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Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Partners with Modern States to Pilot Models for Demonstrating College-Level Mastery and Earning Free College Credit for New Jersey Students

TRENTON - Today, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) and Modern States announced a pilot partnership to provide students across New Jersey with the opportunity to earn free college credit for demonstrating college-level mastery. The partnership with Modern States furthers the goals outlined in the [State Plan for Higher Education](#) by offering students college preparation and the ability to earn free college credit. A State Plan Working Group for On-ramps to College further explored [best practices and potential models](#) for demonstrating college-level mastery.

Modern States is a non-profit organization that provides high-quality courses and other learning materials to individuals free of charge, with the goal of the program being “Freshman Year for Free.” Students are able to take courses at their own pace, and once they have successfully completed a course, Modern States gives them a voucher to take CLEP exams for free. CLEP exams are offered by the College Board and cost \$89.

Three New Jersey institutions are currently participating in the pilot: Centenary University, Mercer County Community College and Thomas Edison State University. As COVID-19 has created barriers for students and declining enrollments in institutions of higher education, this partnership will help guide and allow students to explore potential postsecondary pathways. In addition, this partnership can encourage adults, particularly during this time of high unemployment, to explore access to higher education opportunities. This initiative will contribute to the state’s goal of 65 percent of all working-age adults earning a high quality credential or degree by 2025.

“Since day one, my administration has been steadfast in our commitment to giving every resident the same opportunity for success, and that starts with education,” **said Governor Murphy**. “From our Community College Opportunity Grant program to the Garden State Guarantee initiative, we are ensuring greater access to a higher education, whether a resident is recent high school graduate planning their future or an adult learner returning to school in search of new opportunities. This partnership opportunity with Modern States further builds on our progress to bring postsecondary education within reach for all of our residents.”

“Access, affordability, and lack of opportunity should not be a hindrance to student success,” **said Dr. Brian Bridges, Secretary of Higher Education**. “That’s why – through programs such as the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) and other affordable pathways – we remain focused on making higher education more equitable and attainable for all. New Jersey’s workforce and economy will undeniably be stronger as a result of this collaboration, and we are grateful to our Modern States partners for making this possible.”

“I applaud the efforts in New Jersey to help make a college education more affordable,” **said Steve Klinsky, Modern States’ Founder and CEO**. “Both Governor Murphy and Secretary Bridges fully recognize the importance of providing alternative pathways to college, and I am pleased to work with

them on this initiative that will offer Modern States' tuition-free online courses to learners throughout the state.”

“Thomas Edison has a long history of partnering with Modern States as well as accepting CLEP, AP and many other forms of learning assessments to accelerate degree completion for our adult learners. I applaud this Modern States partnership as it provides study materials and free exams at a time when numerous adult students are struggling financially. For our students, many of whom started college earlier in their lives, but never finished, or who need a new degree to advance their careers, this is a chance to fulfill that dream,” **said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, President of Thomas Edison State University.**

“Students who benefit most from CLEP are the same students Centenary serves most successfully. By partnering with Modern States, we are creating an additional on-ramp to achieving a high-quality education at Centenary even more affordable and accessible,” **said Dr. Bruce Murphy, President of Centenary University.**

“Mercer County Community College is delighted to join NJ OSHE, Modern States, Thomas Edison State University & Centenary University in an Innovative partnership to provide high-quality options supporting degree completion. Specifically, this partnership will allow eligible students to earn college credits through high-quality preparation and standardized CLEP examinations free of charge to students. It is an additional pathway to college completion without the cost barrier,” **said Dr. Jianping Wang, President of Mercer County Community College.**

CLEP currently offers 34 exams for different introductory college-level courses. More than 2,900 colleges and universities throughout the country grant credit for CLEP.

For more information on Modern States, visit <https://modernstates.org/about-us/who-we-are/>. New Jersey residents interested in participating in this initiative can visit: <https://nj.modernstates.org/> and should work with their institution to learn more.