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Community Colleges Launch Statewide Coalition to Address Students' Basic Needs

TRENTON, N.J. –The New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC), the statewide nonprofit organization enshrined in state law that works to strengthen and support New Jersey's 18 community colleges, announced today that it is partnering with community-based organizations and state and local governments to form a new statewide coalition to reduce student hunger and increase access to basic needs, including housing, child care, transportation, and health care. The work of this coalition will be informed by the results of the #RealCollege New Jersey Report by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University and will build on innovative efforts currently underway at the state's community colleges.

“New Jersey's community colleges have long been concerned that too many community college students struggle to find food and a place to live,” said NJCCC President Aaron R. Fichtner, Ph.D. “We are grateful that the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Hope Center have quantified the extent of those struggles. The findings in the #RealCollege Survey Report will inform our current and future efforts to work with state government, community-based organizations and others to expand partnerships and strengthen programs to address the food, housing and other needs of students. Such efforts are critical to ensuring that more New Jerseyans can earn credentials, certificates and degrees, and obtain jobs and careers that provide family-sustaining wages and contribute to the state's economy.”

The coalition will include New Jersey's community colleges, Hunger Free New Jersey, the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, other state and local government agencies, and other community-based organizations. The coalition will develop a statewide policy action plan to guide future efforts to help students in need increase access to food, housing, child care, transportation, health care, and other social services supports.

Helping more students get access to social services supports is a main priority of New Jersey's community colleges, as stated in *Vision 2028: A Framework for the Future of Community Colleges*. NJCCC welcomes all organizations interested in working with us to join us in this effort. All organizations interested in joining this effort can visit: <https://www.njccc.org/initiatives>.

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