



STUDENT SUCCESS

WORKING GROUP DELIVERABLE

The **Student Success Working Group** will focus on identifying evidence-based and otherwise promising strategies to boost college completion at New Jersey's colleges. The group will explore opportunities to strengthen student success by scaling and replicating academic, social, and financial interventions that are innovative and effective. Specifically, the group focused on:

- ➔ Exploring and recommending alternatives to traditional developmental education.
- ➔ Identifying creative strategies that can accelerate student progress to a degree and reduce the impact of student financial challenges.
- ➔ Exploring opportunities to expand and standardize college credit for prior learning models.
- ➔ Investigating multi-intervention models, such as CUNY ASAP, to see what lessons can be applied in New Jersey from first year to graduation.

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OVERVIEW

In March of 2019, the State of New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education released its plan for higher education in New Jersey. The plan, **Where Opportunity Meets Innovation: A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education**, outlines steps that institutions of higher education in New Jersey should take to ensure that postsecondary education is accessible to all students, affordable, equitable, high-quality, inclusive, and safe.

In an effort to make sure that New Jersey college students can realize their educational objectives, the state plan identifies five working groups to develop strategies that support students and lead to the overall goal that 65% of working-age New Jersey residents obtain a postsecondary educational credential by 2025. Each working group has a discrete focus and charge that aligns with the vision for the **New Jersey Student Bill or Rights** and with specific goals of the state plan.

THE STUDENT SUCCESS WORKING GROUP HAD THE FOLLOWING CHARGE:

To identify evidence-based strategies to boost college completion at New Jersey colleges, including exploring alternatives to developmental education, strategies to accelerate student progress to a degree, opportunities to standardize college credit for prior learning assessment, and possible multi-intervention models.

The Office of the Secretary selected 40 members from among those who applied to a state-wide call and two co-Chairs for the Student Success Working Group. Ph.D. Harvey Kesselman, Ph.D., President of Stockton University and Mr. Reginald Lewis, Executive Director of the Newark City of Learning Collaborative, serve as co-Chairs. Working Group membership represents racial, ethnic, gender, age, and status diversity as well as diversity across higher education sectors in the state.

The Student Success Working Group began its work in June and delivered its recommendations to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education at the final meeting of the Working Group on October 30, 2019.

To facilitate its work, the Student Success Working Group broke into 4 subcommittees, each with a specific charge. Each subcommittee has one lead or two co-leads. This group was charged with:

1. To explore and recommend alternatives to traditional developmental education
2. To identify creative strategies to accelerate student progress to a degree and reduce the impact of financial challenges
3. To explore opportunities to expand and standardize models for accepting college credit for prior learning
4. To investigate multi-intervention models to support students from first year to graduation

The full Student Success Working Group met once a month, and the subcommittees met as needed from June to October. The subcommittee members presented their research and draft recommendations at monthly meetings of the Working Group. The co-Chairs as well as the staff from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority reviewed and commented on each draft of the subcommittees' recommendations prior to the monthly meeting. Subcommittees' final recommendations were submitted to the co-Chairs and to the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for their review by October 10, 2019.

On October 30, the subcommittees presented their final recommendations. The staff of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will forward the final recommendations from each subcommittee to the Secretary of Higher Education, following that meeting.

The Student Success Working Group subcommittees created four documents that provide realistic recommendations for 2-year and 4-year institutions to streamline developmental education, to develop smooth pathways from high school to 2-year and 4-year institutions and from 2-year to 4-year institutions, to explore ways to accelerate time to degree, to expand and standardize prior learning assessment, and to create multi-intervention services that support students academically, financially, personally, and in terms of physical and mental wellness. In addition, the subcommittees recommend that the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education promote professional development to support faculty and administrators' sharing best practices and learning new methods for effecting reforms related to student success, provide a means for regular data collection from and dissemination to institutions of higher education, and explore opportunities for encouraging a third academic semester in the summer. The Student Success Working Group members believe that moving in the recommended directions will help students achieve their educational goals in a timely fashion while incurring the least amount debt and contribute to the state goal for 65% of working-age adults to obtain a postsecondary credential by 2025.

Proposals for Accelerating Student Progress to a Degree

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this document belong to the Working Group and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the State of New Jersey. The content provided is intended to serve as a resource to help develop strategies to increase support for students at New Jersey's colleges and is provided in good faith. Due to time constraints, the Working Group notes the information may not be comprehensive and readers should take into account context for how the deliverable is used as well as further research that may be available after publication.

