



Promoting Excellence for All

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Commission on Higher Education Considers Plan to Acquire More Federal Research Funds for Higher Education

A Blueprint for Excellence, New Jersey's long-range plan for higher education, calls for an increase in federal research dollars for higher education in New Jersey, moving the state's ranking from 21st to 15th by 2012. At its November 19 meeting, the Commission on Higher Education discussed a proposal to achieve that goal.

Two members of the working group that developed the proposal, Philip Furmanski, executive vice president of academic affairs at Rutgers University, and Donald Sebastian, vice president of research and development at NJIT, reported to the Commission on five key research areas recommended as targets for New Jersey higher education institutions: Stem Cell Research, Biomedically-Related Nanoscience, Homeland Security, Advanced Imaging Technology, and Genomics/Bioinformatics. They pointed out that each of the areas is particularly important to New Jersey, and each has a rich foundation of current assets on which to build.

"This proposal provides an important vision for New Jersey," commented Commission Chairman Francis Mertz. "If sustained over time, it will significantly enhance New Jersey's economy and stature as a leader in research and development."

The Commission established and facilitated the small working group of research university representatives that identified the target research areas and projected milestones to reach a goal of at least \$807 million in 2012, which would more than double the level of funds currently generated by New Jersey colleges and universities.

According to the report, the projected increases will require significant changes in performance that will not be accomplished merely through incremental growth of existing R&D programs. High-profile efforts to develop new modes of attracting research funding will be necessary.

"A critical component of success will be extensive, systemic collaboration among the research universities and other institutions," stated Jeanne Oswald, executive director of the Commission. "Development of coalitions and the leveraging of state and private sector assets will be essential as well."

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The report will now be shared with all college and university presidents in New Jersey who will be asked to identify research strengths that their institutions may contribute to each of the five targeted areas.

Once the plan is adopted by the Commission in December, the research universities, and other institutions where appropriate to their missions, will develop or enhance tactical plans to successfully compete for federal research awards in the target areas. State and private sector strategies to support institutional efforts and leverage funds will be pursued.

The proposal is available on the Commission's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/highereducation>.

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