

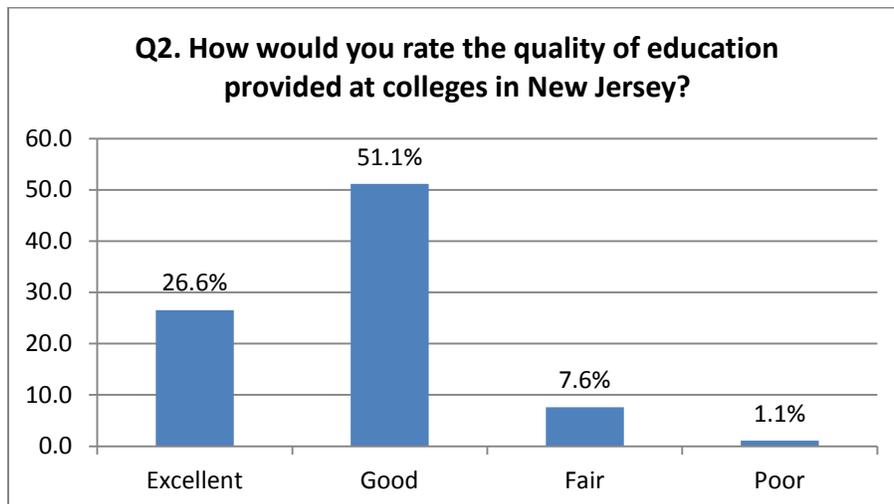
## Stockton Poll: NJ Colleges and Universities Seen as High Quality, But Cost Is Major Barrier

***For Immediate Release:  
With weighted frequencies in attachment***

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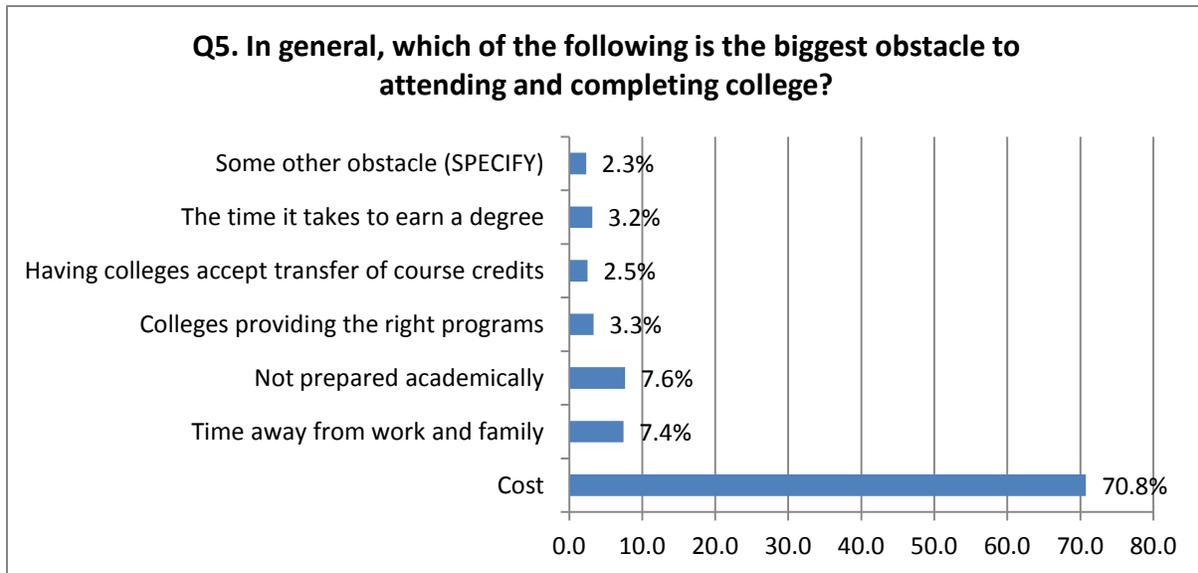
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**Galloway, NJ** – Adults in New Jersey view Garden State colleges and universities as having high quality and providing high value for the investment, with a majority saying colleges help in job and workforce development, according to a Stockton Polling Institute poll of over 1,000 individuals in New Jersey.



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"Cost is seen as a major barrier, and citizens expect state and college leaders to make needed reforms to boost college affordability and completion," said Dr. Darryl Greer, Ph.D., Senior Fellow at the Hughes Center and Director of the Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance Center. The poll is part of a larger project on higher education policy reform, "Building Public Trust in an Era of Change."



New Jerseyans are somewhat split over the affordability of college, with 47 percent describing college in New Jersey as affordable, while 40 percent say flatly that college is not affordable. A majority (54 percent) also believes it is unlikely that student financial aid will be available to them or their families.

Citizens see state funding cuts, salary increases, and the cost of facilities and technology as factors driving college costs.

"College hiring practices and state-negotiated salary and benefit packages greatly influence cost," Greer said. "Clearly both parties need to partner on reform in this critical area."

Citizens take a balanced view of responsibility for state and college reforms to improve college affordability and completion rates, with about 42 percent indicating that more state funding or more student financial aid is needed. Almost an equal number (45 percent) say that better college cost control and tighter reins on tuition, such as tying tuition to the rate of inflation, would help families afford college.

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“Among possible reforms to improve affordability and completion, it seems as if the public expects state and college leaders to stick to basics and not get lost in the policy weeds of reforms that only marginally help with college opportunity and completion,” Greer said.

Regarding new modes of delivering college courses, it appears that the public has not fully embraced new technologies as a solution. Not only do citizens prefer traditional four-year colleges over online programs, but online delivery did not rank high (15 percent) as a fix for the affordability/completion challenge. Nearly 30 percent believe that only some New Jersey colleges should specialize in online degree programs, while 54 percent think that all colleges should offer online programs.

“This response, taken with the strong preference for traditional four-year college instruction, indicates that the public may favor a hybrid approach to college learning, not simply more technology,” Greer said.

Finally, regarding trust to take responsibility for improving college access, affordability and completion, citizens trust college leaders 2-1 over the governor and over the state Legislature.

“While colleges share responsibility for making college less affordable, it seems that the public continues to trust presidents and boards of trustees to continue to provide high quality service, and to make needed reforms,” Greer said.

### **Methodology**

More than 1,000 adult New Jersey residents were interviewed by the Stockton Polling Institute for the Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance Center (HESIG). Both the polling institute and HESIG are components of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted at the Stockton Polling Institute by live interviewers calling from the Stockton College campus. The poll was conducted from March 15-31, 2013. Interviewers called both land lines and cell phones. All prospective respondent households in the source telephone list have the same chance of joining the sample because of the random digital dialing system (RDD). Data is weighted according to United States Census Bureau demographics for New Jersey voter age population.

### **About the Hughes Center**

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy ([www.stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://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. The center is named for Ambassador 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 found at [www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College](https://www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College) and can be followed on [Twitter@hughescenter](https://twitter.com/hughescenter).

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