



HESIG Newsletter - Winter 2017

Meeting Expectations to Increase College Value and Students' Success

This edition of the newsletter summarizes HESIG efforts since 2012, and offers some recommendations regarding state-level and campus policy change needed for NJ colleges and universities to fulfill the promise of educational opportunity for citizens in service to the broader public good. For a more complete discussion of HESIG findings, observations and recommendations, see Working Paper #4, "Aligning Higher Education with Citizens' Needs, Expectations and a Promise of Success," as well as full surveys and report summaries at www.stockton.edu/hughes-center/hesig.html.

In accomplishing its mission the HESIG project has conducted focus group sessions with opinion leaders (executive roundtables); held a statewide symposium on student outcomes involving 200 individuals from 32 NJ colleges and universities, and other organizations; and accomplished four surveys of citizens and students regarding college value, expected outcomes and needed change. HESIG benefits from its Policy Steering Council, consisting of policy advocates from leading national and state organizations, its William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and Stockton Polling Institute colleagues, and from its partnership with the Office of the NJ Secretary of Higher Education, ETS, New Jersey City University and others.



Some Suggested Strategies
Recommendations to the State of New Jersey, colleges and universities, students and families.



Executive Roundtable Advice and Survey Findings
Citizens have specific ideas about increasing college value.



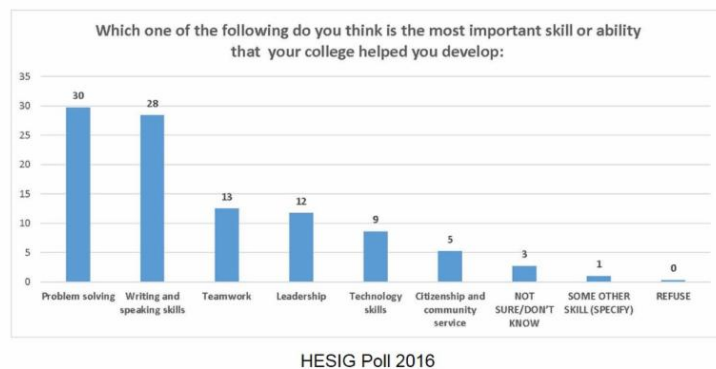
Ideas to Support Student Success
Flexible Plan for Success for completing college; Regional Internship Centers.

Some Suggested Strategies

A fundamental recommendation to the State of New Jersey is to build a rationale to support higher education, and what it expects from its colleges; and for colleges and universities individually and collectively to take a lead role in creating a vision to sustain public investment, and to account for educational outcomes. An underlying theme to accomplish this goal is a strong partnership between state government, business, labor and higher educators, and greater collaboration between the state's schools, senior and community colleges. A viable vision for higher education should be driven from the perspective of citizens' and state economic and civic needs, rather than the institutions alone.

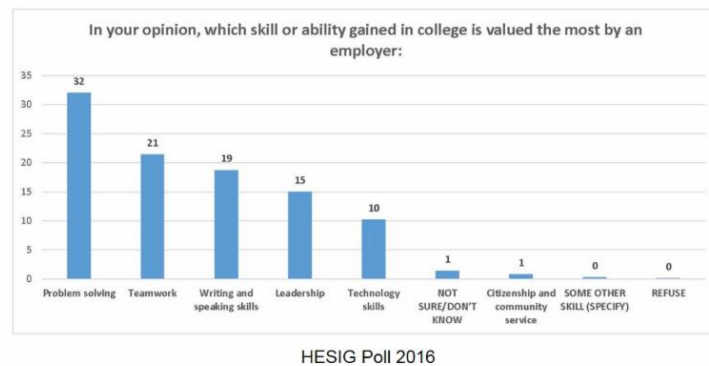
To accomplish these goals the State of New Jersey should:

- Work with the colleges to create a predictable funding rationale for higher education that supports access to high quality instruction and service, affordability, and degree completion.
- Reexamine the structure of the state's student financial aid programs, and increase funding for year-round and part-time students.
- Get the state's personnel and labor contract policy in order, by reforming civil service and granting state colleges and universities more authority for contract negotiations.