Problem Statement

Across the nation and in New Jersey, students take more than 2 years to complete an associate degree and more than 4 years to complete a bachelor's degree. According to Complete College America (CCA), the increase in time to degree results from the fact that students do not take a full credit load each semester.¹ CCA data show that students who take 15-credit course loads (5 courses) each semester are more likely to graduate, pay less in tuition and living expenses, gain additional years of earnings, and free up limited classroom space for other students. Consequently, CCA urges institutions of higher education to promote a 15 credit (5 course) standard for all students enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities.

New Jersey completion rates mimic those at the national level. The median four-year graduation rates at 4-year public institutions in New Jersey is 49% and 72% at six years. By comparison, the median four-year rate at private institutions is 43%, while the six-year rate is 50%.

Graduation Rates for Full-time, First-Time Degree Seeking Students in Bachelor's Degree Programs (2012-2018)

	2012 Cohort N	Graduated after:					
		4 years		5 years		6 years	
<u>Public Institutions</u>	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
College of New Jersey	1,363	1,035	75.9%	1,148	84.2%	1,169	85.8%
Kean University	1,381	313	22.7%	584	42.3%	674	48.8%
Montclair University #	2,201	1,038	47.2%	1,496	68.0%	1,571	71.4%
N J City University	713	76	10.7%	227	31.8%	281	39.4%
NJIT #	931	272	29.2%	530	56.9%	607	65.2%
Ramapo College #	867	514	59.3%	615	70.9%	638	73.6%
Rowan University	1,483	729	49.2%	996	67.2%	1,064	71.7%
Rutgers - Camden	481	150	31.2%	256	53.2%	279	58.0%
Rutgers - Newark #	1,048	356	34.0%	616	58.8%	673	64.2%
Rutgers - New Bruns #	5,910	3,625	61.3%	4,566	77.3%	4,751	80.4%
Stockton University #	997	567	56.9%	717	71.9%	742	74.4%
Wm. Paterson University #	1,230	358	29.1%	596	48.5%	644	52.4%
TOTAL, Public Institutions	18,605	9,033	48.6%	12,347	66.4%	13,093	70.4%

	2012 Cohort N	Graduated after:					
		4 years		5 years		6 years	
<u>Private Institutions</u>	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bloomfield College	367	42	11.4%	104	28.3%	124	33.8%
Pillar College #	20	4	20.0%	6	30.0%	6	30.0%
Felician University	228	56	24.6%	96	42.1%	104	45.6%

Saint Peter's University	390	129	33.1%	181	46.4%	195	50.0%
Georgian Court University	160	56	35.0%	82	51.3%	87	54.4%
Caldwell University	292	104	35.6%	152	52.1%	166	56.8%
FDU-Florham	589	231	39.2%	305	51.8%	321	54.5%
FDU-Metro	532	209	39.3%	286	53.8%	293	55.1%
Saint Elizabeth, College of	145	62	42.8%	72	49.7%	72	49.7%
Stevens Institute	614	274	44.6%	524	85.3%	537	87.5%
Centenary University	234	111	47.4%	136	58.1%	137	58.5%
Monmouth University	1,005	561	55.8%	683	68.0%	694	69.1%
Drew University #	361	204	56.5%	219	60.7%	223	61.8%
Rider University	919	523	56.9%	584	63.5%	595	64.7%
Seton Hall University #	1,453	873	60.1%	993	68.3%	1,020	70.2%
Princeton University #	1,355	1,184	87.4%	1,284	94.8%	1,306	96.4%
TOTAL, Pub-Mission Ind	8,664	4,623	53.4%	5,707	65.9%	5,880	67.9%

Source: IPEDS Graduation Rates Survey (Downloaded 6/12/2019).

Six students were excluded from Rutgers-New Brunswick's cohort; four students from Stockton & NJIT; two students from Ramapo,

Rutgers-Newark, Princeton & Seton Hall and Montclair, Wm Paterson, Drew, Pillar, Berkeley & Devry each removed one student from their cohort.

The completion rate at 2-year institutions in New Jersey is lower than that for 4-year institutions.² The highest 2-year graduation rate is 32%, and the highest 3-year graduation rate is 43%. Not even half of the students who begin at a public 2-year institution complete their associate degree in 4 years. The median 2-year completion rate at 2-year institutions in New Jersey is 13%, while the median 3-year completion rate is 27%.

