

**Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee**  
**Tuesday, April 8, 2014, 10:00 AM**  
**Committee Room 4, 1st Floor, State House Annex**

**Statement by Rochelle Hendricks, Secretary of Higher Education**

Good morning Chairman Sarlo, Vice Chairman Stack, and Senators of the Budget and Appropriations Committee. It has been an eventful year in higher education, and I would like to share some of the highlights about how we helped students succeed, how we worked as a force for positive change in communities, how we established new partnerships with business and industries, and how we are prepared to meet the rapidly changing demands of the future.

First, the highlights: For the first time in 25 years, with bipartisan support of the Legislature, we have moved forward with voter-approved, state-supported construction projects that will bring new laboratories, and new buildings for business, engineering and science programs to college campuses throughout the State. With financing provided by five bond funds, we reached contract agreements for 176 construction projects at 46 colleges and universities. There is no confusion about the merit of these long-awaited and truly inspiring projects. Construction, after decades of anticipation, is underway.

Similarly, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education helped to facilitate the largest academic merger ever attempted in the United States. Today, Rutgers has the medical school it needed to move from good to great. Rowan University is poised to double its student population as it provides a huge economic boost to the underserved southern region of our State. I am proud of the hard work of all involved in implementing the biggest structural changes we have ever attempted since New Jersey first established its higher education system more than 50 years ago.

Our State leads the nation in the amount of student aid provided per pupil. We have some of the finest universities in the world. Our graduation rate is ranked in the top five in the country. And yet, we know that we have unacceptable achievement gaps in this State. Unfortunately, too many students arrive at our colleges and universities unprepared to do college-level work at a time when postsecondary credentials are essential for individuals to succeed and for economies to grow.

We know that the lack of student preparedness is a significant, persistent problem and we are committed to addressing it.

For example, the Educational Opportunity Fund administered by my office is a model for the nation, providing aid and support services to more than 12,000 disadvantaged students in 60 programs in collaboration with 41 colleges and universities.

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Our College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) is a federal program that increases the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. This grant program, administered by our agency since 2009, provides the funds for our Aim High Academies which lift the sights of 250 students from dozens of impoverished neighborhoods, encouraging them during summer courses to pursue careers in the sciences.

CACG funds also enabled us to launch a new program this year called The First Day at College to help hundreds of students gain confidence and learn how to succeed in the college environment. These activities include orientation, campus tours, career guidance, FAFSA workshops and the opportunity to attend a college lecture. The primary goals are to create college awareness and to create an expectation that students will enroll and succeed in the college or university of their choice.

Through CACG, my office has made \$620,000 in funding available for another new program this year -- College Readiness Now – which also receives \$300,000 in matching funds from community colleges.

The College Readiness Now program supports pilot projects that will better prepare students who need academic help before they graduate from high school. Each pilot project uses diagnostics and feedback from local high schools to find students who need assistance.

The GEAR UP program (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program), also administered by my office, is helping 2,380 students, grades 6-12, in 56 middle and high schools get ready for college in eight of the state's most distressed cities. GEAR UP works with three four-year universities and four community colleges.

During my first year as Secretary, we won a \$24 million federal grant to continue and expand the GEAR UP program, and we are pleased that New Jersey is one of only 19 states to receive a GEAR UP grant. The student services provided include during- and after-school tutoring, Saturday classes, a 6-week summer academic program, test preparation, academic counseling, college field trips and career fairs.

Today, we are proud to report the results. Fully 98 percent of the high school seniors enrolled in GEAR UP graduate from high school. Seventy-seven percent enroll in college within six months of graduation, and they outperform peers on state tests.

Although the programs administered by my office are success stories affecting a small percentage of the 438,000 full- and part-time students enrolled in New Jersey's higher education institutions, they are demonstrations that well-designed, intentional policies and programs can positively impact some of our most challenging educational issues. The next step is to consider effective ways to support sustainability and scalability.

Can we do more?

We can. Indeed, we must do more.

Multi-generational, entrenched poverty is a determined adversary, but we are just as determined to overcome it in the way that common decency and social justice demand.

