



Promoting Excellence for All

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NEWS RELEASE

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Commission Discusses Draft Update of Higher Education Plan

A draft update of *New Jersey's Long-Range Plan for Higher Education: A Blueprint for Excellence* was discussed today by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. Update 2005 is the first in a series of annual reports on progress in achieving the objectives of the plan. After receiving additional feedback from the higher education community, a final update will be considered for adoption on October 28, 2005.

Adopted by the Commission in November 2003, the state's master plan for higher education is a dynamic document that was developed with the assistance of over 500 stakeholders. Annual updates of the *Blueprint* will (1) monitor progress in achieving the plan's seven principal objectives and key outcome measures, (2) inform future state investments linked to the objectives, and (3) develop new components to enhance progress toward achieving the overall vision.

"In reviewing progress made since the plan was adopted in late 2003, it is important to recognize that the *Blueprint* represents a long-term strategy," said Commission Chairman Frank Mertz. "Increased investments and fundamental changes will be phased in, and outcome data will be best assessed by examining trend data over several years."

The 2005 update provides refined key outcome measures; initial recommendations regarding the enhancement of public research universities (Objective VII); status reports on the other six principal objectives, including some new and revised components; and baseline data to assess progress in achieving goals over time.

Examples of initial points of progress include:

- Enrollment in New Jersey's colleges and universities grew by 18,675 between 2002 and 2004, exceeding projections.
- Growth in the number of degrees in some high-demand areas has occurred since 2003, such as nursing (associate level), computer and information sciences (bachelor's level), counseling psychology (master's level), and medical scientists (doctoral level).

- State support has increased for the state's two major student assistance programs, Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), and two new programs – NJ STARS and the Social Services Student Loan Redemption Program – have been established.
- New Jersey has joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) to strengthen the high school diploma. The Presidents' Council and Commission on Higher Education are working collaboratively with the Governor's Office, the Legislature, the Department of Education, and the business community to align academic standards in high school with the knowledge and skills required for success in the first year of college or the workplace.
- Baseline data have been established to monitor progress in institution-specific outcomes, including retention and graduation rates, enrollment growth, and increased external revenues.

There are several areas in which progress has not yet been made. The two that have the greatest overall effect on achieving the key objectives of the plan are related to state support.

- Capital funding for higher education to enhance quality and preserve and expand campuses has not yet been provided. A task force of state, business, and institutional leaders is developing long-term state policy recommendations for capital needs support.
- Initial goals for increased operating support of colleges and universities in each sector have not been met. Another task force will recommend a specific funding policy for state operating support of public research universities and state colleges and universities.

Efforts underway to address each of the components of the plan are summarized in Update 2005.

“The *Blueprint* is guiding multiple efforts to improve higher education for New Jersey and its people,” stated Dr. Jeanne Oswald, executive director of the Commission. “It recognizes the shared responsibility between higher education and the state to prepare students for the future, support economic development, and enhance quality of life in this state.”

The draft update is available on the Commission's website at www.state.nj.us/highereducation .

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