



A STUDENT-CENTERED VISION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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New Jersey Deputy Secretary of Higher Education Departing Murphy Administration

TRENTON — Diana Gonzalez, who currently serves as New Jersey’s Deputy Secretary of Higher Education, announced today that she will be departing the Murphy Administration at the end of August and transitioning to the private sector.

Gonzalez previously worked on Governor Phil Murphy’s gubernatorial campaign, during which she served as Policy Advisor and Outreach Director. Gonzalez began serving as Deputy Secretary in January 2018 at the start of the Murphy Administration.

“Diana played a critical role in advancing our higher education priorities during our first term in office,” **said Governor Murphy**. “I wish her nothing but the best in her future endeavors.”

Gonzalez served as Interim Secretary of Higher Education for about five months amid the COVID-19 pandemic following the departure of Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, former Secretary of Higher Education and current Chief Policy Advisor to Governor Murphy. Over the course of the pandemic, Gonzalez was instrumental in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) leveraging more than \$2 billion in federal funding to support New Jersey’s higher education sector. During her time as Interim Secretary, she also led New Jersey’s Higher Education Restart Advisory Group, comprised of presidents, faculty, and students, to ensure stakeholder engagement informed the state’s guidance and response to the public health crisis.

As Deputy Secretary, Gonzalez worked closely with the Governor’s Office to manage office operations, liaise with state higher education leaders, and coordinate priority initiatives to enhance equitable educational opportunities for all students. Gonzalez also worked with industry partners to help position New Jersey’s more than 80 institutions of higher education as engines of economic growth and innovation by increasing public-private partnerships and cultivating research and development opportunities.

Most notably, Gonzalez’s portfolio included enhancing the state’s economic and workforce development initiatives, particularly through partnerships with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU). Last month, \$3 million in funding provided by the NJBPU was awarded to Atlantic Cape Community College to establish an industry-recognized Global Wind Organization safety training program and facility to prepare workers for careers in the state’s growing offshore wind industry. This industry-standard credential will help prepare New Jersey’s workforce to respond to growing clean energy investments.

“It has been an honor serving the residents of New Jersey as Deputy Secretary of Higher Education under Gov. Murphy’s leadership, particularly at a time when colleges, students, and families face

unprecedented challenges during this ongoing pandemic,” **Deputy Secretary Gonzalez said.** “I look forward to seeing New Jersey, under Dr. Bridges’ leadership, continue making strides in spurring innovation and harnessing the talent of our students, regardless of their life circumstances.”

“Since my first day as Secretary, Diana has been a tremendous asset and critical member of our team in not only contributing to our policy work in providing life-changing educational experiences, but working to advance our talent and workforce development goals to position New Jersey and our institutions as economic engines and hubs of innovation,” **said Dr. Brian Bridges, Secretary of Higher Education.** “Her leadership has been second to none, and I personally thank Diana for her dedication and contributions to the higher educator sector during her time with the Murphy Administration.”

Gonzalez began her career as an early childhood teacher. After completing her Master of Education degree at Rutgers University, she went on to work in several different capacities within higher education. During her time at Rutgers, Gonzalez served as a representative to the Board of Trustees, was a member of the University Senate, and was a course instructor and graduate assistant.

She has worked directly with students, providing career advice and guidance during her time at Princeton University’s Center for Career Development. She also worked at Georgetown University as the Resident Director for the Community Scholars Program for first-generation college students from underrepresented groups and economically-disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gonzalez previously served as a board member of the Cuban American Alliance for Leadership & Education, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering students in New Jersey communities through academic scholarships, professional development, and cultural immersion. She supports City Relief, a nonprofit organization working to end homelessness, poverty, and addiction.