Graduation Rates for Full-time, First-Time Degree Seeking Students (2015-2018)

<u>Community Colleges</u>	2015 Cohort N	Graduated in:					
		2 years		3 years		Transfers	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Essex	1,771	37	2.1%	217	12.3%	234	13.2%
Hudson	1,896	43	2.3%	189	10.0%	229	12.1%
Passaic	820	25	3.0%	95	11.6%	99	12.1%
Atlantic	881	47	5.3%	183	20.8%	136	15.4%
Bergen	2,515	149	5.9%	547	21.7%	354	14.1%
Middlesex	1,861	118	6.3%	401	21.5%	297	16.0%
Camden #	1,595	103	6.5%	299	18.7%	254	15.9%

Mercer	1,128	98	8.7%	216	19.1%	227	20.1%
Union	1,460	145	9.9%	433	29.7%	181	12.4%
Brookdale	2,028	241	11.9%	563	27.8%	332	16.4%
Raritan	1,097	138	12.6%	299	27.3%	201	18.3%
Burlington	1,503	194	12.9%	388	25.8%	380	25.3%
Morris	1,218	158	13.0%	425	34.9%	203	16.7%
Cumberland #	728	103	14.1%	251	34.5%	99	13.6%
Ocean	1,546	243	15.7%	529	34.2%	201	13.0%
Gloucester	1,770	288	16.3%	509	28.8%	398	22.5%
Sussex	472	90	19.1%	119	25.2%	172	36.4%
Warren #	217	48	22.1%	92	42.4%	45	20.7%
Salem #	201	65	32.3%	86	42.8%	29	14.4%
Total, Community Col	24,707	2,333	9.4%	5,841	23.6%	4,071	16.5%

Source: IPEDS Graduation Rates Survey (Downloaded 6/12/2019).

One student was excluded from the cohorts of Camden & Cumberland; 2 students were removed from Salem & Warren.

Although there are many reasons why students do not graduate “on time,” financial issues, including the need to work and caretake, play significant roles.³

Most students who attend institutions of higher education in New Jersey receive some form of financial aid: subsidized and unsubsidized loans, Tuition Aid Grant funds, Pell grants, etc.⁴ Unlike federal student loans, which must be repaid, New Jersey’s Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) program provides grants for qualified New Jersey residents that do not require repayment. TAG is one of the most generous need-based financial aid programs in the nation. According to HESAA, one-third of all full-time undergraduates attending post-secondary school in New Jersey receive support through the TAG program.

Research suggests that reconsidering the allocation of financial aid can help improve student completion rates.⁵ Currently, most financial assistance covers fall and spring semesters and does not apply to course work taken during the summer. Pell grants recently expanded support to include the summer.⁶ TAG has not yet followed suit in its allocation.

The two-semester course schedule also impacts time to degree. Historically, the academic year is comprised of two semesters, the fall and spring. Summer sessions usually offer fewer courses and those offered are driven less by scheduling strategy and more by instructor availability. Importantly, since students receive little financial aid for summer courses, only students with the financial resources to pay out-of-pocket and who do not work full-time can benefit from summer study. To address student debt, time to degree, and equity in the availability of summer study, several institutions across the country have adopted a year-round college option. Year-round college enables students to take courses for three semesters, rather than two, thus creating the opportunity for all students to make adequate progress toward degree completion. The

Community College Resource Center at Columbia (CCRC) studied the impact of year-round Pell on student completion and found that for each \$1,000 of year-round Pell (YRP) grant funding per YRP eligible student, the likelihood of summer enrollment among YRP eligible students increases by 27 percentage points and the likelihood of associate degree completion increases by 2.2 percentage points, with these gains primarily benefiting adult students who enrolled at age 20 or above (Liu. 2017).

Recommended Action Items for NJ Postsecondary Institutions

1. Create a plan for a year-round college option and evaluate summer offerings with an eye towards more intentional course sequencing and availability of core and required courses in majors to facilitate completion within four years.

Several institutions have moved in this direction, among them Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, University of California, University of Oklahoma, George Washington University.⁷

2. Consider a high school graduation requirement to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and/or the New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application (HESAA New Jersey State Questions).

In New Jersey, S4095 was introduced and referred to the Senate Education Committee on September 10, 2019. The senate bill “requires students to complete a free application for federal student aid as part of high school graduation requirements.”

