



THE EDUCATION EQUATION

PART 2

Strategies for Retaining and Attracting
New Jersey's Future Workforce



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STRATEGIES TO RESKILL, RESHAPE & REHIRE NEW JERSEY'S WORKFORCE

BACKGROUND

In 2018, NJBIA released a study titled “The Education Equation: *Strategies for Retaining and Attracting New Jersey's Future Workforce.*” The study, which was a deliverable from NJBIA's Postsecondary Education Task Force, was a phase 1 deep dive into researching and analyzing factors that affect New Jersey's workforce pipeline. The taskforce, which included 100 prominent members from academia, state education and labor departments, businesses, and young adults, worked to build a framework that sought to better prepare, preserve, and place New Jersey's future workforce. The group made 13 recommendations to ensure New Jersey's workforce and the state's education programs are aligned with the needs of the private sector.

In 2019 & 2020, NJBIA and Focus NJ made it a priority to identify and understand how New Jersey's industries and the jobs they provide are advancing into the future. As such, we embarked on a phase 2 deep dive into a statewide, eight-industry study to gather insights from New Jersey business and industry to identify the changing dynamics, opportunities, challenges, and emerging skill sets. Our goal was to work collaboratively with academia to ensure the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow are embedded within programs at the state's postsecondary institutions.

TASKFORCE OVERVIEW

The Education & Workforce Development Taskforce was formed by NJBIA in partnership with Focus NJ as

a phase 3 initiative to continue to expand workforce research to further reflect our new realities in a coronavirus pandemic world. The taskforce, which is comprised of state leaders from business, industry, academia (K-16), workforce development boards, nonprofit associations and state government (including executive and legislative branches), has been formed to 1) evaluate the recommendation status of The Education Equation, 2) release an updated report that will identify recommendations to reskill, reshape, and rehire New Jersey's workforce, 3) better understand the various initiatives at play in the state to better promote partnerships and collaboration and 4) create and foster relationships to bridge the gap between business, government, and academia to ensure that our resources are being used effectively and efficiently.

The taskforce meetings convened virtually from February to June 2021. Participants were also given the opportunity

to complete a survey that clearly identified framework themes. The taskforce was in full agreement that education workforce development issues are interconnected, and a majority (85%) believe these issues should be viewed, talked about, and/or analyzed together. The framework below was developed by the taskforce and was agreed upon by majority rule. The recommendations should be viewed as that of the taskforce in its entirety and do not necessarily reflect the views of independent stakeholders. Please refer

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To view the 2018
**The Education
Equation: Strategies
for Retaining and
Attracting NJ's
Future Workforce**

to Appendix A for a list of taskforce participants who agreed to be publicly listed.

SETTING THE SCENE

Prior to the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic experts were already discussing the astonishing difference between the jobs of the future and the jobs of the recent past. Advancements in technology and artificial intelligence were beginning to transform economies around the world causing industries to start rethinking their workforce strategy. However, according to Focus NJ's Future of Work Industry Series Study, a true technological revolution was not expected to transform New Jersey's workforce for another decade. The state experienced record low unemployment rates in 2019, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (US BLS), and nearly everyone who wanted a job had one.

2020 was a year unlike any other experienced during our lifetime. The novel coronavirus pandemic caused havoc on New Jersey's public health and economy. The pandemic triggered government-mandated nonessential business closures, and stay-at-home orders were in effect from mid-March to mid-June 2020 in the Garden State. Most New Jersey schools, from K-12 to postsecondary institutions, operated predominately online or via remote learning throughout the year and in some cases throughout the 2021 school year as well. Small businesses were devastated, and many were forced to shut their doors, either temporarily or permanently, according to Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker. This resulted in record high unemployment rates.¹

Economists have compared 2020 unemployment to rates seen only during the Great Depression. In total, over 1.9 million people filed unemployment claims and received more than \$20 billion in unemployment benefits in 2020 alone, according to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOLEWD). Analyses from the Economic Policy Institute found that the pandemic had a disproportional impact on minority workers and workers of color, and

“pandemic induced job losses hit low-wage workers much harder than those earning higher wages.”²

According to the U.S. Department of Labor:

- › **“Jobs that require high levels of education and skill pay higher wages than jobs that require few skills and little education. Statistics from the BLS validate this viewpoint by revealing that the unemployment rate among people who have a professional degree is significantly lower than that of people who have a high school diploma or less than a complete high school education. In addition, earnings increase significantly as a worker's degree of education rises.”**

While there are a myriad of factors that contribute to educational attainment, generally, postsecondary enrollment tends to increase during economic downturns, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. This increase is typically due to a large number of displaced working adults who return to the classroom for new or further training otherwise known as upskilling or reskilling.³ Given that there was a disproportional number of low-wage workers displaced during the pandemic, one would expect to see an increase in undergraduate enrollment in 2020.

