Higher Education in New Jersey Today: Highlights of Accomplishments and Collaborations to Meet Future Needs

With a staff of 18 people, the Secretary has reorganized limited personnel and partnered with other State agencies to preserve traditional programs while launching new initiatives that are re-introducing New Jersey to the national conversation about the important role of higher education in meeting critical needs of the State and nation while also addressing reform efforts.

Since last year, the following initiatives and programs have been central to our efforts and will be the key to advancing meaningful, accountable postsecondary education opportunities in the year ahead.

New Initiatives

- The Student Success Collaborative
  On February 24, 2016, the Secretary convened the first meeting of the Student Success Collaborative to bring together leaders with statewide, national and international experience, to identify and disseminate highly effective policies and strategies. The Student Success Collaborative will examine higher education institutions’ policies, programs and practices related to student safety and success. A review of the following areas will be conducted to identify exemplars as well as weaknesses in: advising and counseling; sexual harassment and assault; experiences of students based on race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender; financial aid; commuter and residential student life; and general campus climate.

- The Anchor Institution Initiative
  Our agency is planning a conference in the fall, bringing together select higher education institutions, community leaders and organizations to address the needs of several of our most challenged urban communities. This initiative recognizes the unique role our higher education institutions can play in enhancing the future of our urban centers. Neighboring higher education institutions will focus on quality partnerships in Newark, Paterson, Trenton, Camden and Atlantic City. Working to facilitate collective impact, we believe that we can transform and enhance the quality of life for our citizens and their communities.
• **The New Jersey Talent Pipeline Academy**
On May 26, 2016 we will participate with half a dozen public and private agencies in a High Quality Partnership Summit at the Conference Center at Mercer. A High Quality Partnership is a team, driven by a group of industry employers, partnered with education, workforce, organized labor and economic development, which uses industry data to create career pathways for individuals that result in industry-valued credentials, certificates or degrees. Hosted by the New Jersey Talent Pipeline Policy Academy, the High Quality Partnership Summit will provide an opportunity to learn about New Jersey’s vision for High Quality Partnerships, hear how peers are utilizing partnerships to drive progress, and identify ways to grow High Quality Partnerships in the State. The Summit aims to bring leaders from workforce development boards, higher education institutions, K-12 education and career and technical education centers, Talent Networks, economic development organizations, organized labor, and other community organizations together with business and industry. The Talent Pipeline Academy is supported by the National Governor’s Association.

**Expanded and Enhanced Initiatives and Programs**

• **Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)**
Since our agency was named project manager in Fall 2014 of a $4 million, federally funded initiative to share student data among agencies, our SLDS state project team has made great progress. When construction of the new system is complete the State will have the ability – as many states already do – to evaluate student performance from kindergarten, through high school, postsecondary education and into the workforce. The data system will indicate areas of need such as the evaluation of effective intervention programs at the pre-K through 12 and Post-Secondary Education levels. It will contribute to more efficient and effective decision making by agencies and institutions using data, and the improvement of the implementation of services, programs and curriculum for students and jobseekers. The data system will have the potential to highlight successful programs and best practices that can serve as models for new programs and policies. Funding for the SLDS project is scheduled to expire in June 2016.

• **Educational Opportunity Fund**
Our Educational Opportunity Fund is a model for the nation, providing aid and support services to 13,000 disadvantaged students in 60 programs in collaboration with 41 colleges and universities. The program helps mentor and tutor economically challenged students who are among the first in their families to attend college. Fully 55 percent of the students in EOF programs in New Jersey public state universities and colleges graduate within six years. Our students had a higher graduation rate than any of the other students in a survey of low income students in 15 states. The Administration revitalized the EOF program, appointing a new board, making the program fully compliant with regulations. For more detail, go here: [http://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/index/EOFPROGRESSREPORTFINALMay2015.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/index/EOFPROGRESSREPORTFINALMay2015.pdf)
• **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Pathways Network**
  The New Jersey STEM Pathways Network is a public-private strategic alliance established to inform the alignment of STEM resources, support an education-to-workforce STEM pipeline, identify exemplary formal and informal learning opportunities, and promote STEM career pathway awareness. At the Secretary's request, more than three dozen representatives of academia, industry, foundations and government are working together to ensure that NJ remains globally competitive in STEM industries and continues its rich history of innovation by attracting, cultivating and retaining a diverse talent pool. On several occasions earlier this year, members of the STEM Pathways Network met with the New Jersey School Boards Association, the DOE, the NJEA, the Dodge and Woodrow Wilson Foundations to develop a pilot project to improve the delivery of STEM education in the K-12 grades. The pilot will focus on more effectively involving women and minorities in STEM subjects to better prepare them for the careers of the future.

