



Stockton Convenes Top National and State Leaders on Higher Education Policy Reform

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Galloway, NJ – College value and affordability were the key issues discussed by higher education thought leaders recently at Stockton College's initiative on Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG).

National policy specialists, trustees and leaders from New Jersey colleges and universities meeting on Sept. 25 advised on two big issues: helping colleges increase the understanding of the value of a college degree to meet rising public demands; and improving governance practices to support accountability for public investment, trust, and for educational outcomes.

The HESIG initiative, "Finding Solutions, Building Public Trust in an Era of Change," as part of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, places The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey at the center of state and national reexamination of critical policy issues affecting college opportunity. The council advised HESIG to continue its primary focus on recommending strategic policy action; promoting public engagement for change, using scientific polling; and serving as an "honest broker" by convening educational and policy leaders to find solutions, free of political and institutional self-interest.

Stockton President Herman Saatkamp, a member and strong supporter of the council, stated, "Higher education in New Jersey and nationally faces important financial and service challenges, and significant opportunity for positive change, while maintaining strong traditional values of educational and public service. The HESIG council is a remarkable group of some of the best policy advocates in the country. Stockton is proud to host and to be part of a growing national effort to improve policy and practice that advance college opportunity."

National data expert Dennis Jones of the National Center for Higher Education Management Information Systems led a discussion of economic, demographic, and technology trends affecting higher education. Key factors included New Jersey's unique autonomous governance structure and a rapidly changing college-bound and college-completion population, including older adults.

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Aided by other expert policy analysts, including Dan Hurley of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and Richard Novak and Jane Wellman, both of the Association of College and University Governing Boards, some of the specific advice to HESIG covered:

College value:

- Clearly define value in a manner that relates directly to the educational needs and aspirations of students served, recognizing the special New Jersey context to close the achievement gap for emerging populations.
- Partner closely with K-12 policy makers and business leaders on the national drive toward a core curriculum for school completion and college readiness.
- Make sure that college value is tied explicitly to measurable, mission-related educational outcomes and especially to degree completion and affordability; and as new financial models to pay for college develop, help make the cost/financial aid/debt relationship become more transparent.
- Communicate about the educational and economic value of college in ways that are understandable to citizens and diverse constituencies, that emphasize public benefits, and that build stronger public support.

Governance reform (to HESIG and a new National Commission on Governance):

- Engage boards of trustees on critical trends that affect the colleges' strategic goals, and emphasize internal policy reform needed to achieve long-term, mission-related goals.
- As new business models are adopted to expand partnerships and engage new educational-delivery technology, help boards understand their changing role and scope of authority, especially in relation to mission, and shared responsibilities with presidents, faculty and others.
- Actively work with state-level officials and others to strengthen the composition of boards, trustee education and self-evaluation, and the trustee appointment process; and to support appointing highly qualified citizens to new affiliated organizations.
- Strengthen the college's ability to partner with the state and others to promote best practices and policy-focused progress toward achieving long-term strategic goals tied to a broader state agenda, as well as institutional mission.

Dr. Darryl Greer, HESIG Senior Fellow, who facilitated the meeting said: "I am deeply appreciative of the Council's thoughtful advice. It provides the foundation for a strong HESIG agenda, working with partners in New Jersey and nationally to help close the college achievement gap, to keep college affordable and accountable, and to serve a broader public agenda."

During 2013-14, HESIG will hold two regional "roundtables" of college and policy leaders; conduct a second Stockton scientific poll on accountability reforms; and continue analyses of best practices to promote college access, affordability and completion, as well a public accountability.

HESIG's mission is to serve as an agent for constructive policy change, by recommending strategic action on college opportunity, in service to the broader public good. This is the council's second meeting since HESIG's founding in 2012. The meeting agenda, supporting materials, accomplishments to date, and biographical information on the council can be found at www.stockton.edu/hughescenter/hesig

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