However, for a variety of reasons not yet fully studied, New Jersey's postsecondary institutions experienced an average 6% decline in undergraduate enrollment in fall

2020 compared to fall 2019, despite the opportunity for online/remote learning during the pandemic, according to the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE). New Jersey's community colleges experienced a 12.5% decline in overall enrollment in fall 2020 compared to fall 2019.⁴ To put this decline into perspective, undergraduate enrollment declined 3.6% nationally and community college enrollment declined by 10.1% nationally during the same time span, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Initial data from the National Student Clearinghouse

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To view the
**Future of Work in NJ:
Industry Series Study**

Research Center indicates that national undergraduate enrollment in spring 2021 experienced its largest decline since the onset of the pandemic. Overall, undergraduate enrollment declined 5.9% and community college enrollment declined 11.3% in spring 2021 compared to spring 2020.⁵ While there is currently no data available for New Jersey's postsecondary institutions, the taskforce believes it is fair to assume the state's enrollment numbers were likely similar to the national averages.

As of June 2021, New Jersey had recovered about 60% of the jobs lost because of the pandemic yet the unemployment rate was 7.3%, according to the NJDOLWD. And "although hiring accelerated in low-wage industries last month [May 2021], low-wage jobs have been the slowest to return," according to the Brookings Institute. Now as employers are struggling to fill open jobs, despite a 1:1 job opening to unemployment ratio,⁶ businesses are being forced to further amend their strategies and are accelerating their adoption of technologies⁷ as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic and accompanying workforce realities.

The recommendations set forth in the report focus on strategies to reskill, reshape, and rehire New Jersey's workforce post-pandemic. To achieve a strong economic recovery post-pandemic and to ensure a well-trained workforce into the future, we must: 1) expand business, academic, and government partnerships, 2) train for current jobs while preparing for the future and 3) ensure equitable access to education and workforce development opportunities.

TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESKILL, RESHAPE & REHIRE NJ'S WORKFORCE

Expand Business, Academic and Government

Partnerships: There are many programs and partnerships forming around New Jersey that are working to address the issues of upskilling and reskilling. However, despite attempts for better collaboration, many are still operating in silos with little interconnectivity among regional stakeholders

to expand these initiatives throughout the state. The opportunity for collaboration is immense and sincere statewide partnerships will aid New Jersey in a robust economic recovery with a strong workforce pipeline. The expansion and promotion of partnerships between business,

academia and government are essential to create sustainable communication about current industry needs and to form a "workforce ecosystem" in New Jersey.

Key stakeholders for collaboration include, but are not limited to, the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development, the New Jersey Department of Education, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, the State Employment and Training Commission, workforce development boards, K-12 educational institutions, vocational-technical schools, the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, labor unions, community-based organizations, private career schools, the New Jersey Business & Industry Association, other business organizations, industry leaders, employers, and other eligible training providers to improve the alignment of training for the needs of employers in New Jersey. The taskforce has put forth two recommendations to address collaboration and partnerships throughout the state.

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To learn more about how technology and artificial intelligence is changing New Jersey's industries.

**Future of Work in NJ:
Industry Series Study**

1. Continue to improve state-level collaboration between employers, educational institutions, and government agencies through the creation and implementation of a Workforce Development Committee housed within the New Jersey Presidents' Council.
2. Create a strategic partnership between the Presidents' Council's Workforce Development Committee and New Jersey's workforce development boards to establish ongoing communication and collaboration around workforce issues.

Train for Current Jobs While Preparing for the Future:

Identifying which industries will employ the most individuals in the future and which industries will pay the best wages is essential to New Jersey's future workforce success. However, while preparing for the future we must continue to adequately train workers for current jobs, with the understanding that society is undergoing a technological revolution that is continuously changing employer needs. In addition, professional development and lifelong learning continue to be essential tools for successful careers. To that end, the taskforce has set forth eight recommendations to address the changing workforce dynamics.

1. Embrace technology by using predictive analytics to identify emerging industries and to modify both credit and non-credit curricula to accurately reflect the skill sets needed for jobs in the Garden State.
2. Create "Emerging Industries" continuing education courses for K-12 educators that will qualify for professional development hours in accordance with N.J.A.C.6A:9C-3.4, which requires teachers to earn at least 20 hours of professional development each year.
3. Increase career pathway awareness through activities such as "Career Planning Seminars" in middle school and early high school to introduce students to career pathways and accompanying educational requirements. This should include opportunities to meet local business leaders, so students understand the options available to them.
4. Enhance business volunteer and mentorship programs in the K-12 setting throughout the Garden State.
5. Develop an industry-recognized, coordinated, and standardized roadmap for credentialing and certifications that clearly outline pathways to for-credit degree programs.

