[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 1326

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

Sponsored by:
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Assemblyman Hutchison, Assemblywoman Morales, Assemblyman Scharfenberger, Assemblywoman Brennan and Assemblyman Kearney

SYNOPSIS

Creates Task Force on Higher Education Governance and Funding; appropriates $200,000.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Budget Committee on June 28, 2026, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/14/2026)

AN ACT establishing the Task Force on Higher Education Governance and Funding, and making an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established the Task Force on Higher Education Governance and Funding. The purpose of the task force is to examine the State's system of higher education, including its organization, governance, and funding mechanisms. The task force shall develop recommendations that align with the State's higher education priorities.

b. The task force shall consist of [2]**[**13**]** 14[2] members as follows:

(1) the Secretary of Higher Education, ex officio, or a designee;

(2) the Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, ex officio, or a designee;

(3) two public members appointed by the President of the Senate, both of whom shall have substantive experience in higher education administration, public policy, or educational research relating to higher education governance and funding;

(4) two public members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, both of whom shall have demonstrated expertise in institutional accountability, fiscal management of institutions of higher education, student access and equity in higher education, or industry and workforce development in higher education; and

(5) [2]**[**seven**]** eight[2] members appointed by the Governor, including: the president of a public research university, or a designee; the president of a State college or university that is a member of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, or a designee; the president of a county college, or a designee; the president of an independent institution of higher education, or a designee; [2]the president of a Talmudic institution or theological seminary, or a designee;[2] the president of the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey, or a designee; [1]**[**and**]**[1] the president of the Council of New Jersey State College Locals, or a designee[1]; and a representative of the New Jersey Education Association[1].

2. Appointments to the task force shall be made within 60 days of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
[1]Assembly AHI committee amendments adopted May 4, 2026.
[2]Assembly ABU committee amendments adopted June 28, 2026.

expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the task force within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the task force for its purposes.

3. a. The task force shall organize no later than 60 days following the effective date of this act and shall be required to meet regardless of whether all members have been appointed as of that date.

b. The Secretary of Higher Education shall serve as interim chairperson of the task force until all members have been appointed, at which time the task force shall choose a chairperson from among its members and shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

c. The task force shall hold at least one public hearing no later than six months after the organization of the task force.

4. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall provide such stenographic, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and such professional staff as the task force requires to carry out its work. The task force also shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

5. It shall be the duty of the task force to examine the governance and funding of the State's system of higher education. The task force may utilize the assistance of an external consultant to meet its research needs. In conducting its work, the task force shall assess the system's ability to meet the current challenges facing institutions of higher education, and to recommend to the Legislature specific data-driven criteria and approaches to adequately, equitably, and stably fund public institutions of higher education, through:

a. an in-depth examination of the organizational structure of each institution of higher education in the State, including an analysis of the role and impact of their governing boards;

b. an analysis of the role and impact of State entities that provide oversight, guidance, and support to the State's institutions of higher education;

c. the identification and evaluation of State statutory and regulatory requirements, including any required submissions of data and reports, imposed upon institutions of higher education, degree-granting proprietary institutions, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority;

d. an analysis of the funding made available by the State to fulfill State statutory and regulatory requirements and the amount of

funding which institutions of higher education and degree-granting proprietary institutions expend to fulfill those requirements;

e. an analysis of the institutions' funding mechanisms and the impact of funding mechanisms on tuition and student and institution outcomes including, but not limited to, a review of State operating aid as a percentage of the operating budget of each public institution of higher education beginning in fiscal year 2000 and in each fiscal year thereafter;

f. the development of a master calendar that identifies the dates or timelines of all major reporting requirements for institutions of higher education within State and federal regulations;

g. an analysis of the mission statements of the State's institutions of higher education, and whether resources at these institutions are effectively utilized and promoting these mission statements;

h. a review of the relationships between county colleges and other institutions of higher education;

i. an assessment of the extent to which institutions of higher education are meeting the State's workforce needs;

j. an analysis of the effects of the change in higher education governance structure in the State since the abolishment of the Department of Higher Education in 1994; and

k. the identification and recommendation of best practices utilized in New Jersey and other states in the areas of higher education governance and funding including, but not limited to, best practices that may address:

(1) State funding options to annually support the operating and critical auxiliary needs of institutions of higher education, including capital construction and deferred maintenance, and the extent to which other states issue bonds or incur other forms of debt to support those needs;

(2) the use of annual capital budgeting;

(3) the percentage of State-funded employment positions at each public institution of higher education in the State relative to that institution's total employment, and the extent to which other states support fringe benefits of employees of public institutions of higher education;

(4) the availability of supplemental State support through grant programs and other funding opportunities;

(5) the appropriate governance structure of the State's higher education institutions; and

(6) the identification of any regulatory or other barriers that limit or prevent the realization of cost efficiencies through joint purchasing, shared services, and other cost-saving opportunities for collaboration among institutions of higher education.

6. a. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature

pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than one year after the task force organizes.

b. The task force shall expire 30 days after the issuance of its final report.

7. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the sum of $200,000 for the needs of the task force. The secretary may, upon the recommendation of the task force, use these funds to hire, contract, or partner with subject matter experts as may be necessary and appropriate.

8. This act shall take effect immediately.