

**FACT SHEET:  
EXPANDING FREE COLLEGE TO ENSURE AFFORDABLE AND PREDICTABLE  
PATHWAYS FOR ALL NEW JERSEY STUDENTS  
THROUGH A GARDEN STATE GUARANTEE**

Governor Phil Murphy, in his FY2021 budget, has announced a bold new compact for higher education that **will allow all eligible New Jersey students to attend any public college in the state tuition-free**. This plan creates a path for broader affordability in addition to New Jersey's continued commitment to tuition-free community college in the state. Under this new *Garden State Guarantee*, NJ's 13 four-year public institutions will receive increased funding through the state's outcomes-based funding rationale to support institutions in serving low-income students and underrepresented students of color. In exchange for this increased investment, beginning with the cohort entering in the Fall of 2021, each institution will:

- Publicly promote a "College Promise"-style last-dollar commitment that students with adjusted gross incomes (AGI) of \$65,000 or less will pay zero tuition and fees for their first two years of study;
- create a sliding scale pricing structure for students above this income threshold; and
- lock in tuition prices for *all* students through the length of their academic program.

**How the Garden State Guarantee Will Work**

In the FY2020 budget, Governor Murphy unveiled a new rationale for funding the state's public four-year institutions that aligns with state priorities and rewards these institutions for achieving successful student outcomes. The funding rationale is based on the:

- total number of degrees awarded,
- number of degrees awarded among underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups, and
- number of students who qualify for Pell grants.

In FY2021, the Governor's budget continues down this path of equitable funding and includes an historic funding increase of \$50 million for senior public institutions of higher education through the institutions' outcomes-based allocations. In exchange for this new funding, these institutions will commit to offer a tuition-free price guarantee for two years to students with adjusted gross incomes (AGI) of \$65,000 or less, starting beginning with the cohort entering in fall 2021. This aligns with the eligibility for the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) program and **will allow all eligible NJ students to attend any public college in the state tuition-free**. In addition, all students at four-year public institutions will have their tuition price locked in for the duration of their academic program of study, creating a transparent and predictable pricing structure. Students who begin at community colleges **would have the potential to have their entire degree tuition-free**.

Funding the program through the state's outcomes-based funding rationale allows institutions the flexibility to use their increased funding as they see fit to assist their students, as long as the commitment is met. This program will complement existing efforts to provide affordable pathways for students at Rutgers-Camden, Rutgers-Newark, William Paterson University, and New Jersey City University. For institutions that are already making this commitment through existing resources, the funding increase can be used to cover other unmet needs for non-tuition costs or put in place programs to support students through to completion.

The Garden State Guarantee aligns with the goals of the state's plan for higher education, *Where Opportunity Meets Innovation*, by committing to affordable and predictable tuition costs and by creating a new reasonable and measurable affordability benchmark for all students.