

Commission Promotes NJEDge

COMMON IDENTITY EMPHASIZES THE COMPETITIVE EDGE NEW JERSEY'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES PROVIDE

NJEDge (•n jāy ej') n. A diverse system of two- and four-year public and independent colleges and universities giving students, employers, and the state a competitive edge.

NJEDge will soon be synonymous with New Jersey's colleges and universities. Creation of the NJEDge "brand" is part of an effort by the Commission on Higher Education and the Presidents' Council to raise the profile of the state's higher education system and increase awareness about its educational, economic, and societal contributions.

As a critical part of the state's economy, New Jersey's 57 diverse colleges and universities serve students, employers, government and policymakers, and the general citizenry. NJEDge provides a unifying identity that communicates higher education's pivotal role in maintaining the state's economic edge and providing all New Jerseyans with an educational advantage in today's competitive marketplace.

For example, top-quality education and training programs give students the edge in achieving their academic and career goals. New Jersey's strategic location at the heart of the northeastern corridor, along with a wide range of on-campus and distance learning offerings, and the state's deep commitment to student access make it a great place to attend college. In addition, linkages with elementary and secondary schools, public service projects, and cultural activities provide advantages for residents throughout the state. And, from large corporations to small businesses, New Jersey employers depend on well-prepared graduates and high-tech research and development to give them the competitive edge in today's global economy.

With this issue, the Commission's quarterly newsletter becomes *NJEDge News*, providing a broad audience with information about statewide higher education issues and accomplishments as well as notable programs at individual institutions.

An NJEDge web portal, www.njedge.org, is already in place. It links users to college and university websites, financial aid information, searchable indexes of degree pro-

grams and distance learning offerings, the Commission's website, and a host of other information about higher education in New Jersey.

A new network linking public and independent institutions with high-speed data and video communication will be known as NJEDge.Net. The network will further hone New Jersey's edge with new and expanded opportunities to integrate technology into collegiate teaching and research, and through links to preschool to grade 12 schools as well as corporate and community constituents.

NJEDge complements college and university image and identity campaigns, and institutions are invited to identify themselves with **NJEDge** by using the logo in their own publications and marketing materials. ■

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Highlights from this issue...

- **Proposed new teacher preparation initiatives and expanded funding for high-tech programs.**
- **Colleges launch new P-3 certificate programs.**
- **Community colleges share distance learning resources.**
- **Highlights from the systemwide accountability report.**

New and Expanded Initiatives Proposed

FY2002 budget recommends teacher preparation and high-tech programs

Consistent with recommendations in the Commission on Higher Education's budget policy statement, the proposed fiscal year 2002 budget includes new teacher education and recruitment initiatives and an expansion of higher education's role in high-tech training and research.

The proposed budget includes \$10 million to improve teacher preparation quality and capacity, and an additional \$5 million to recruit high-achieving teachers for disadvantaged school districts.

Recognizing the need for more and better-prepared teachers, the first initiative will challenge New Jersey colleges and universities to make teacher preparation a top priority. Institution-specific strategies will enable them to expand the capacity of their programs and improve linkages with the state's preschool to grade 12 core curriculum content standards.

To ease shortages in critical disciplines, the budget proposes stipends for new preschool, science, math, special education, and world language teachers in disadvantaged school districts. The recruitment program will provide state bonuses of \$5,000 per year for five years to eligible teachers who graduate with at least a 3.0 grade point average. Increasing the diversity of the teaching force will be a particular emphasis.

The proposed budget also includes a package of initiatives to make New Jersey more competitive in creating and retaining

high-tech jobs.

The High-Tech Workforce Excellence Grants launched this year will be continued, enabling the Commission to award a second round of grants to strengthen programs in computer science and information technology; physical, life, and health sciences; engineering and engineering technology; and math and science teacher education.

Also proposed are two funds to boost university research in biomedical and other technology fields. The Fund for Technology Innovation will increase capacity at the six research universities, and funding to match federal research grants will be extended. A new Higher Ed/Business and Industry Partnership Fund will provide funds to match new private sector research grants in science and technology.

