

[First Reprint]

**SENATE, No. 3313**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**219th LEGISLATURE**

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INTRODUCED JANUARY 7, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator NELLIE POU**

**District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)**

**Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**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 Senate Higher Education Committee on March 11, 2021, with amendments.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/28/2021)**

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 <sup>1</sup>~~15~~ 16<sup>1</sup> 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) <sup>1</sup>~~10~~ 11<sup>1</sup> 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; <sup>1</sup>a representative of the  
35 New Jersey Education Association; <sup>1</sup>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

**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>Senate SHI committee amendments adopted March 11, 2021.

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

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

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

17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

47 (9) a comparison of the average completion rate and average  
48 grade for students enrolled in each online course offered by each

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