



Lieut. Gov. Kim Guadagno Meets with Business, Education and Government Leaders at Stockton

Connecting Education and Jobs Is Theme at May 5 Meeting

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Galloway Township, NJ - The state, higher education and business came together today at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey to work on closing "the disconnect" between the 200,000 available jobs in New Jersey and the state's 7.2 percent unemployment rate.

Lieut. Gov. Kim Guadagno visited Stockton's main Galloway campus to speak with President Herman Saatkamp, Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks, Commissioner Harold Wirths of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, President Peter Mora of Atlantic Cape Community College and a roundtable of business, education and government leaders from southern New Jersey.

Stockton's Talent Network for Retail, Hospitality and Tourism is one of New Jersey's seven Talent Networks, which train workers for jobs that industry leaders want to fill.

"We understand, under President Saakamp, that things are working very well right here," Lieut. Gov. Guadagno said, citing the Talent Network and other workforce development programs.

"President Saatkamp is a leader and innovator who understands the importance of being a strong and reliable partner with the surrounding communities, businesses and industries," said Secretary Hendricks. "His efforts have solidified Stockton College as a stellar example of how colleges can meet critical needs and provide a clear vision for the future.

Stockton is working with elementary and high schools, community colleges and other four-year institutions on workforce development, President Saatkamp said, adding that about 70-80 percent of Stockton graduates have jobs within six months after they graduate.

But he asked the business leaders, "What are the skills we should be focusing on?"

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Paul Gentilini, whose family owns Ford and Chevrolet dealerships in Woodbine, Cape May County, said, "It's always hard for us to find qualified technicians." He said many of his hires have gone to Universal Technical Institute (UTI) which has locations around the country, the closest one being in Philadelphia. He said he would like to have a similar training facility in southern New Jersey.

Lori S. Herndon, a Stockton alumna who is president and chief executive officer of the AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, and executive vice president of AtlantiCare, said partnerships with Stockton and ACCC have been instrumental in providing trained nurses, nurse-practitioners and other health sciences staff.

Commissioner Wirths said his department is spending training money only on "real-time jobs." "We're going to employers, asking what's needed and training for those jobs," he said.

Frank Formica, Atlantic County freeholder chairman and owner of Formica Bros. Bakery, an Atlantic City family business that dates to 1916, said too many young people think they need to leave southern New Jersey to find jobs, and that federal Workforce Investment Board (WIB) dollars need to be better aligned with real jobs.

"Tell us what you want," Lieut. Gov. Guadagno said.

"Put the marketing out that there are jobs here," Formica said.

Freeholder Alex Marino added that county officials want to make sure there is a real return on investment when government funding is spent on training.

President Saatkamp suggested doing more work on internships, including emphasizing "soft skills," such as getting along with others in the workplace. He also said that Stockton's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and the Stockton Polling Institute could be resources on workforce development issues.

Anthony J. Coppola, Sr., owner of the Historic Town of Smithville and a member of the Stockton Foundation board, said his business has a need for training in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), and Spanish-as-a-Second-Language.

"We do that," Wirths said.

ACCC President Mora added, "We do a tremendous amount of work in ESL for casinos." He offered to work with Coppola on the training.

Bharat Aggarwal, who owns three Pilani's stores on the Atlantic City Boardwalk that sell women's clothing, jewelry and exotic snacks, said retail on the Boardwalk is "getting tackier and tackier."

"We're trying to change that," he said, and offered Lieut. Gov. Guadagno a list of suggestions for making Boardwalks better.

Pilani's has received help through Stockton's Small Business Development Center with business strategy, planning and identifying funding to purchase two of the stores, and help to grow the business and extend product offerings.

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“We have established The Richard Stockton College as a center of excellence for our students and we are pleased and honored by the kind and gracious words of the lieutenant governor and members of the Governor’s Cabinet,” said President Saatkamp. “We have always been an integral part of our community, and as Stockton continues to prosper, I am confident we will find new ways to help our community grow with us.”

President Saatkamp told the group to “think five, 10 and 20 years down the road,” in developing more training and jobs for the region and state. “We can do it,” he said.

The group also included: Atlantic County Freeholder Will Pauls, who is president of the South Jersey Building Trades; Ron Johnson, CEO of Shore Medical Center and a Stockton graduate; Tom Ballance, a Stockton graduate who is president and COO of the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa; Andrew J. Musick, director of Policy and Research at the New Jersey Business & Industry Association; Sheila Smallwood, manager of the Laboratory Services Division at the FAA’s William J. Hughes Technical Center; and Sharon Schulman, a Stockton graduate who is CEO of External Affairs and Institutional Research at the college.

The lieutenant governor also toured the college’s Independence Plaza, where a two-story mural of the Declaration of Independence shows the signatures of the founding fathers, including that of Richard Stockton, for whom the college is named. She met with members of the community at a reception in the Campus Center’s Grand Hall.

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