Highlights of Historic Reforms, Accomplishments

2017

- The Many Paths, One Future: 65 by '25 Attainment Goal is announced, meaning that by the year 2025, 65 percent of the working-age adults in New Jersey will have attained a degree, certificate, or industry-recognized stackable credential. Currently, the attainment rate for New Jersey is 50.2 percent, one of the best in the nation but not nearly high enough to meet the forecast demand for skilled labor in the years ahead (Lumina Foundation, A Stronger Nation, New Jersey's Report 2017). A resolution supporting the goal was signed by the Governor’s Higher Education Council, the Acting Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development and the Secretary of Higher Education. The goal has been endorsed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the State Employment and Training Commission.

- After approving $180 million for 35 projects at 32 higher education institutions last summer, contracts are being signed and construction plans are moving forward. This second round of funding followed $1.3 billion approved for 176 higher education construction projects in 2013.

- A New Jersey Anchor Institutions event is planned for May 30, 2017 at the Educational Testing Services in Princeton. Following two years of exploratory and developmental work, this event will formally launch the New Jersey Coalition of Anchor Institutions. The higher education institutions work collaboratively to design and implement place-based systemic, sustainable solutions with statewide policy implications. Together, we are developing fresh opportunities and means to redress entrenched challenges, engaging the citizens in the work of transforming their communities.

- The Secretary created the STEM Pathways Network to better prepare students for in-demand jobs of the future in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). With support from the Overdeck Family Foundation, the Secretary announced the creation of four “STEM Ecosystems” in Delran, Newark, South Jersey and Jersey City. Those representatives in April attended a national convening in Tampa, learning best practices from 37 other STEM ecosystems around the country. An “ecosystem” is a community that includes a higher education institution, a school district, local businesses and industry, foundations, teachers, parents, students and state agencies all working together to improve instruction and ensure that students have a clear pathway to rewarding jobs in STEM fields that also help drive the State’s economy.
• The **Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault**, which is staffed by the Secretary’s office, has been working diligently toward finishing its report in June. The Task Force has met 10 times since its creation and initial organizational meeting in June 2016.

• At an April 7 **Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF)** student awards ceremony, a record 1,070 students were recognized for high academic achievement. From April 23 to 26, 2017, our agency’s EOF program hosted the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Atlantic City. State-supported opportunity fund leaders from New York and Pennsylvania joined New Jersey leaders to discuss how disadvantaged students could continue to be granted access to transformative academic programs. The New Jersey EOF will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

• Our agency began accepting applications in February from New Jersey’s institutions which want to offer online courses in other states. Under the recently signed **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)**, New Jersey institutions can offer online courses in 47 states and the District of Columbia without going through each state’s licensure process.

• Discussions of a **funding rationale for New Jersey’s higher education institutions** continue. The Secretary and the Presidents’ Council have been in productive discussions, informed by the independent analysis and recommendations from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Recently, HCM Strategists, supported by the Lumina Foundation, agreed to provide additional support.

• In April, the agency submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education to compete for a seven-year grant award to continue our highly successful **Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)** initiative, which currently serves about 2,300 disadvantaged middle and high school students in New Jersey.

• The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education has served as the lead agency in the creation of a statewide longitudinal data system with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development; the Department of Education; the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers; and the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission. The system has been built and successfully tested. The **New Jersey Education to Earnings Data System (NJEEDS)** will provide data to decision makers to better inform policy for State government.

The Secretary created a **new higher education blog**, upgrading its earlier e-letter, promoting good news and interesting achievements by New Jersey colleges and universities. The blog is distributed to about 600,000 higher education full- and part-time students, faculty and staff; teachers, guidance counselors and administrators in the K-12 school system; state and federal lawmakers; business and industry leaders; and higher education associations.
2016

- With College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) federal funding, the Secretary supported the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program to increase the number of students completing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) baccalaureate degree programs.

- Partnering with NASA and the New Jersey School Boards Association, the Secretary established the Minority Educator Institute to encourage more minority students to pursue careers in STEM-related fields.

- The Secretary expanded the Student Success Initiative to become the Student Success Collaborative to bring together leaders with statewide, national and international experience, to help identify and disseminate effective policies and strategies to enhance student success.

- The Secretary launched the Coalition of Anchor Institutions initiative to identify, develop and expand how select higher education “anchor institutions” can most effectively work collaboratively with urban communities to effect systemic change.

- A test run of our new Statewide Longitudinal Data System by the Heldrich Center at Rutgers shows a very encouraging 82 percent match among the four state data systems that will be used to better inform coherent and consistent state policy across agencies.

- After legislative action approved by the Governor, the Secretary organized the Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault in response to the growing concern of sexual assault incidents on college campuses across the country.

2015

- The Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) released a progress report showing that its students in New Jersey four-year public institutions rank number one when compared with the college graduation rates of disadvantaged students in 15 states.

- The Secretary begins the NJ STEM Pathways Network, a public-private strategic alliance established to improve the alignment of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) resources.

- The departments of Education and Labor and Workforce Development, the State Employment and Training Commission and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education won a National Governors Association planning grant to find ways to leverage and align State resources to promote career awareness, education and industry partnerships, employability and industry skill development.
• The Secretary began work with higher education institutions and Campus Compact in Paterson, Camden, Trenton and Newark. The goal is to draw on academic expertise while fully engaging residents as partners in finding and implementing ways to improve the quality of life in these communities.