Colleges and Universities should:

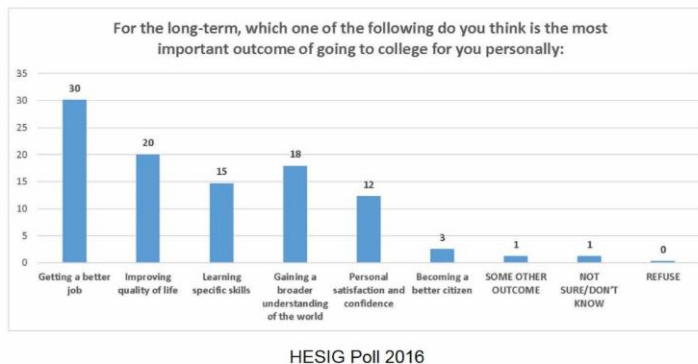
- Redesign business and educational delivery practices where most of the money is spent on talented faculty, staff and facilities, not just at the margins.
- Restructure the curricula toward more discipline-based studies that tie together both academic and practical skills and abilities needed to achieve in college and the workplace, focusing on highly-valued college outcomes, including clear writing, speaking, and problem-solving abilities.
- Provide more intensive academic advising and career counseling to help students make better academic choices, and build stronger partnerships with businesses, alumni and others to provide internships tied to academic studies and students' current work.



Students and Families should:

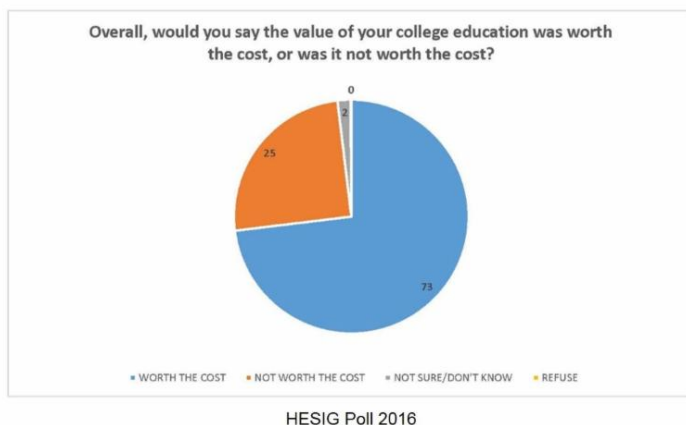
- Make better choices regarding which college to attend, what to study, and available student financial aid.

- Make good educational decisions while in college. National and HESIG research indicate that students should study harder, and seek out academic and career counseling more frequently, and internships more often, even as many already work to help pay for college.



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Executive Roundtable Advice and Survey Findings



While studies reinforce that colleges need to increase value to students, principally by offering more practical experiences tied to studies, unfortunately, civic learning, important to students understanding of how to participate in a democratic society, is viewed by citizens as one of the least expected college outcomes.

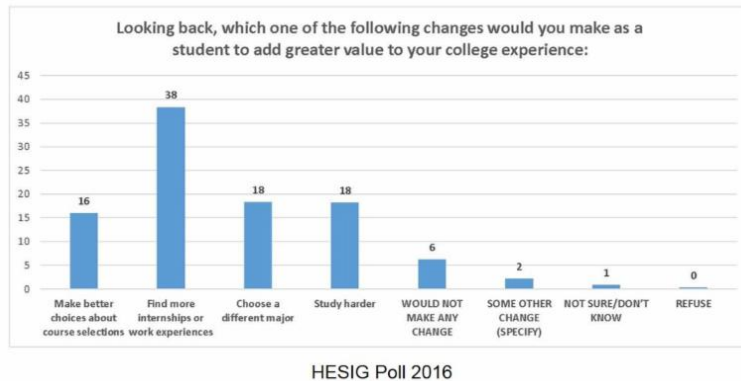
Executive roundtables in 2014 at Stockton University and New Jersey City University, consisting of executives from business, higher education, K-12 education, media and government, suggested the following:

- Help students develop effective interpersonal abilities such as, tolerance of diversity of opinion; openness to multiple approaches to problem solving; and application of high ethical standards as important outcomes for a college education.
- Create more co-op/intern experiences for students which would move them sooner from the classroom to practical workplace experiences.
- Create greater awareness of the needs of non-college bound students, and in partnership with schools and business expose students to needs and values of a workplace environment and for participation in a democratic society.
- Strengthen dual enrollment programs with schools and transfer collaboration between two-year and four-year colleges.
- Involve business and nonprofit organizations more to help develop educational content, internship experiences, and to structure expectations about desired outcomes.
- Involve community leaders to help define standards for community engagement and responsible citizenship in a democratic society.
- Recognize community engagement and development as a core mission focus to improve the quality of life for individuals in the region, whether or not they attend college.

