

P.L. 2021, CHAPTER 299, *approved November 8, 2021*  
 Assembly, No. 4836 (*Second Reprint*)

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 <sup>2</sup>, and certain proprietary institutions,<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>, and proprietary institutions licensed to offer  
 13 academic degrees,<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>1</sup>**[15]** <sup>2</sup>**[16<sup>1</sup>]** <sup>17</sup>17<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>**[course]** courses<sup>2</sup> 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) <sup>1</sup>**[10]** <sup>2</sup>**[11<sup>1</sup>]** <sup>12</sup>12<sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>2</sup>the president of a proprietary institution licensed to offer  
 35 academic degrees, or a designee;<sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>1</sup>a  
 38 representative of the New Jersey Education Association;<sup>1</sup> 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

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:

<sup>1</sup>Assembly AHI committee amendments adopted March 8, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Assembly floor amendments adopted May 20, 2021.

1 in a four-year institution of higher education and one of whom shall  
2 be currently enrolled in a county college.

3 c. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days  
4 of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the  
5 task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original  
6 appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve  
7 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary  
8 expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members  
9 of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or  
10 otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

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

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

22

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

25 (1) the manner in which public and independent institutions of  
26 higher education <sup>2</sup>and degree-granting proprietary institutions<sup>2</sup>  
27 shifted to online learning following the issuance of Executive Order  
28 No. 104 of 2020 and the methods undertaken by institutions to  
29 resume in-person courses following the issuance of Executive Order  
30 No. 155 and Executive Order No. 175 of 2020;

31 (2) a description of each <sup>2</sup>**【public and independent】**<sup>2</sup>  
32 institution's strategy in delivering education to students, including  
33 whether an institution offered all of its classes online, in person, or  
34 through a hybrid program of online and in-person courses;

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

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

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

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

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

4 (8) the perceptions of students, faculty, and staff of the quality  
5 and value of online courses as compared to courses provided in  
6 person;

7 (9) a comparison of the average completion rate and average  
8 grade for students enrolled in each online course offered by each  
9 institution during the COVID-19 pandemic and the average  
10 completion rates and grades for those courses in the prior academic  
11 year. The comparison shall indicate whether or not the courses  
12 were provided online or in person in the previous academic year;  
13 and

14 (10) an assessment of the policies and procedures each public  
15 and independent institution of higher education <sup>2</sup>and each degree-  
16 granting proprietary institution<sup>2</sup> has in place to ensure that  
17 institutional support, technological support, and faculty support are  
18 provided to students enrolled in online courses to ensure a high  
19 quality educational experience.

20 b. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and  
21 recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant  
22 to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than two  
23 years after the task force organizes.

24 c. The task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its  
25 final report.

26  
27 3. This act shall take effect immediately.  
28  
29  
30

31  
32 Establishes task force to evaluate quality, efficacy, costs, and  
33 educational outcomes of online courses offered by public and  
34 independent institutions of higher education and degree-granting  
35 proprietary institutions during COVID-19 pandemic.