

March 19, 2020

March 19, 2020 Princeton, New Jersey – “Ensuring that New Jerseyans have the education and training they will need for high quality jobs in the future and matching that talent to the workforce needs of the State’s businesses and industries is the focus of Jobs NJ” said New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education, Zakiya Smith Ellis.



Pictured left to right: Zakiya Smith Ellis, New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education; Joshua E. Hodes, Chair, NJEFA; Eric D. Brophy, Esq., Executive Director, NJEFA

An Ex-Officio Member of NJEFA’s Board, Secretary Smith Ellis’s comments were made during a presentation she gave to NJEFA’s Board at their meeting on February 25th. In her comments, the Secretary emphasized the Administration’s efforts to implement Governor Murphy’s economic plan to reinforce New Jersey as a global economic leader and center of innovation and to build on the State’s new student-centric higher education master plan, **Where Opportunity Meets Innovation**.

“Jobs NJ is a critical part of those efforts,” said Secretary Smith Ellis who also Co-Chair’s Governor Murphy’s Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council, which launched Jobs NJ: Developing Talent to Grow Business in the Garden State earlier this year. Jobs NJ is a comprehensive plan to build an ecosystem of collaboration among many stakeholders, including government and private industry, colleges and universities, students, workers, labor unions, and businesses. “The goal of bringing together this expansive network of stakeholders,” the Secretary said, “is to ensure that New Jersey citizens are prepared to be national leaders in the 21st century talent market and that New Jersey businesses and employers can efficiently find the talent they need to grow and expand.”

Jobs NJ has three primary strategies, each of which plays a key role in creating a pathway for New Jersey citizens to get the education and training needed at an affordable price, so they can fill in-demand jobs. Those strategies include: 1) Expanding Access to Opportunity; 2) Training Individuals for In-Demand Jobs; and 3) Matching Talent to Jobs.

The strategies outlined in Jobs NJ directly align with the State’s higher education master plan - **Where Opportunity Meets Innovation** - unveiled in 2019. The higher education master plan calls for 5 targeted working groups to reinforce the strategic vision for higher education in the State. One of those working groups, Making College More Affordable, has focused its work over the last year on identifying ways to partner with four-year colleges and universities to establish transparent, predictable, and guaranteed pricing that students can count on throughout their college career and increase access to low-income students.

A member of the Secretary’s Making College Affordable working group, NJEFA Executive Director Eric D. Brophy said, “The primary strategies of Jobs NJ are examples of the extremely well planned and coordinated approach at OSHE and across the Murphy Administration to build a fairer and stronger economy that works for all segments of New Jersey’s population. The Authority is extremely proud to support these efforts.”

Jobs NJ includes aspirations for each primary strategy and initiatives to achieve certain benchmarks by 2025, which include; increasing educational attainment among historically disadvantaged populations, closing the racial and gender wage and employment gap, connecting education and training to industry needs, and creating a Talent Action Road Map customized for New Jersey businesses.

Secretary Smith Ellis highlighted several Administration initiatives currently in progress that support the mission of Jobs NJ. Some of these include supporting New Jersey’s world-class K-12 public schools, introducing free community college and apprenticeship programs, and putting money in working families’ pockets through an Earned Income Tax Credit.

Following the Secretary’s remarks, NJEFA Chairman Josh Hodes said, “making sure our State has a well-educated and robust student population that is prepared to enter a highly competitive and highly trained workforce is paramount. On behalf of the Authority, thank you Secretary Smith Ellis for the tremendous work that you and your team at OSHE and many others in the Administration are doing to ensure a bright future for all New Jersey. NJEFA is ready to support your efforts in any way we can.”

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