

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



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## **Response to Darryl Greer, CEO of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, October 6, 2010 commentary**

Darryl Greer, CEO of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, October 6 commentary commending Governor Christie's higher education "toolkits" is sorely lacking in reality. Despite Governor Christie's severe cuts in the state higher education budget to the detriment of the institutions, Greer, favors a Christie "tool kit" bill which would, in fact, lead to greater expense and possible further reductions in State higher education funding. It is called collective bargaining "reform" but what it really means is that individual state colleges would be empowered to negotiate separate collective bargaining agreements with unions representing employees on their campuses. Currently the State negotiates two Agreements with the Council of NJ State College Locals, AFT (one for full time faculty and professionals, the other for adjunct faculty), one with the Communications Workers of America for administrative and clerical employees and one with Local 195, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers for service and maintenance employees. The state college presidents assist in formulating the State's bargaining demands and are represented at the bargaining table, but in the end, the Governor's Office calls the shots.

This system of centralized bargaining has existed for decades without any labor strife. It has provided uniformity in salaries and benefits across the nine state colleges/university's institutions. No one has ever accused the State of giving away the store. On the contrary, wage increases have been modest (sometimes zero percent increase) and the Council of NJ State College Locals and other state employee unions have made numerous concessions to address management's concerns. Furthermore hundreds of local agreements have been negotiated between the individual college presidents and local unions. How in the world will breaking up these four bargaining units to require the simultaneous or rolling negotiations of 36 separate contracts (four bargaining units times nine institutions) lead to anything but administrative chaos, strikes, destructive competition between institutions and the deterioration of working conditions?

At the time when cost savings are on everybody's lips, how can anyone justify the brand new layer of high priced managers that each state college and universities will hire to negotiate and administer their labor agreements?

Governor Christie and many State legislators are calling for shared services, merger of municipalities and school districts and statewide or countywide salary guideline for pre K-12 teachers. If he is advocating centralization in the pre K-12 sector, why is he simultaneously

proposing to de-centralize bargaining in the public higher education sector? Why eliminate an existing statewide guideline for salaries, promotions, etc, when it is adherence of these uniform standards that have been critical in reducing disparity in pay and academic rank due to gender, race and ethnic background?

Mr. Greer of course does not address these issues. The only substantive argument he musters is that “leaving negotiations in the hands of Trenton...results in wage increases that the State does not pay for.” This sounds like a wonderful argument for demanding that the State fully fund the salary increases. It is one that the Council continues to make, but the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, with its offices directly opposite the State House, has apparently given up on. What Mr. Greer and his colleagues fail to understand is that if the State leaves it to the individual state colleges to negotiate their own separate agreements, as they propose, the State will have no incentive whatsoever to fund them. In the absence of state funding, the individual institutions will have to raise tuition through the roof to fund the negotiated contracts. Or they could demand draconian cuts in wages and benefits in these newly created thirty six separate bargaining units and wait for the resulting chaos to break loose.

In light of the October 2007 State Commission of Investigation Report entitled Vulnerable to Abuse: The Importance of Restoring Accountability, Transparency and Oversight to Public Higher Education Governance and the July 5, 2010 Moody’s Investor Service report documenting excessive borrowing by the state colleges and universities, more State oversight, not less, is clearly in the public interest.

It is time that the governor, the legislature and Commission on Higher Education address some of the concerns raised by the AFT and other campus unions. How are out of unit administrator’s salaries and compensation packages established? Why is there no statewide salary guideline for out of bargaining unit administrators? In evaluating faculty for re-contracting and promotion input, the institutions insist on obtaining input and performance reviews from students, faculty peers, and campus administrators. Why doesn’t a comparable process exist on campuses for administrators? When faculty were furloughed and took a wage freeze, why was there no statewide imposition of the same kind of salary freeze and furlough for administrators? Why did one board of trustees during this period award a deferred retention bonus to its president? Are the compensation packages given upper level administrators truly appropriate to their responsibilities? Some have state-paid housing, automobiles, pension packages that are richer than what any state worker gets as well as country club memberships, entertainment allowances, and a host of other perks. In some cases the total compensation package is hidden from the public view because it will be subsidized by foundation or donor gifts. These are funds that could be put to better use updating the technology in the classroom.

All sources of institutional income and the total compensation packages of upper management should be made available to the campus unions and the public. Mr. Greer’s and the State colleges and universities presidents’ views in his commentary do not provide for greater accountability. They are ultimately an attempt to create a thicker veil of secrecy over the operations of our public higher education institutions.

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