



News Release
January 24, 2020

New Jersey Awarded Major Grant to Make Higher Education More Affordable and Career-Relevant

TRENTON, NJ- The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) has received a \$639,000 grant from Lumina Foundation to address two areas of critical need in the Garden State: reducing adult learners' non-tuition costs and connecting their credentials to in-demand jobs and careers. This award will help the next phase of work to advance the state higher education plan, *Where Opportunity Meets Innovation: A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education*, which focuses on five key areas: building on-ramps to college; making college affordable; fostering student success; promoting safe and inclusive learning environments; and cultivating research, innovation, and talent.

“Since the release of the state higher education plan, we’ve been working hard to implement the action steps with stakeholders across the state. With this Lumina grant, New Jersey will take a two-prong approach to enhancing college affordability and labor market value with a focus on equity,” said **Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis**. “We plan to double down on supporting New Jersey’s most valuable resource: our students.”

“We look forward to collaborating with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education in bringing together higher education institutions and employers to focus on building stronger career pathways for New Jersey residents within our innovation economy,” said **Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**.

“For many New Jerseyans, affordable college and career training doesn’t just require affordable tuition, it also depends on access to affordable child care, food assistance, and health care,” said **Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. “At the Department of Human Services, we have changed policies and expanded services to make it easier for individuals who are building their career pathways to get the help they need from our child care assistance program, our food assistance program (SNAP), and our affordable health care options. Together with the Secretary of Higher Education and our colleagues across government, we are committed to helping New Jerseyans get the skills and supports they need to thrive.”

“The financial burdens placed on today’s students are squeezing too many out of opportunity. And more than ever, these students lead multilayered lives. They are working adults, single parents, and from all walks of life. Their needs are going to reflect that,” **said Wayne Taliaferro, strategy officer for finance and federal policy at Lumina.** “For some time now, we’ve known that affordability is a challenge that goes well beyond tuition, and the adverse effects are especially troubling along the lines of race and income. But with that awareness comes responsibility. The time is now to build a system of holistic, equitable support that takes that on. The steps that New Jersey plans to take will help do just that.”

As part of this grant, OSHE will implement strategies to improve affordability and labor market value over the next two years in order to impact the New Jersey’s attainment goal of 65 by 25: 65% of working-age New Jerseyans having a high-quality certificate or degree by 2025.

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. The foundation envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Lumina’s goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.

###