• **GEAR UP: Helping Low-income Students Transition from High School to College**
  In partnership with Elevate Education (Elevate), NJ GEAR UP has launched a new and exciting pilot program to deliver a series of high impact interactive workshops that promotes and enhances effective study skills. Elevate will provide end-to-end study skill solutions to 240 middle and high school students at NJ GEAR UP program sites in Camden, Jersey City and Trenton. Our program to help middle and high school students transition to college gets results. We know that 98 percent of the low-income students in our GEAR UP program graduate from high school, and more than 80 percent enroll in a higher education institution within six months of their high school graduation. Our GEAR UP program (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) works with low-income students in 56 middle and high schools in some of the most impoverished areas of the State, including Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, Trenton, Camden, Bridgeton, Atlantic City and Pleasantville. The participating partner higher education institutions are Atlantic Cape Community College, Cumberland County College, New Jersey City University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Passaic County Community College and Rowan University. The program recently expanded to include Salem County Community College and the Penns Grove School District.

• **College Readiness Now**
  The College Readiness Now program is a partnership among the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) and all 19 of New Jersey's county colleges to implement bridge programs to address the remediation needs of graduating high school students prior to their enrollment in college. At the conclusion of the 2014 pilot program, the 19 county colleges had partnered with over 60 high schools across the state and enrolled 921 students in bridge programs to help the students improve their English and math skills. As a result, 440 students achieved college ready status in English and/or mathematics upon successful completion of the program and the other 481 students
reduced their need for remedial education. Students in some of the pilot programs were also able to participate in free dual-enrollment opportunities to earn college credit prior to graduating from high school.

- **New Jersey Prior Learning Assessment Network (NJ PLAN).**
The New Jersey Prior Learning Assessment Network (NJ PLAN) is a consortium of New Jersey colleges and universities partnering to help students earn credit toward their degrees. Through “Prior Learning Assessment,” students earn college credit for the college level learning they have already acquired outside the classroom. This process allows students to shorten the time to degree completion, while lowering costs and increasing access and retention. Thomas Edison State University, a pioneer and national leader in prior learning assessment, is serving as the anchor institution of the consortium. The NJ PLAN pilot program, with the help of a grant provided by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, is now working with 14 higher education institutions on this important, expanding program.

**Ongoing Responsibilities**

- **Licensure and Accreditation**
Before the Secretary reorganized the office, the agency had a three-year backlog of licensure applications for new schools and programs. Today there is no backlog. A cumbersome review process has been revamped. Applications that once were available only in paper are now routinely uploaded online for password-protected confidential review by the Academic Issues Committee of the Presidents’ Council. Decisions are rendered promptly. Our agency informs the accreditation process in New Jersey and participates in national conferences on accreditation. Our agency has overseen a significant expansion in the number of higher education institutions which have joined with New Jersey-based partners to offer a wide variety of new degrees to New Jersey residents in a number of areas such as computer science, business, criminal justice, health services, nursing, psychoanalysis, psychology, education, sports management, communications, and higher education leadership. In addition, institutions offer hundreds of New Jersey high school students the opportunity to take an impressive range of dual credit offerings, jump-starting their college careers and accelerating degree completion. Our agency has also provided guidance and assistance that has resulted in the approval of petitions from a number of long-standing New Jersey institutions in order to adjust their programmatic missions. These developments will allow the institutions to expand their offerings and enrollment, enhance the reputations of the institutions and the State, and provide an increased economic benefit to New Jersey and local communities.
• **A Web Site with More Information Available to the Public**
  Our agency maintains a wealth of information available through our New Jersey Data Dashboard on our web site. Thirty public institutions of higher education post annual institutional profiles including graduation and retention rates. Tuition, fees, enrollment and information on transfers are all easily available through portals clearly posted on the front page of our web site.

