



Stockton Report Recommends Changes to Make Higher Education More Affordable, Effective

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Galloway, NJ - Stockton's Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance Project (HESIG) issued a report today that recommends these changes to make college more affordable and easier to complete, and to give students the skills they need to succeed in the workforce:

- Broaden partnerships with high schools to teach subjects and skills needed to succeed in college and the workforce, and grant college-level credit for those courses; partner with community colleges on credit transfer, to shorten time needed to complete a degree, and to reduce college cost;
- Expand partnerships with businesses to help build programs that combine workforce and academic skills, and to create internships;
- Reduce the number of degree credits required for graduation by giving credit for evidence of knowledge gained outside of college;
- Provide a clearly articulated set of specific abilities across disciplines that college graduates are expected to master, such as effective writing, speaking, and decision making; and workplace skills such as teamwork, punctuality and tolerance of diversity.
- Restructure student financial aid for different types of students, programs and institutions to increase affordability, and reduce debt; and prioritize support for success programs for low-income, first-generation, and adult students.

"HESIG's work to promote college access, affordability and quality is critically important to the future of higher education," said President Herman Saatkamp of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. "Stockton is pleased to work with our state and national partners to enable more students to further their educations, and to reap the value of a college degree throughout their lives."

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Today's report offers policy recommendations and a "tool kit" of best practices for New Jersey colleges and state policy makers to help narrow the "achievement gap" for college-bound students, and to add value to the college outcomes. It was underwritten in part by a grant from the ETS Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy, with support from the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, Stockton Polling Institute and New Jersey City University.

The 2014 initiative titled "Finding Solutions, Building Public Trust in an Era of Change," engaged citizens and executives on the role of higher education in helping to secure the long-term prosperity of the state. The HESIG project accomplished this by: convening two "executive roundtable" forums of state leaders from business, education, government, the media; and conducting a statewide survey of citizens to test the support for needed educational change to increase college value. The roundtables were held at Stockton College and New Jersey City University.

HESIG Senior Fellow Darryl Greer, who headed the project, said: "What's at stake is citizens' future opportunity to compete and prosper in New Jersey. This initiative goes to the heart of fulfilling the promise of the benefit of a college education."

"The report provides a strong foundation on which to build statewide awareness of what needs to be done by colleges, in partnership with others, to take action on the college success agenda," said Lenora Green, Senior Director of the ETS Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy.

New Jersey City University President Sue Henderson stated: "The project provides important guidance on what colleges and universities must do to achieve high value outcomes for all students. We will use the report to help the university expand partnership initiatives already underway to give students the skills needed to succeed in college and beyond."

The report notes that executives and citizens polled agree that adding more practical experience for students while in college would make higher education more valuable, and that top skills to be gained from college include: writing and speaking clearly; and problem solving.

Dr. Harvey Kesselman, Stockton provost and executive vice president of the college, noted that these skills are a high priority for Stockton students, as part of faculty-developed Top 10 Learning Outcomes.

In line with some of the report's other recommendations, Stockton currently offers dual enrollment programs at 17 high schools, allowing students to take college courses while in high school, earning credits at reduced rates. The college also has an extensive internship program. In addition to increasing scholarships and other aid, Stockton is the only New Jersey state public school with a Grant In Aid program, which in Fall 2014 offered 1,000 students scholarships totaling \$3 million.

The Stockton statewide poll, released earlier this year, found that citizens believe that New Jersey's colleges exhibit excellent/good quality (87 percent); and high value (90 percent) for the cost. Yet 87 percent of citizens polled think that colleges need to change educational and business practices to increase value; and see jobs and careers as an important expected outcome of college.

HESIG plans to expand its work on these important issues during 2015 through polling research, invitational forums and policy advocacy. Summaries of the executive roundtables, participants, and survey findings are at: www.stockton.edu/hughescenter/hesig.

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Higher Education and Strategic Information Governance (HESIG)

HESIG serves as an agent for constructive higher education policy change, by recommending strategic policy action aligned with a public agenda to serve the public good. Guiding principles include: enhancing college access, affordability, completion, productivity, accountability, and building partnerships to achieve these ends.

William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and is also the home of the Stockton Polling Institute. The Center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton College. The Hughes Center can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter and found on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College>. The Hughes Center blog can be found at blogs.stockton.edu/policyhues.

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