• Through the Office of the Secretary, New Jersey colleges and universities are encouraged to compete for the first time in the federal Green Ribbon schools program. The program recognizes institutions that reduce environmental impact and costs, improve the wellness of students and staff and incorporate STEM, civic skills and green career pathways. Raritan Valley Community College was one of 11 colleges honored nationally.

2014

• The Office of the Secretary introduced regulations allowing the implementation of the Tuition Equality Act, also known as the Dream Act, which permits institutions to charge undocumented residents in-state tuition.

• The Secretary reorganized the office and modernized the processing of Licensure applications. The move completely eliminates a three-year backlog of applications for new programs. An all-paper process is transformed into an all-electronic process.

• The Governor appointed a new Board of Directors for the Educational Opportunity Fund, the first time the EOF board is at full strength in many years.

• To more effectively disseminate news and information about higher education, the Secretary started an e-letter which is distributed to 600,000 educators, lawmakers, guidance counselors, college students, faculty members, staff and other stakeholder groups.

• With federal funding, the Secretary began the College Readiness Now program with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges. By the end of the year, 19 county colleges partnered with 60 high schools and enrolled 921 students in bridge programs to help improve their English and math skills. In 2016 and 2017, the Governor budgeted funds to extend the program.

• In collaboration with Thomas Edison State University, the Secretary created the New Jersey Prior Learning Assessment Network (NJ PLAN), which will help students earn college credit for what they can prove they already know. As of 2016, 11 colleges and universities are participating in the program that can save students time and money.

• To control online costs and fees incurred by institutions, the Secretary organized a New Jersey review team to examine the merits of joining the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA).
• The Secretary began the Student Success Initiative and conducted a student survey on advising in partnership with Stockton University's Center for Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance.

2013

• After voters approved the Building Our Future Bond Act in November 2012, regulations were promulgated by our agency by January 2013, allowing applications to be developed and disseminated.

• In February, the Secretary and the Educational Facilities Authority hosted a technical assistance session for institutions interested in applying for Building Our Future funds.

• In March, institutions submitted more than 250 applications.

• By the end of April, the Secretary proposed $1.3 billion in spending for 176 projects to benefit 46 higher education institutions throughout the State.

• By June, the State reorganized the delivery of medical education in New Jersey. Rutgers received a medical school and most of the public health institutes and programs from the former University of Medicine and Dentistry. Rowan University was designated to become a public research university and is given a second medical school to operate.

• The Office of the Secretary redesigned and improved its website, contracting with the State Department of Treasury to improve office technology and securely back up thousands of previously unprotected electronic files and emails.

• Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno announced the creation of a new Council on Innovation and asked the Secretary to serve as chair. In addition, the Secretary is asked to join the award-winning Partnership for Action to find ways that industry and academia can work together to improve New Jersey's economy and attract more federal funding.

• More than 40,000 books were distributed to disadvantaged children through a grant provided by the Secretary. Through a partnership with the African-American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, administrators and staff at the institution now known as Rowan College at Burlington County (RCBC) work with the First Book organization to distribute the books. RCBC is the first college in the nation to work with First Book and serve its community. The program continues and expands in later years.

2012

• The Secretary presented a Showcase for Academic Excellence to feature best practices for higher education teacher preparation programs in New Jersey.
• New Jersey joined the Education Delivery Institute in Washington, D.C., as part of an effort with more than a dozen states to improve graduation rates and diminish achievement gaps.

• With the departments of Education and Labor and Workforce Development, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education won a $5 million federal grant to construct a Statewide Longitudinal Data System which later becomes NJEEDS. NJEEDS will improve our ability to collect and disseminate academic performance data to inform policy and program development.

• In November, voters approved $750 million in funding for higher education construction, the first such support offered by the State in 25 years. With another $550 million allocated in contract bonds, New Jersey colleges and universities are invited to compete for nearly $1.3 billion in construction funds.

2011

• The Governor’s Task Force on Higher Education’s report was released to the public on January 4.

• Governor Christie named Rochelle Hendricks the first Secretary of Higher Education in New Jersey on May 12.

• The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education won a $24 million, six-year federal GEAR UP grant to create a transition to college for more than 2,300 disadvantaged students per year from Atlantic City, Pleasantville, Bridgeton, Camden, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and Trenton.

• At the Secretary’s invitation, the National Governors Association hosted a policy academy at the Educational Testing Service to help plan for the future of higher education in New Jersey.

• Dr. Sol Barer was named by Governor Christie to chair the University of Medicine and Dentistry Advisory Committee to study a merger with Rutgers.
Higher Education Priorities

Student Success: Focus on access and attainment to ensure equity and college readiness. Increase diversity, improve advising, reduce remediation. Concentrate on completion, online learning, K-12 collaboration, two-year and four-year college partnerships and creating pathways to success.

Affordability: Encourage dual enrollment, strengthen transfer and reverse transfer agreements, reward collaborations, evaluate academic advising and financial aid policy and practices, and provide students with incentives for on-time completion.

Workforce Alignment/Economic Growth: Foster business and industry partnerships, industry-aligned certificates and stackable credentials, increase research, internships; improve career counseling and placement services. Promote innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration among New Jersey's institutions of higher education.

Higher Education Finance: Promote fairness, predictability, and mission-based incentives. Identify current funding sources, develop a funding rationale and consider new financial models for efficiency and effectiveness.

Autonomy and Accountability: Improve transparency, accountability and consumer access to data, updating required collections. Disseminate information with local, State and national context. Explore capacity, authority and communication; provide analysis. Promote continuous improvement and safeguard the public interest.

Civic Engagement: Promote the significance of the role of higher education in the life of the community and the State. Use expertise to solve problems.