• **An e-letter to 600,000 Students, Parents, Faculty, State Lawmakers, K-12 Educators, and Leaders of Business and Industry**
  The Office of the Secretary recently established an e-letter that informs the public of important higher education news, successes in research and new programs and opportunities for students. The e-letter is distributed electronically to more than 600,000 college students, faculty, staff, state and federal lawmakers, and high school administrators and guidance counselors. By disseminating news about higher education throughout the State, the e-letter helps identify and promote the achievements of our higher education institutions to a broad audience.

• **The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) & Student Unit Record System (SURE)**
  Data from IPEDS and SURE ensures the availability of information for various public consumers and increases transparency and accountability of the institutions of higher education:
  - **The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)** is the national data collection system for higher education. As the state coordinator for New Jersey, OSHE is responsible for coordinating the completion of federal surveys for over 70 New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education. Participants in our Student Unit Record (SURE) system have significant portions of their federal IPEDS surveys completed for them. In addition to completing surveys during the three IPEDS web-based collections, New Jersey institutions are required to complete additional state-specific forms.
  - **The Student Unit Record (SURE)** system is designed to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to discharge its research, planning, and coordinating responsibilities, and to assist institutions in a variety of ways, e.g., by tracking their transfers and reducing their need to fill out additional surveys. All 30 of New Jersey’s public colleges and universities—and nine (9) participating independent institutions—currently participate in SURE. SURE maintains student level record information on fall enrollment, fiscal year enrollment, degree completions, and transfer of students. In addition, it maintains non-credit enrollment for the 19 community colleges.
• **Institutional Profiles**
  The office is responsible for collecting, compiling, and analyzing data on our state's colleges and universities. The principal data collection tools are the national Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and New Jersey's Student Unit Record (SURE) system. The information received from institutions is processed to create reports on all facets of their operations: enrollment, faculty, finances, etc. Analysis of this data is used in reports and is made available to the higher education and wider communities. Each year, the form and content of the website is shared with the Presidents' Council.

• **New Jersey College Student & Consumer Information Act**
  The New Jersey College Student and Parent Consumer Information Act requires each New Jersey four-year public college and university to display on its website comprehensive information on the cost of attendance, the graduation rates of admitted students, and the faculty of the institution. It also requires the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to establish the guidelines, criteria, and format in reporting the information prepared pursuant to the Act. The statute specifies certain required data for inclusion and calls for the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to create a comparative profile of the student consumer information reports for this website.

• **Transfer of Credit Annual Report**
  In accordance with statute N.J.S.A 18A: 62-46, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) and the New Jersey Presidents' Council have established the Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement. Under this agreement, OSHE has compiled data from New Jersey senior public institutions of higher education about students transferring from New Jersey community colleges. The report is posted annually on the OSHE website.

• **Higher Education Data Advisory Group**
  Established by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), the Higher Education Data Advisory Group (HEDAG) provides counsel to OSHE on the collection, use and sharing of information about our State's colleges and universities. As data play a greater role in the decision making process, it has become more important to ensure data integrity and safety in response to changing needs. HEDAG ensures the participation of data providers and users in monitoring data policy.

• **Inventory of Degree and Certificate Program Offerings**
  The Inventory of Degree and Certificate Program Offerings at New Jersey institutions of higher education contains information about over 4,000 approved degree and certificate programs at licensed New Jersey institutions of higher education. OSHE collects and publishes data on credit bearing certificate and degree programs that receive approval by the Academic Issues Committee and the Presidents' Council.