Again, we have small programs and big plans. As our pilot projects and renewal plans succeed, we can find more funding and increase the scale of their impact.

Our colleges and universities not only serve our students, but as anchor institutions, we look to them to serve our communities. Beyond the athletic, cultural and social opportunities the higher education institutions offer their resident communities, many of our universities are deeply involved in renewal efforts in Atlantic City, Camden, Newark and Paterson. It is my hope that, in close collaboration with the new chancellor in Newark, we will have an exemplary national model for building collective impact to fulfill the public mission of making a sustainable difference in our communities. This is a call for civic renewal through a commitment to the public good.

Not only is my office involved in student success and community redevelopment, but we are also working very hard to increase the collaboration between academia and industry. Just as we did with Lockheed-Martin, when universities, industry and state government worked well together, we can convince important companies – with significant research dollars and thousands of employees -- to remain in or move to New Jersey.

To that end, the Lieutenant Governor has named me as the newest member of the Partnership for Action (PFA), and I serve as chair of the Council on Innovation. On the Council, we have brought together our research universities and members of business and industry to help create a true innovation ecosystem for our State's economy to contribute to building pathways to prosperity for individuals, communities, businesses and industries for New Jersey.

Informed by a rich history of accomplishments, inspired by the legacy of Edison and Einstein, and encouraged by the multiple partners and initiatives in place, the Council is focused on ensuring that NJ has the competitive edge, nationally and internationally.

New Jersey's colleges and universities have too many secret successes. For too long, they have performed important research in cancer and chemistry, in engineering and biomedical science, without making the world or even their neighbors aware of their landmark contributions. Our Council on Innovation, with PFA, is working to find ways to radically transform this undersold image of New Jersey as a place where great things happen. We plan to hold events that will showcase accomplishments by New Jersey colleges and universities, demonstrating how they are making progress toward transformational change.

To facilitate that transformation, we need to be ready for the future, ready and willing to adapt. Demographically, the world is rapidly changing. College is no longer about only

preparing 18-year-olds for life, but now we must embrace lifelong learning. People from every imaginable background and new technologies are affecting how we fulfill our mission and meet emerging and ever-changing demands.

We are getting ready for that challenge.

At the same time that we are building new facilities and repairing long-neglected ones, we must be ready for a digital future that is not bordered by traditional ideas about time and place. College ready does not have to wait until grade 13. If students are ready to perform, why not allow them to begin their collegiate studies when they are in high school – and they can gain simultaneous high school and college credits? This is not pie in the sky. This is happening now. In New Jersey, we have 10,000 students enrolled in more than 230 dual enrollment programs. Every year, we have nearly 100,000 students ready to begin college. So again, we have small programs and big needs. To address affordability – why not allow more students to save money by taking college courses in high school? The successful models are already in place. We can creatively leverage existing resources to advance this and similar efforts to help make postsecondary education more affordable and completion more attainable.

We need to know how we are doing. We need to be accountable to the public we serve. So, we are building a data system that will help us do just that.

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System will allow us to track student performance from Kindergarten through high school, through college and into the workforce. It's not a fantasy. It's already under development and should be fully operational within three years.

With this new information, students will know what academic programs result in jobs that suit their needs. Students don't only go to college to find a way to earn a living. They want to learn about themselves and about the world. But they should have the data they need to make informed decisions. Our Statewide Longitudinal Data System – a huge effort to merge the data systems of the Department of Education, higher education, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development – will make massive amounts of statistics, new data and informational resources available to students and parents everywhere.

In summary, we are moving in the right direction. We have small programs and big plans to advance meaningful improvements to a relatively robust system. We are optimistic about the future. As we provide greater service to communities, as we partner with industries and foundations, other state agencies and stakeholders – we will find the resources we need to grow and prosper. We are on a mission. We have set the bar high, and we are determined to succeed in accomplishing important things for the people of the Garden State in the months and years ahead. Let us work together to find a way to build the future we need.

I look forward to answering your questions.