



May 5, 2021

## Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to Host Series of Student Roundtables to Highlight College Affordability through Garden State Guarantee Proposal

Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Brian Bridges will join college students, elected officials, and institutional leadership at New Jersey City University (NJCU) on Thursday, May 6 to kick off a series of roundtable discussions on college affordability and the \$50 million investment in the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY2022) budget toward the Garden State Guarantee (GSG) initiative.

“This hallmark investment will help ensure every New Jersey resident has access to an affordable, high-quality postsecondary education, particularly low-income families who may not be able to afford college without this support,” **Secretary Bridges said**. “We want students to know that a college degree is truly within reach.”

The historic GSG investment builds upon the success of the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) by ensuring that eligible students receive a tuition-free education for their first two years at any public college or university in New Jersey. Under the GSG initiative, students with household incomes of \$65,000 or less will have the opportunity to receive tuition- and fee-free education for two years of study at one of New Jersey’s four-year public institutions. Eligible students transferring from New Jersey county colleges to a four-year public institution will be able to pair the CCOG with the GSG to receive a four-year degree tuition- and fee-free.

The GSG will also support thousands of additional students statewide through a sliding scale pricing structure for eligible students above \$65,000 annual gross income and a guaranteed pricing structure for all students throughout their academic program. This initiative will be available for students starting in fall 2022.

“We are grateful to the Governor’s Office and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the opportunity to host this important roundtable discussion on our campus,” **said Dr. Sue Henderson, President of New Jersey City University**. “NJCU is a proud early endorser of Governor Murphy’s game-changing Garden State Guarantee proposal as we understand first-hand how the historic investment in higher education and students, like the ones we proudly serve at NJCU, will benefit our state. The Garden State Guarantee builds upon the successful Debt-Free Promise program we launched at NJCU in 2016. We enthusiastically applaud every effort to make access, affordability, and equity the hallmarks of higher education, and we look forward to continuing this conversation with our guests on May 6.”

“The Garden State Guarantee will send students and families a clear message that New Jersey colleges are affordable, well before students even apply for admission or financial aid,” **said David Socolow, Executive Director of the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)**. “All too often, low-income and first-generation students abandon their dreams of a postsecondary education due to ‘sticker shock’ from the full published tuition price. The GSG will make the true cost of a New Jersey college education transparent by promoting predictable net prices that families can afford.”

“Governor Murphy has been committed to breaking down barriers to make college more affordable and accessible,” said **Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti**. “By smartly and strategically investing in higher education, New Jersey is investing in residents and in our future. These programs are transformative and will make New Jersey fairer and stronger.”

The FY2022 budget proposal allocates \$45 million for the GSG initiative, which will increase direct aid to all 13 state institutions of higher education through the Outcomes-Based Allocation, and another \$5 million for program implementation.

Currently, similar initiatives are offered at four of 13 public four-year institutions: NJCU, Rutgers-Camden, Rutgers-Newark and William Paterson University. Stockton, Rowan and Kean universities also announced similar programs that will begin in fall 2021.

Members of the media and public can view the event at 2 p.m. by visiting <https://youtu.be/nGHp5oArwTQ>.