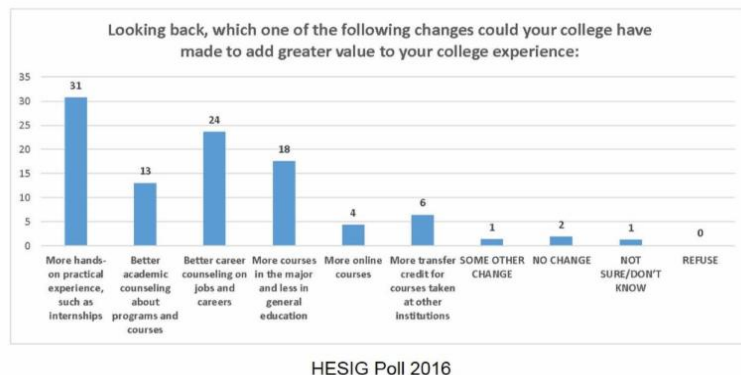
HESIG surveys conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute include a March 2013 survey of 1000 citizens; a May 2014 statewide poll of 800 adult residents, supported by an ETS grant; a November 2014 survey of nearly 5000 undergraduates at 31 NJ colleges and universities commissioned by the Secretary; and a February 2016 survey of over 700 recent college graduates. The surveys followed three major themes: college affordability and value for the cost; skills and abilities gained in college; and changes needed to make college more valuable.

Survey findings 2013 - 2016 include:

- Citizens continue to worry about college affordability (over 40% believe college is unaffordable).
- Citizens and students (70-90 percent depending on when asked) perceive that the value of New Jersey colleges are worth the cost.



- Nearly 90 percent of graduates agree strongly or somewhat that colleges provide an appropriate level of academic and practical experiences (40/47 percent).
- A majority of citizens and students believe that colleges need to change both educational and business practices to increase value.
- Citizens have ideas about who should be responsible for such change (colleges in partnership with businesses) and what can be done to reduce time to degree completion (easier credit transfer, and credit-by examination for knowledge and skills gained outside of college).
- Students and recent graduates concur with roundtable advice regarding top skills and abilities gained from college (writing, speaking and problem solving).
- They consistently view economic benefits of college (jobs) as paramount regarding the purpose for attending college, and as a top college outcome of college.
- They have specific ideas about what needs to change to increase college value; for example, more practical experiences, such as internships, related to studies. While internships are seen as important to job success, relatively few students (20 percent of current undergraduates and 50 percent of graduates, including post-graduate professional fields) find these experiences, even though three-fourths are working, with 40% working at least 30 hours per week, annually while in college, including seasonal and summer breaks.
- Roughly 30 percent of recent graduates view academic advising and career counseling as not important to job/career success.
- Citizens trust colleges to make needed changes by a margin of 2-to-1 over state government.
- About 60 percent of graduates indicate college as very or somewhat important to civic awareness (25/36 percent). Only about 5



percent of college graduates report citizenship as a top expected outcome that colleges help to develop.

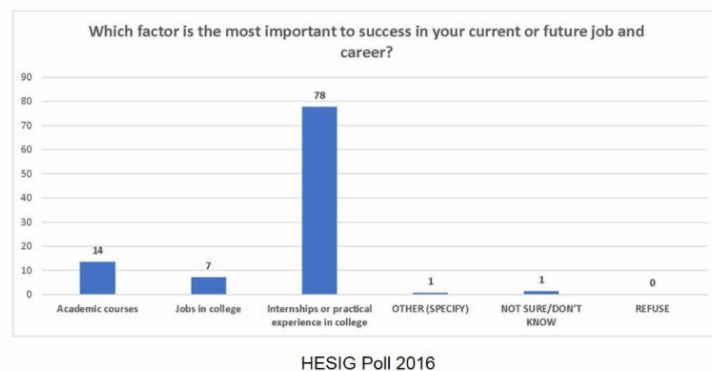
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Ideas to Support Student Success

On June 15, 2016, approximately 200 higher education academic and student support professionals and individuals from industry, state and local government, and non-profit organizations attended a day-long HESIG symposium on Student Success and College Outcomes, in cooperation with the Secretary's Student Success Collaborative. Symposium participants recorded recommendations in small group working sessions on three issue areas: perception of use, coherence and value of counseling and advising services; best practices and priorities for change; and resources needed to achieve change.

Some ideas flowing from working groups include:

