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Council on Innovation Formed to Help New Jersey Improve its Innovative Economy

> *In adopting a Building Bridges II recommendation, state seeks to bind the ties between government, business and academia.*



Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks

At a recent press conference at Rutgers University's Piscataway campus, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno announced the formation of the Council on Innovation. The entity, headed by Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks, will advise the state's Partnership for Action on how industry and academia can better work together to improve the state's

innovative economy and attract more federal funding. At the same event, it was announced that Hendricks would become part of the New Jersey Partnership for Action, now a four-part entity whose goal is to attract new businesses and help existing businesses thrive in the state. It includes the Business Action Center, Choose NJ, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and the Secretary of Higher Education.

The formation of the Council on Innovation is one of the recommendations of the "Building Bridges II: Breaking Down Barriers" report released by Innovation NJ and the New Jersey Policy Research Organization (NJPRO) (please see page 61).

"This day has been a long time coming," the Lt. Governor said. The formation of the Council on Innovation is "the administration's next step in promoting excellence in higher education as a pathway to an innovative ecosystem. Our first 'win' is adopting one of 'Building Bridges II' recommendations and forming the Council on Innovation, which will advise the governor and the Legislature."

Among the business people and organizations involved in the Council are: Tracie McDaniels of Choose NJ; NJBIA's Melanie Willoughby; the New Jersey Technology Council's Maxine Ballen; BioNJ's Debbie Hart; the Healthcare Institute of New Jersey's Dean Paranicas; the Research & Development Council of New Jersey's Tony Cicatiello and the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's Charlene Brown (former chair of the NJPRO board of trustees and chair of the Innovation NJ Collaboration Committee). The institutions of higher education involved in the Council include those members of the Association of State Colleges and Universities, the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, Rutgers University, New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rowan University, to name a few.

"These members are on the front lines and have their fingers on the pulse of what is needed to grow the state's innovation industries," Guadagno said.

She added, "Working together, the Council will seek to: Propose policies to promote innovation in New Jersey and beyond; ensure that regulations are

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consistent with the state's pro-growth policies and don't pose obstacles to those strategies; identify emerging trends in technologies to foster business relationships and models; play an important role in forming policy in a variety of ways; and serve as a foundation to pursue the remaining 14 recommendations in the Building Bridges II report."

According to Hendricks, part of what the Council will do, along with the assistance of its members, is help the state promote "the extraordinary work that is already taking place here. We need to make sure we are able to retain and attract the talent we need here in New Jersey, not just to be well positioned and compete with states like Massachusetts, Colorado and North Carolina, but to surpass them because we have the wherewithal to do extraordinary things.

"I need everyone in this room to step up and do great things. ... There is nothing to hold us back. I want to see New Jersey competitive, nationally. My expectation is that we will be a global leader. ... We should expect nothing less from ourselves."

The Lt. Governor then highlighted achievements in the state that are destined to strengthen the state's high-tech industries. These include: the passing of the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act to transform higher education in New Jersey by creating a world-class network of educational institutions, including hubs of higher education excellence in the northern, central and southern parts of the state; New Jersey becoming the first East Coast state to launch the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship, with nearly \$9 million in support from foundations and private funds; the creation of a series of Talent Networks to identify the exact skills and training necessary to maximize worker marketability and meet employer demands in STEM-related fields and other growing industries; and the announcement of the governor's STEM Scholars Program to mentor New Jersey's best and brightest students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

– Anthony Birritteri

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