education Committee on March 8, 2021, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/20/2021)

1 AN ACT establishing a task force to study the quality of online
2 education provided by public and independent institutions of
3 higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. There is established a task force for the purpose of
9 examining the quality, efficacy, costs, and educational outcomes of
10 online courses offered by public and independent institutions of
11 higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing
12 recommendations for potential improvements in the delivery of
13 online courses to students.

14 b. The task force shall consist of ¹~~15~~ 16¹ members as
15 follows:

16 (1) the Secretary of Higher Education, ex officio, or a designee;

17 (2) one public member appointed by the President of the Senate
18 and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
19 Senate, both of whom have expertise in issues related to the
20 delivery of online course in higher education;

21 (3) one public member appointed by the Speaker of the General
22 Assembly and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader
23 of the General Assembly, both of whom have expertise in issues
24 related to the delivery of online courses in higher education; and

25 (4) ¹~~10~~ 11¹ members appointed by the Governor, including:
26 the president of a public research university, or a designee; the
27 president of a State college or university established pursuant to
28 chapter 64 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, or a designee;
29 the president of a county college established pursuant to chapter
30 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, or a designee; the
31 president of an independent institution of higher education, or a
32 designee; a representative of the American Association of
33 University Professors; a representative of the Council of New
34 Jersey State College Locals AFT/AFL-CIO; ¹a representative of the
35 New Jersey Education Association¹; two individuals who are chief
36 information officers or equivalent positions, one of whom shall be
37 employed at a four-year institution of higher education and one of
38 whom shall be employed at a county college; and two students, one
39 of whom shall be currently enrolled in a four-year institution of
40 higher education and one of whom shall be currently enrolled in a
41 county college.

42 c. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days
43 of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the
44 task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original
45 appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AHI committee amendments adopted March 8, 2021.

1 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary
2 expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members
3 of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or
4 otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

5 d. The task force shall organize not later than 30 days
6 following the appointment of its members. The task force shall
7 choose a chairperson from among its members and shall appoint a
8 secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

9 e. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall
10 provide such stenographic, clerical, and other administrative
11 assistants, and such professional staff as the task force requires to
12 carry out its work. The task force also shall be entitled to call to its
13 assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any
14 State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission,
15 or agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

16
17 2. a. The task force shall study and consider issues including,
18 but not limited to, the following:

19 (1) the manner in which public and independent institutions of
20 higher education shifted to online learning following the issuance of
21 Executive Order No. 104 of 2020 and the methods undertaken by
22 institutions to resume in-person courses following the issuance of
23 Executive Order No. 155 and Executive Order No. 175 of 2020;

24 (2) a description of each public and independent institution's
25 strategy in delivering education to students, including whether an
26 institution offered all of its classes online, in person, or through a
27 hybrid program of online and in-person courses;

28 (3) a description of the technology and software utilized by the
29 institutions to provide online courses to students;

30 (4) the costs borne by institutions and students in the shift to
31 online learning that occurred as a result of Executive Order No. 104
32 of 2020 and throughout the pandemic;

33 (5) a description and assessment of the efforts and policies set
34 forth by the institutions to ensure that students had access to the
35 technology and other resources necessary to complete online
36 courses during the pandemic;

37 (6) the effect that offering an increased volume of online classes
38 had on student enrollment and retention compared to the prior
39 academic year and on the cost of attendance;

40 (7) the traditional cost of offering an online course at each
41 institution compared to the cost of offering an in-person course, and
42 how the COVID-19 pandemic affected that cost;

43 (8) the perceptions of students, faculty, and staff of the quality
44 and value of online courses as compared to courses provided in
45 person;

46 (9) a comparison of the average completion rate and average
47 grade for students enrolled in each online course offered by each
48 institution during the COVID-19 pandemic and the average

- 1 completion rates and grades for those courses in the prior academic
2 year. The comparison shall indicate whether or not the courses
3 were provided online or in person in the previous academic year;
4 and
- 5 (10) an assessment of the policies and procedures each public
6 and independent institution of higher education has in place to
7 ensure that institutional support, technological support, and faculty
8 support are provided to students enrolled in online courses to ensure
9 a high quality educational experience.
- 10 b. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and
11 recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant
12 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than two
13 years after the task force organizes.
- 14 c. The task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its
15 final report.
- 16
- 17 3. This act shall take effect immediately.