

## Stockton-Zogby poll shows parents want more funding for college programs, but don't want higher taxes

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Parents of high school students think the state should put more funding into higher education, although few are willing to pay more in taxes to support the state's colleges, a survey showed.

According to the results of a Stockton-Zogby Poll released Monday, 54 percent of the 2,000 parents surveyed said state funding for higher education is unsatisfactory. Seventy-six percent said more funding should be available and 97 percent said their children are likely to go to college, most likely a four-year public college.



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“Parents of high school students overwhelmingly expect their children to go to college,” said Daniel Douglas, director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College, which commissioned the poll. “And they think the state should be providing more resources for higher education.”

Sixty-four percent of those who supported more funding said they would be willing to make cuts in other programs such as road improvements. But just 19 percent said they would be willing to pay higher taxes.

While four-year public college ranked highest among those surveyed, community colleges, at least in the southern part of the state, are gaining more positive ratings since the last survey in 2010.

The survey included 600 parents from Atlantic and Ocean counties, 600 from Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, and 800 from the rest of the state.

Statewide, 80 percent of respondents said their children are more likely to go to a four-year college than a two-year college, with almost half saying it will likely be a public college because of the lower cost. In Atlantic and Ocean counties, 70 percent preferred a four-year college, and in Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, 67 percent said they would choose a four-year college.

Almost 63 percent of parents believe that a four-year college offers a better quality of education than a two-year college, but again, results in the southernmost counties show more parents think community colleges are doing a better job.

In Atlantic and Ocean counties, 59 percent say quality is better at a four-year college, about the same as in 2010.

About 35 percent say it is better at a two-year college, up from 33 percent in 2010.

In Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, the percentage who said quality is better at four-year colleges dropped from 65 percent in 2010 to 58 percent in 2012. The percentage of parents there who think a two-year college has better quality rose from 29 percent to 35 percent.

Paul Shelly, spokesman for the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, said he is not surprised

results are somewhat different in the south since there are fewer four-year colleges. He said the experience at a four-year college is different than at a community college, which could play into parents' definition of quality.

Jacob Farbman, spokesman for the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, said the community colleges may not have as many offerings as four-year colleges, but that is part of the reason they are more affordable.

"We will continue to say that community colleges are terrific feeder institutions into the four-year schools," he said. "When a student transfers, they still get a bachelor's degree from Rutgers or Rowan or Stockton."

Both spokesmen said increased state funding would help control tuition increases but acknowledged the state's still-struggling financial status.

"It's great that parents think there should be more funding for higher education," Farbman said. "But it is still a tough fiscal climate."

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