New Jersey Study Underscores Importance of State-level College Research

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by Lois Elfman



Public policy advocate Dr.
Darryl G. Greer said he
believes a state- and
region-based investigation
is crucial to achieving
national college completion
goals. Recent research
conducted in New Jersey
provides valuable
information.

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discussions—was funded by a grant by the Education Testing Service Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy, as part of "Finding Solutions: Building Public Trust in an Era of Change."

Greer said he hopes Black, Hispanic and other underrepresented groups continue to aim for higher education because there is reason for optimism. His ongoing conversations to serve these groups will also include the need to reach back to middle schools and high schools and assist teachers, counselors and principals to improve the critical learning abilities in their students that will prepare those students to succeed at the post-secondary level.

With approximately 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, Greer said the solutions of affordability and retention are not ikely to be found at a macro level. Of course, there should be national discussion on financial aid, but the local, micro level is where the critical connection is in terms of public trust in colleges.

Greer has assembled an advisory council that includes national voices on higher education, local business leaders, representatives of the state's colleges and universities, elected officials and members of the community. The leadership group will make specific policy recommendations.

"We want to build a leadership group in New Jersey to help our leaders help colleges do what needs to get done to be responsive to the public," said Greer. "The key is to keep the public not only informed, but engaged in the conversation. That's how you manage change."

Greer is aware that New Jersey is much smaller and has less institutions of higher education than states such as Texas, Florida and California, but there are lessons learned from New Jersey's approach that if utilized will benefit other states.

"New Jersey can be a model for positive change and inclusiveness of all the stakeholders," he said. "New Jersey can help lead a national conversation."