

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4836

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 19, 2020

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**Assemblywomen McKnight, Lopez, Jimenez, Jasey, Timberlake,
Assemblyman Mejia, Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttie and Assemblyman
Conaway**

SYNOPSIS

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

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As amended by the General Assembly on May 20, 2021.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/30/2021)

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 ², and certain proprietary institutions,² during
 4 the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

8
 9 1. a. There is established a task force for the purpose of
 10 examining the quality, efficacy, costs, and educational outcomes of
 11 online courses offered by public and independent institutions of
 12 higher education ², and proprietary institutions licensed to offer
 13 academic degrees,² during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing
 14 recommendations for potential improvements in the delivery of
 15 online courses to students.

16 b. The task force shall consist of ¹[15] ²[16¹] 17² members as
 17 follows:

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

19 (2) one public member appointed by the President of the Senate
 20 and one public member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
 21 Senate, both of whom have expertise in issues related to the
 22 delivery of online ²[course] courses² in higher education;

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

27 (4) ¹[10] ²[11¹] 12² members appointed by the Governor,
 28 including: the president of a public research university, or a
 29 designee; the president of a State college or university established
 30 pursuant to chapter 64 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, or a
 31 designee; the president of a county college established pursuant to
 32 chapter 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, or a designee;
 33 the president of an independent institution of higher education, or a
 34 designee; ²the president of a proprietary institution licensed to offer
 35 academic degrees, or a designee;² a representative of the American
 36 Association of University Professors; a representative of the
 37 Council of New Jersey State College Locals AFT/AFL-CIO; ¹a
 38 representative of the New Jersey Education Association;¹ two
 39 individuals who are chief information officers or equivalent
 40 positions, one of whom shall be employed at a four-year institution
 41 of higher education and one of whom shall be employed at a county
 42 college; and two students, one of whom shall be currently enrolled
 43 in a four-year institution of higher education and one of whom shall
 44 be currently enrolled in a county college.

45 c. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days

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.

²Assembly floor amendments adopted May 20, 2021.

1 of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the
2 task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original
3 appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve
4 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary
5 expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members
6 of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or
7 otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

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

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

19

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

22 (1) the manner in which public and independent institutions of
23 higher education ²and degree-granting proprietary institutions²
24 shifted to online learning following the issuance of Executive Order
25 No. 104 of 2020 and the methods undertaken by institutions to
26 resume in-person courses following the issuance of Executive Order
27 No. 155 and Executive Order No. 175 of 2020;

28 (2) a description of each ²**[public and independent]**²
29 institution's strategy in delivering education to students, including
30 whether an institution offered all of its classes online, in person, or
31 through a hybrid program of online and in-person courses;

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

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

37 (5) a description and assessment of the efforts and policies set
38 forth by the institutions to ensure that students had access to the
39 technology and other resources necessary to complete online
40 courses during the pandemic;

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

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

- 1 (8) the perceptions of students, faculty, and staff of the quality
2 and value of online courses as compared to courses provided in
3 person;
- 4 (9) a comparison of the average completion rate and average
5 grade for students enrolled in each online course offered by each
6 institution during the COVID-19 pandemic and the average
7 completion rates and grades for those courses in the prior academic
8 year. The comparison shall indicate whether or not the courses
9 were provided online or in person in the previous academic year;
10 and
- 11 (10) an assessment of the policies and procedures each public
12 and independent institution of higher education ²and each degree-
13 granting proprietary institution² has in place to ensure that
14 institutional support, technological support, and faculty support are
15 provided to students enrolled in online courses to ensure a high
16 quality educational experience.
- 17 b. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and
18 recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant
19 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than two
20 years after the task force organizes.
- 21 c. The task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its
22 final report.
- 23
- 24 3. This act shall take effect immediately.