



NEW JERSEY

LEGISLATIVE DEMOCRATS

FOR RELEASE:
June 4, 2024

Senate:
Press Office
(609) 847-3700

Assembly:
Press Office
(609) 847-3500

Members of New Jersey Legislative Caucuses Reaffirm Support for NJCU and Applaud Leadership of Interim President Andres Acebo

(Trenton) – The undersigned members of the New Jersey Legislature, Latino Legislative Caucus, Black Legislative Caucus, and Hudson County Legislative Delegation issued this statement affirming their continued commitment and support for New Jersey City University's (NJCU) revitalized mission and the thousands of students and families it serves, as well as the hundreds of faculty and staff who serve them. Many members, who have proudly grown in number in the new legislative session, have deep and personal ties to the University's mission and the students and families it touches. We personify the stories of the students who walk onto NJCU's campus, and some of us attended and graduated from the University, which is why we proudly supported last year's legislative stabilization appropriation and will continue to legislatively support the University's work and commitment to the populations it serves.

We also deeply value the importance of representation that authentically mirrors the constituencies we are privileged to serve. It's that representation that we proudly highlight and support. We applaud the servant leadership that the State and our communities have witnessed from NJCU Interim President Andrés Acebo, J.D. President Acebo is the only current Latino to lead any institution of higher education in New Jersey and the youngest known ever to lead a public university in our State. Equally notable is that he also personifies the stories of the students he serves as a first-generation, public school-educated son of working-class immigrants, born and raised in Hudson County, who became the first person in his family to attend college. He exemplifies the promise of equal opportunity and higher education. His passion for and connection to the community and mission that he has remarkably led out of crisis and into a period of significant revitalization has earned our confidence in his continued leadership to usher the University into its second century of service with stability, community engagement, strategic growth, and student-centered service. His passion and leadership have earned him significant honor and distinction.

"New Jersey City University is one of our State's oldest Minority-Serving and Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Nearly half of its overwhelmingly commuting students identify as Hispanic/Latina/o. Thirty percent identify as Black/African American, and at least eight percent identify as Asian American Pacific Islander. Two-thirds of all students are first-generation, and the overwhelming majority come from low-income and working-class households. It serves the most socioeconomically diverse student population of any public university in New Jersey, with a publicly celebrated history of driving social and economic mobility. This year's commencement saw nearly 1,700 graduates, an 11.6% increase in degree completion over last year. This is a testament to the resiliency and the new emphasis on student success in and for the community.

Public records affirm the University's significant strides at an unprecedented pace under Acebo's leadership. A global rating agency improved the University's financial outlook to stability while achieving new milestones in access and affordability, responsive academic and curricular reform, shared governance, labor relations, and community engagement.

The University has been led with exceptional resilience in navigating challenges posed by the global pandemic, higher education disruptions, and structural and systemic financial issues. Quick and decisive actions, commitment to shared governance, collegial work with organized labor, community engagement, strategic planning and implementation, and a student-centric mission-driven commitment have positioned the University to better serve the communities we represent.

The University developed strategies and engaged internal and external stakeholders in several key areas, including:

1. Stabilizing the financial trajectory of the institution through developing and implementing NJCU's Recovery and Revitalization Plan;
2. Strengthening ties to the community by leading a community-wide process of reviewing and refreshing the institution's Mission and Vision to reaffirm and rebuild the institution's historic commitments to students, families, and our community, including those that have been historically underserved and underrepresented;
3. Setting out a feasible, transparent, and community-supported road map by developing and implementing an integrated NJCU Strategic Plan comprised of an Academic Master Plan, a Strategic Enrollment Plan, and a Student Development and Community Engagement Plan;
4. Strengthening access and affordability for students through an overhaul of the General Education curriculum to ensure seamless transfer for all New Jersey community college students, intentional affiliations, and partnerships such as the concurrent admission program with Hudson Community College, which provide direct pathways for degree programs and shared resources to community college students;

5. Revamping the institutional aid structure and process to ensure that students with financial need are supported in ways that reduce their future financial burdens, including for our State's undocumented students through its partnership with TheDream.US;
6. Building and strengthening relationships with key community stakeholders to ensure a robust and thriving Hudson County and New Jersey economy through initiatives such as the Project Labor Agreement (PLA) and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at providing internship opportunities for NJCU students; and
7. Building and strengthening opportunities for immigrant and first-generation students through the MOU signed with GLACO — Grupo Latinoamericano de Cónsules en New Jersey — to initiate higher education programs and services tailored to the Latin American and Latino community in New Jersey to advance their educational attainment and career development, as well as to establish partnerships between Latin American higher education institutions and NJCU faculty and staff to promote mission-aligned programs in the most diverse communities in our country.

These are only some highlights of the recent and significant transformations being led at New Jersey City University under uniquely representative leadership and stewardship. We have witnessed the University community's tireless work to place itself on stable footing, reorganize and reallocate structures, processes, and resources, and ensure that students will have continued and enhanced access to a dedicated and engaged faculty and staff for the institution's second century serving the State of New Jersey.

We applaud the work of President Acebo and NJCU's students, faculty, and staff. We unequivocally support their continued leadership and work to ensure stability, community engagement, strategic growth, and student-centered service.

Undersigned:

LD-31
 Senator Angela McKnight
 Assemblywoman Barbara McCann Stamato
 Assemblyman William Sampson

LD-29
 Senator M. Teresa Ruiz
 Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor-Marin
 Assemblywoman Shanique Speight

LD-32
 Senator Raj Mukherji
 Assemblyman John Allen
 Assemblywoman Jessica Ramirez

LD-35
 Senator Nellie Pou
 Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter
 Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly

LD-33
 Senator Brian Stack
 Assemblyman Julio Marengo
 Assemblyman Gabriel Rodriguez

LD-27
 Assemblywoman Rosie Bagolie
 Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill

Assemblywoman Carmen Morales – LD-34
 Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez- LD-19

Assemblywoman Annette Quijano – LD-20
 Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez – LD-5