3. Consider a flat-rate tuition model that allows students to take 12-18 credits per semester for one price.

Several New Jersey institutions have moved in this direction, offering students the option of taking up to 5 courses each semester for a flat rate. In addition, institutions across the United States have flat-rate tuition opportunities: the University of Oklahoma, Michigan State University, and the University of St. Thomas.⁸

4. Consider workable opportunities for students to “bank” unused flat-rate tuition credits from the fall and the spring semester to purchase credits for summer study.

Because banking offers students the opportunity to complete 30-36 credits for one price, it encourages students to graduate in four years instead of six, enter the workforce earlier, avoid an additional year or two of tuition, fees, and room/board that could reduce student loan debt.

Credit-banking is used at the University of Oklahoma. Students apply for “banking” by a specific time in the spring semester so that the bursar and financial affairs offices will be aware of

individual student's intent. Below are other details of the University of Oklahoma "banking" opportunity:

Banked Hours

Full-time undergraduate students who are charged a flat rate and take fewer than 15 hours per semester may be able to bank hours to use in the summer. The hours a student has banked will automatically be used to reduce summer charges for tuition and mandatory hourly fees. Banked hours cannot be converted into cash or held for a future academic year.

- Students must be classified as undergraduates during the summer semester to be eligible to receive reduced charges for banked hours.
- Academic Excellence Fees, College Program and Technology Fees, Mandatory Semester Fees, and Course Specific Fees are not charged at a flat rate and will not be covered by banked hours.
- Banked hours may not be used for developmental math (DMAT) courses.
- Courses outside of the Norman campus summer term will not be covered.
- Courses covered *do* include on-campus, online, and OU summer study abroad courses.
- Enrolled hours exceeding the number of hours banked will not be covered.
- No credit will be received for unused banked hours.
- Courses dropped after the add/drop period (at 0% refund) will count towards your enrollment total when determining banked hour eligibility.

Getting Started

Each institution should create a committee of faculty, staff, students if possible, and administrators to consider summer course offerings, flat-rate tuition, and year-round education. The committee should assess internal operations, state-wide practices, national trends, and best practices.

Selected Resources

New Jersey college affordability study

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/reports/CASC.pdf>

Reasons students do not graduate on time

<https://www.npr.org/2019/03/13/681621047/college-completion-rates-are-up-but-the-numbers-will-still-surprise-you>

HESAA TAG data collection report, 2018

<https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/TAGGraduationRates2018.aspx>

CQ Researcher report on year-round school,

<https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre1963060500>

Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (2015)

Need-Based Aid and College Persistence: The Effects of the Ohio College Opportunity Grant

<https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/mI4gm2cDtHXWUgvtvZ26/full>

NJ Spotlight

New Jersey Has Weak System of State Support for Black and Latino College Students

<https://www.njspointlight.com/stories/19/01/09/weak-system-of-state-support-for-black-and-latino-college-students-in-nj-report/>

Impact of year-round Pell grants

Liu, Vivian, July 2017. Is school out for the summer? The impact of year-round pell grants on academic and employment outcomes of community college students. CCRC Working Paper 95.

New York: Community College Research Center.

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/impact-year-round-pell-grants-academic-employment-outcomes.pdf>

New Jersey Senate Bill 4095

https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/S4500/4095_I1.HTM

¹ <https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CCA-Intensity-Brief-April3-1.pdf>

² <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=NJ&l=3&ct=1&ic=2%2B3&pg=1&id=183655#retgrad>

³ <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/13/681621047/college-completion-rates-are-up-but-the-numbers-will-still-surprise-you>

⁴ <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/statistics/aid/Aid2018s.pdf>

⁵ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/impact-year-round-pell-grants-academic-employment-outcomes.pdf>

⁶ <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell>

⁷ <http://www.shfwire.com/educators-promote-year-round-college-schedule/>

⁸ See University of Oklahoma (<http://www.ou.edu/bursar/flat-rate-tuition>), Michigan State University (https://undergrad.msu.edu/uploads/files/FlatRateTuition-FAQ-2018-12-06b.pdf?fbclid=IwAR36SC59rvvS0-Je29kMMRrGBxlz_bj_3ktsZbLlkcc4YBJkIFGsz24pqfnI), and the University of St. Thomas (<https://www.stthom.edu/Scholarships-and-Financial-Aid/Flat-Rate-Tuition.aqf>)