The proposed budget also includes \$5 million for the Commission on Science and Technology to establish more specialized business incubators in partnership with colleges and universities.

Increases are proposed in college and university operating aid, although not at the levels requested for the senior public and independent institutions. Level funding was recommended in several other key areas where the Commission sought increases, including the Educational Opportunity Fund, College Bound, and part-time TAG. ■

Colleges Step Up to P-3 Challenge

For the state's 30 Abbott school districts, implementing the Supreme Court's mandate for preschool programs has been a daunting challenge.

New Jersey's two- and four-year colleges and universities have stepped up to assist in the statewide endeavor, working hard to help teachers in those programs meet new certification requirements. They are also striving to recruit and train new early childhood teachers to meet the growing demand.

To accelerate implementation of programs for three- and four-year olds, the Abbott districts were permitted to contract with licensed community child care centers. Now teachers at those centers must move expeditiously toward the required Pre-school to Grade 3 (P-3) certification.

Any new teachers hired this year must hold a bachelor's degree and the new certificate by September. Teachers working at the centers before September 2000 have until 2004 to meet the requirement. The state is providing special scholarships to pay for their required coursework.

Recognizing the daunting timelines, five state colleges and universities--The College of New Jersey, Kean University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, and Rowan University--launched programs last summer to help teachers with a baccalaureate degree earn the new P-3 certifi-

cate. William Paterson University initiated a program in the fall. All six institutions are also helping child care center teachers who possess only an associate degree to work toward a baccalaureate degree that includes the preschool certification.

The demand for certified preschool teachers will continue to rise, as approximately 100 additional districts will be required to offer preschool programs for four-year-olds in the fall. Several additional colleges and universities are in various stages of developing new programs to meet that burgeoning demand. Along with the six institutions with programs in place, they will strive to meet the high demand for preschool teachers by recruiting both undergraduate and graduate students to pursue the preschool certificate.

Thirteen New Jersey community colleges are also joining the effort to prepare teachers in child care centers to meet the new certification requirements. Representatives from community colleges that have an Abbott district within their county are visiting child care centers to help teachers without a degree get started in a community college program that will transfer to a four-year institution. Given the tight timelines within which these teachers must earn their baccalaureate degree and preschool certification, the colleges are making special efforts to provide flexible scheduling and support services. ■

Sharing Distance Learning Resources

Online courses offered through the New Jersey Virtual Community College Consortium (NJVCCC) combine the flexibility of distance learning with a full range of campus-based services.

The consortium enables New Jersey's 19 community colleges to expand the range of online offerings available to their students by sharing their distance learning resources. Institutions may open successful online courses to other consortium members that have a similar course as part of their curriculum but do not offer it online.

When a member institution agrees to host another college's course, it effectively becomes their course as well. Students enroll in and receive credit for the online course through their home institution. The local college provides student services such as advisement and counseling, as well as access to the library, computer lab, and other facilities.

The host/provider model lets students know for certain whether credits for a particular online course will count toward their degree. All consortium courses have a uniform tuition rate of \$80 per credit with no service fees.

"We think this is the best model for the students, so they know ahead of time what is happening," said Mary Wall, chair of the NJVCCC executive committee and dean of academic computing and distance learning at Atlantic Cape Community College.

The NJVCCC started in 1999 with only 38 students. This semester, over 600 students are enrolled in 119 credit-bearing courses offered through the consortium.

Four of the participating institutions—Atlantic Cape Community, Bergen Community, Burlington County, and Mercer County Community Colleges—offer full degree programs through the NJVCCC.

The consortium is committed to keeping online classes small, maximizing students' contact with the instructor and each other.

Dr. Wall believes that for a certain type of student, online learning offers a better experience, especially at a community college where many students typically attend class and then leave campus. Many students perform better and develop closer relationships with instructors and peers in the online environment, she said.

