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## **Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Launches BasicNeeds.NJ.gov Resource Hub at Convening of Campus Practitioners**

*Efforts Seek to Advance Equity for Students with Basic Needs Insecurity*

UNION, N.J. – Understanding that non-tuition costs like food, child care, and housing can impact the well-being and success of college students, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) held a statewide convening on Friday to highlight efforts to address basic needs insecurity among New Jersey’s diverse student populations and launch a free online navigation tool that will connect college students with a wide spectrum of basic needs resources. [BasicNeeds.NJ.gov](https://www.basicneeds.nj.gov) – designed in collaboration with the Office of Innovation – centralizes information relevant to students regarding housing, food, transportation, childcare, and other similar supports, while providing an overview of eligibility and the processes for seeking State assistance.

This work is part of the Murphy Administration’s ongoing efforts to help New Jerseyans successfully complete a college education and to make progress toward the statewide goal of ensuring 65 percent of New Jerseyans hold a high-quality credential by 2025.

“As my Administration continues to work toward making higher education more affordable and accessible throughout our state, we recognize that success depends on what happens both in and out of the classroom,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “Today’s students come from all different backgrounds and face any number of challenges in their day-to-day life beyond their ongoing studies. We must take a whole-of-government approach to supporting New Jersey students and understanding their unique challenges to help ensure their postsecondary success.”

The day-long event at Kean University convened a dynamic set of speakers and stakeholders, including prominent national researcher Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, representatives from the

Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Complete College America, to inform and enhance basic needs programming for postsecondary students in New Jersey. Over 170 people attended, representing a combination of campus practitioners, students, community organizations, state agencies and policymakers.

“Supporting students' basic needs security is not only the right thing to do, but it is also vital to ensuring that colleges and universities can fulfill their missions to help students achieve their academic goals,” **said Dr. Brian K. Bridges, New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education.** “In today's landscape, students grapple with unprecedented challenges and enhancing opportunities for communication between researchers, policymakers and practitioners is critical. This collaborative approach empowers us to innovate and formulate lasting solutions, focused on equitable support for all students.”

“In order to ensure that our services are truly meeting the needs of our residents, it's essential that we include them and community partners in the design and development process,” **said Dr. Beth Simone Noveck, New Jersey State Chief Innovation Officer.** “The BasicNeeds.NJ.gov website marks one among a suite of partnerships the Office of Innovation has been proud to engage in. We are always seeking ways to better connect communities with the tools and information they need to thrive in New Jersey.”

BasicNeeds.NJ.gov is part of the broader Resident Experience Initiative (“ResX”) — funded by the federal American Rescue Plan — to streamline, simplify, and improve how New Jersey delivers benefits and services to residents.

As part of the BasicNeed.nj.gov's design and development process, the Office of Innovation and OSHE connected with over 900 individuals and campus partners, which includes outreach to more than two dozen community groups statewide and ethnographic interviews conducted with New Jersey college students. The site will be continually updated and enhanced based on feedback from student users, various campus stakeholders, and community organizations.

The convening and development of BasicNeeds.NJ.gov follow findings from OSHE's [COVID-19 Student Impact Survey](#) and the [2019 #RealCollege Survey](#), which illustrated an increasing prevalence of material hardship among New Jersey postsecondary students, most acutely in the areas of food and housing insecurity.

“Basic needs insecurity among students is a significant concern that affects students not only in New Jersey but nationally,” **said Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, Senior Fellow at Education Northwest and the convening keynote speaker.** “At least one in every three students face food insecurity, one in four is a parent while studying, and one of every two may be housing insecure. Knowing this allows us to recognize that students are humans first and addressing their personal needs and overall well-being is not tangential but central to their academic success.”

The work of the convening complements several of the strategic investments by the State, such as the annual Hunger-Free Campus grants, the statewide Some College, No Degree initiative, and the mental health supports for college students, that are strengthening postsecondary student success in New Jersey. It also builds on the Murphy Administration's overall efforts to fulfill the vision set forth in the [State Plan for Higher Education](#), which is essential for reaching New Jersey's economic goals and seeding prosperity more broadly across the state.

The full event program and photos are available [here](#). Video recordings of convening sessions, once available, will be viewable on [OSHE's YouTube channel](#).



**About New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education:** The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is the leading state agency for higher education policy development and statewide program coordination in New Jersey. Under the leadership of Secretary Brian Bridges, Ph.D., the office works to enhance postsecondary opportunity with a focus on equity, access and affordability for students from all backgrounds. OSHE is dedicated to shaping a strong and inclusive higher education landscape and strategically collaborates with a diverse array of partners to inform best practice, student-centered strategies that empower success. Learn more at [nj.gov/highereducation](https://nj.gov/highereducation).