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THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Stockton-Zogby Poll Measures Parent Attitudes Toward Higher Education in NJ

Most Believe College Funding Should Be a Priority

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, August 24, 2010

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Galloway Township, NJ- A Stockton-Zogby poll has found that an overwhelming majority of New Jersey parents of 9th to 12th grade students believe higher education should be a top budget priority and that the current level of funding is unsatisfactory. Moreover, the poll states most parents would trade off improvements to the state's roads and infrastructure if that meant additional funding for higher education.

"The point is driven home by the fact that nearly every single respondent in every demographic category said it is important for their children to go to college (98 percent overall), and it was likely they would do so," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton.

The telephone survey, commissioned by Stockton, polled approximately 2,000 parents of students in grades 9-12 statewide and included oversamples in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean and Salem Counties from July 15 to July 27, 2010. The margin for error was plus or minus 3.5 percent statewide and plus or minus 4.1 percent in the oversampled counties. In addition to geography, the respondents were broken down according to age, race, gender, income and level of education.

Respondents were asked a series of 40 questions concerning such topics as higher education funding, paying for college, perceptions of two-year schools vs. four-year schools, public vs. private, school reputations, etc.

Majorities in all groups rated positively the overall quality of New Jersey's county colleges, public and private four-year institutions, and most anticipated their children would attend a four-year public college or university in New Jersey. Most parents had a more positive view of four-year institutions over two-year institutions, but that private four-year schools were not seen as superior to public ones. Not surprisingly cost is the major factor parents cite for sending their children to a public college or university.

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Stockton-Zogby Higher Education Poll/ page 2

College Funding:

Overall, 73 percent of parents statewide and similar amounts in the oversampled counties thought more funding should be available for higher education.

Among acceptable tradeoffs for getting more funding, in addition to infrastructure (31 percent statewide), choices included less money to programs for small businesses (26 percent) and paying higher taxes (22 percent).

When asked to name their top three state budget priorities, all groups agreed education was an area that should receive priority funding with K-12 education at around 60 percent and higher education around 54 percent. The third priority for the parents was healthcare around 37 percent.

College Costs:

Scholarships were the top choice to pay for college among 67 percent of respondents statewide. Children paying their own way was chosen by more than 30 percent of the respondents.

Likelihood to Attend a New Jersey State College

Seventy eight percent of the respondents throughout the state said their children were likely to attend a college or university in New Jersey, and in most cases they would select a four-year college or university and more than half said it would be a public one.

Of those who say their children are not likely to go to a private four-year school, three-quarters say the main reason is cost.

[Percentages are rounded and may be slightly different based on whether it is a statewide or oversample result. Figures for each sampling area are available.]

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