Dr. Wall sees exponential growth ahead for the NJVCCC, as the colleges expand the number of online courses offered. Faculty development available through the New Jersey Virtual University (NJVU) is helping all New Jersey public and independent institutions offer more and better-quality online courses and programs. ■

For more information, visit the NJVCCC website at www.njvccc.cc.state.nj.us.

NJIT Research Reaches New Heights

BIG BEAR SOLAR OBSERVATION LETS NJIT SCIENTISTS VIEW OUR NEAREST STAR

Thanks to near-perfect climactic conditions and an unusual design, New Jersey Institute of Technology's Big Bear Solar Observatory provides new data and dramatic images that are expanding scientific knowledge about the sun.

The California observatory, operated by NJIT since 1997, is considered the world's best site for studying the sun. Its location in the middle of Big Bear Lake reduces image distortion caused by heat rising off the ground. Plus, high elevation and usually cloudless skies enable scientists to observe daily changes in the sun.

Scientists' interest in our nearest star is not just academic. Solar activity directly affects many aspects of daily life on earth, including radio communication, electric power systems, satellites, local and global climates, and depletion of the earth's ozone layer.

Solar research will become increasingly significant as we on earth become more dependent on wireless communication. In addition, since the sun is the only star close enough to observe surface features, scientists can learn more about other stars by studying solar activity through the observatory's four specialized telescopes.

The Center for Solar Physics, which operates the observatory, has built on NJIT's expertise in optoelectronics and infrared im-

aging to develop new and enhanced devices that record high-resolution images of the sun and allow measurement of its magnetic fields. With funding from NASA, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, and other agencies, the observatory is providing new information about sunspots and solar eruptions, or

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NEW COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Commission on Higher Education welcomed two new members in January, Laurence M. Downes and Henry C. Johnson.

Mr. Downes, of Princeton Junction, is the Chairman and CEO of New Jersey Resources Corporation and its principal subsidiary, New Jersey Natural Gas Company. He also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Gas Association and Chairman of the New Jersey Shore Partnership.

Dr. Johnson, of Plainfield, is the CEO and President of City News Publishing Company and publisher of City News. Dr. Johnson is a frequent speaker about the importance of urban community building and urban youth achievement.

5th Annual Systemwide Accountability Report

The Commission's fifth annual systemwide accountability report, adopted in March, provides valuable data and information about the state's system of public and independent colleges and universities.

This year's report highlights the need for more high-tech graduates to meet the demand for skilled workers for the state's telecommunications, pharmaceutical, and other high-tech industries. The report indicates that while the number of high-tech graduates is increasing, it's not growing enough to meet escalating demand.

Other key findings from the report include increases in full-time undergraduate enrollment, continued growth in minority

enrollment, and graduation rates at four-year public colleges that exceed national averages. Tuition and fees remain high at public institutions compared to national averages, but New Jersey remains a national leader in state-funded need-based student aid.

"The systemwide accountability report highlights progress in higher education and underscores the critical importance of ongoing investment to keep New Jersey's colleges and universities competitive and strong, while enhancing student access and affordability," said Dr. James E. Sulton, Jr., Executive Director of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education.

Copies of the report are available from the Commission's office or on the web at www.state.nj.us/highereducation. ■

NJIT Research Reaches New Heights

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coronal mass ejections and flares, that shower the earth with high-energy particles and can affect satellites and our communications and power systems.

These explosions occurring 150 million kilometers away are extremely significant to the scientific community. Big Bear provides a "space weather" forecasting service and posts solar activity reports on the Internet.

The Center for Solar Physics also operates a second California facility, the Owens Valley Radio Observatory, which complements Big Bear's research about the surface of the sun with data about what is occurring high in the sun's atmosphere. Radio antennae at Owens Valley map radiation coming from the sun to provide a greater level of understanding about solar activity.

To learn more about solar research or view images of the sun recorded at Big Bear, visit its website at www.bbso.njit.edu. ■

www.state.nj.us/highereducation

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