

COUNCIL of NEW JERSEY STATE COLLEGE LOCALS AFT/AFL-CIO



1435 Morris Avenue
Union, NJ 07083
908-964-8476
FAX 908-688-9330
www.cnjscl.org

Nicholas Yovnello
President



**PRESS RELEASE
MARCH 17, 2010**

THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE MERGER WITH RUTGERS UNIVERSITY MAKES NO SENSE

Thomas Edison State College currently provides flexible college degree programs for adults through online courses, prior learning assessment and credit-bearing exams. Students rarely visit the campus. Rather, they complete courses, take exams and earn their degrees from home or from another convenient location. More than 18,000 students from all 50 states and 70 countries around the world are enrolled in the College, including thousands of U.S. active duty military personnel and returning veterans.

Tucked into Governor Christie's ***Budget in Brief*** is a bizarre proposal to merge Thomas Edison State College with Rutgers University. We believe this proposal has no merit and is seriously lacking in factual support, considering that Thomas Edison State College has grown and prospered in downtown Trenton for the past 31 years as one of NJ's senior public institutions. Two reasons are provided: (1) "To replicate Rutgers' central role in the revitalization of downtown New Brunswick" and (2) to "allow new classroom-based services for students in Trenton, while leveraging the two institutions' distance learning programming."

Neither reason withstands scrutiny. The first questions to be asked should be: Where did this proposal come from? What studies have been conducted and who has been consulted? Are two paragraphs in a governor's budget sufficient reason to eliminate a thriving state college? Where are the cost-savings and why "fix" something that is not broken?

Thomas Edison State College has already contributed to the revitalization of Trenton. The campus consists of five buildings located in Trenton's historic district near the State House. Its headquarters is in the Kelsey Building, one of the architectural landmarks of the city. Since 1979, the College has been active in restoring several historic buildings, including five restored 19th century townhouses adjoining the Kelsey Building and the early 20th century Kuser Mansion. These buildings are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The College of New Jersey located a few miles away in Ewing Township already provides "classroom-room based services" for college students and Edison can cooperate with Rutgers or any other state college/university that provides distance learning without being absorbed by them.

Thomas Edison State College has a national reputation for academic excellence and educational integrity. It is a unique institution that enhances New Jersey's reputation nationally and internationally. Governor Christie should leave well enough alone.

The Governor also proposes that Rutgers University take over the State Library (currently overseen by Thomas Edison College) and the State Museum, because "a lack of consistent State and financial support has prevented the State Library and State Museum from meeting their full potential as cultural and economic assets for Trenton and New Jersey. " The fact that Rutgers "has experience operating its own library and museum" supposedly makes it uniquely qualified to fulfill this job. But is this really true? Every state college and university operates a library and Rutgers' experience operating an art museum does not necessarily qualify it to operate the State Museum, which has an entirely different mission.

Once again, we ask: Where are the studies that make a case for this take over? Are there any cost savings? No information whatsoever is provided by the Governor.

We believe that this proposal is not in the public's best interest and it is certainly not in the best interest of public higher education in New Jersey.

Contact Information: Steve Young, Executive Director
young@cnjscl.org