6. Create a "Career Awareness and Readiness Campaign" to expand societal recognition of the value of all types of higher education and career pathway options that include on-ramps to credentials, degrees, and professional development.
7. Create a "Back to Work Campaign" to promote safe return to work messaging and upskilling/reskilling opportunities for displaced and unemployed workers.
8. Expand corporation business tax and gross income tax credits to include businesses that invest in employee workforce development training. (*Such as P.L. 2019, c.417*)

Ensure Equitable Access to Education & Workforce Development Opportunities:

Socio-economic disparities have become increasingly prevalent during the pandemic. This includes food insecurity, access to transportation, access to broadband technology and software, access to quality education, and access to childcare. And it is especially true for vulnerable populations, such as first-generation college students, students of color, women, minority workers, individuals with disabilities, low-income families, and low- to middle-skill workers. Ensuring equitable opportunity for education and workforce development is key to reskilling, reshaping, and rehiring New Jersey's workforce. The taskforce has set forth seven recommendations to enhance social equity throughout New Jersey.

1. Continue to improve underachieving school districts.
2. Advocate to New Jersey's federal delegation for the expansion of Federal Pell Grant awards to non-credit learners and graduate students.
3. Enact legislation that will expand New Jersey's Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) eligibility and provide low-income students

the ability to receive training grants for enrolling in in-demand noncredit and/or certification programs via state-approved training providers.

4. Invest in and expand New Jersey's transportation systems to increase education and workforce development commuting options and to make intrastate travel more accessible.
5. Create business tax credits to incentivize employers to subsidize employee commuting costs when the employee uses public transportation to commute to workforce development training, and/or attend education courses.
6. Ensure all New Jerseyans have reliable and consistent access to broadband, IT hardware and software.
7. Continue to invest in childcare, early childhood education, and universal preschool at reduced cost for low-income families.
8. Continue to enhance and promote the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion among all facets of society.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations set forth in this report seek to ensure that all New Jersey stakeholders are at the table and that all New Jerseyans have access to the workforce development and educational opportunities needed to enhance skill sets. In addition, the recommendations seek to mitigate current socio-economic disparities while also preparing for the future of work.

The expansion of business, academic and government partnerships is essential to creating sustainable communication about current industry needs and to form a "workforce ecosystem" in New Jersey. Continued training for current jobs while preparing for future jobs is also imperative to ensure our employers and educators are prepared for the adoption of new industries as technology rapidly advances. And finally, socio-economic disparities have become increasingly prevalent during the pandemic. As such, it is imperative to provide equitable opportunities to all New Jerseyans.

SOURCES

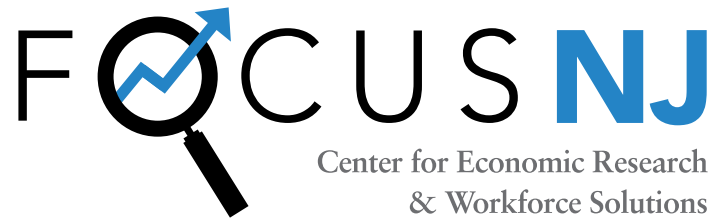
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APPENDIX A

Public Taskforce Participant List

This list does not include participants from the executive and legislative branches

1Huddle	Georgian Court University	New Jersey Institute of Technology
360Score.me	Gibbons P.C.	New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
ACI Medical & Dental School	Gloucester County Workforce Development Board	New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association
Advocates for Children of New Jersey	Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board	New Jersey School Boards Association
American Institute	IBEW Local 102	New Jersey Small Business Development Centers at Ramapo College of NJ
ASAH	Infineum	North Jersey Partners
Association of American Educators	JerseyCAN	Ocean County College
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of NJ	Junior Achievement of NJ	PamTen
Berkeley College	Lincoln Tech	Raritan Valley Community College
Bizratings.com	Mercer County Community College	Rider University
Bloomfield College	Middlesex College	Rowan College at Burlington County
Bridge Their Future, LLC	Middlesex County Workforce Development Board	Rowan College of South Jersey
Brookdale Community College	Monmouth County Workforce Development Board	Rowan University
Camden County College	Morris-Sussex-Warren Workforce Development Board	Rutgers University New Brunswick, Honors College
Career Tech NJ	New Jersey Association of School Administrators	RWJBarnabas Health
ChooseNJ	New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities	RWJBarnabas Health Behavioral Health Center
Connell Foley	New Jersey Business & Industry Association	Sanofi
C-Track Training	New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation	Stevens Institute of Technology
Domain Technology Partners	New Jersey City University	Sussex County Community College
Drew University	New Jersey City University, School of Business	The College of New Jersey
Eastwick College	New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development	Total Suspension LLC
Essex County College	New Jersey Council of County Colleges	Trenton Public Education Foundation
Essex County Workforce Development Board	New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools	UNEX Manufacturing
Exxon Mobil Corporation	New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association	Union County College
Fairleigh Dickinson University		United Way of Northern New Jersey
Falstrom Company		University of Phoenix
Felican University		UPS
Focus NJ		We Raise NJ
Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University		William Paterson University
Garden State Coalition of Schools		



10 West Lafayette Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
609-858-9513
focusnj.org
cbuteas@focusnj.org



**YOUR CATALYST
FOR GROWTH**

10 West Lafayette Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
609-393-7707
njbja.org
info@njbja.org