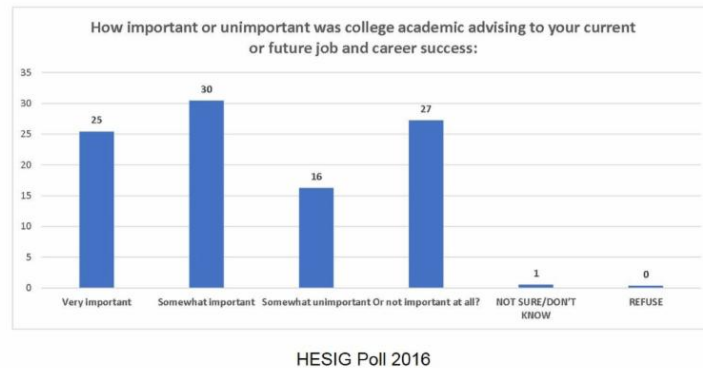
- Provide more information about practical experience tied to academic choices.
- Assist faculty in bringing practical experience into the classroom.
- Strengthen outreach to the larger community, especially alumni and potential employers to build internships.
- Create a system of benchmarks for students and advisors/counselors to measure performance.
- Create more integrated experiences for transfer students.
- Tie career services into first-year orientation, and redesign of the freshman experience.
- Require regular meetings of faculty, advisors/counselors and academic and student affairs directors, deans and provosts.
- Require practical experiences for all students by major or discipline.
- Realign resources to provide for more aggressive outreach and follow up to students, and better use of new media.
- Provide cross-training for advising/counseling staff.
- Make advising and counseling a requirement of graduation, integrated throughout the college experience.
- Tie civic learning directly to fields of study.
- Use more external mentors to provide students with career guidance.
- Integrate some services such as tutoring more closely with advising and counseling.
- Meet more often and coordinate more with school and two-year colleagues.
- Encourage presidents to make regular reports to boards of trustees on advising and counseling as an issue related strategically to mission accomplishment.



Accomplishing what needs to be done to make college more valuable to individuals and society may require taking a different perspective - one that is "student centered." This means looking at the individual student, rather than the institution of higher learning, its structure and processes, as the key organizing principle.

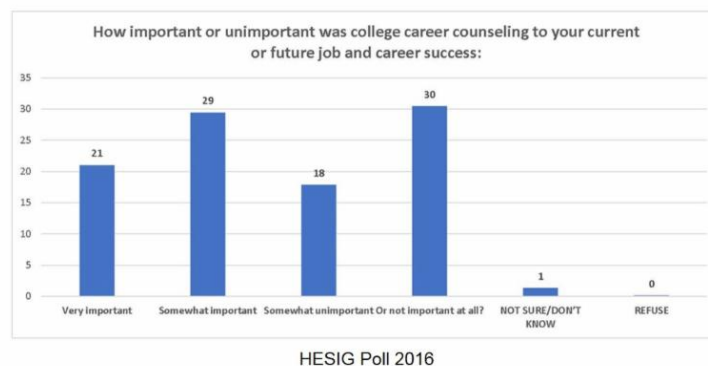
Flowing from the symposium, HESIG suggests that colleges and universities consider the following ideas as a foundation for innovation in policy and practice centered on student success:

1. Upon matriculation, colleges should assist every student prepare an explicit yet flexible **Plan for Success** for completing college. The plan should address not only academic success, but also the financial, social and physical needs of students. The plan, to be accomplished with support from faculty, advising and counseling staff, administrators, alumni, and other mentors and coaches, would be reviewed each semester, and updated annually, as a requirement of graduation.
2. Require paid internship experiences that generate academic credit for every student through stronger business/alumni partnerships. Beginning in the third year of study in a four-year sequence, every student should be required to seek an appropriate internship or practical experience related to academic and career aspirations. The state, universities and businesses should create new **Regional Internship Centers**, to facilitate administration, coordination and certification of internships.
3. Help students demonstrate competence in attainment of communications abilities and workplace skills, and explore post-college plans. In the final year of study, each student should be assessed and counseled by the college regarding critical skill attainment, and should participate in an exit advising/counseling program regarding graduate/professional study and career opportunity.
4. Prepare students for civic participation. Upper division students should take a course in his/her major degree program linking studies to components of civic responsibility.



These suggestions are not easy to implement and will not fit every institution. In many cases they would revolutionize financial and personnel resource management. But they should not diminish liberal learning, or make college more vocational. Instead, they complement higher order abilities gained in college with real-world practical, workplace and problem-solving skills, and provide students with pathways to succeed by preparing to learn for a lifetime. They would help, too, in making college more affordable, by accelerating degree completion.

Higher education cannot fix all of New Jersey's social and economic problems; but it is extremely important to the hopes of a diverse state population that will consist of a larger share of racial minorities and new immigrants, seeking work in a state where about two-thirds of new jobs will require some college study, and 30 percent will require at least a college degree.



In short, college opportunity and completion should be an important factor in aligning the needs of an educated population with state needs, long-term economic equity and prosperity, and a deeper understanding of the importance of civic participation in a democratic society.

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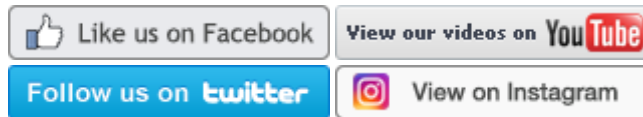
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