

atchdog report: New Jersey any recipients of Tuition

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ANE D... D Education Writer | Pos

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ESAA Executive Director Gabrielle Ch...
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and students do better.”

Established in 1978, New Jersey TAG funds were originally supposed to pay 100 percent of public college tuition and 50 percent of independent college tuition. As college costs and TAG demand have risen, the grants have not kept pace, averaging only 40 percent of tuition at all four-year colleges,

unsatisfactory graduation rates.

“The bigger question is, how does all of the aid work together and how do we use it better,” said Greer, who is now a senior fellow for Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance at Richard Stockton College’s William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, where he is developing a paper on changing higher education.

Just how dysfunctional New Jersey’s finance system for higher education is can be demonstrated by two seemingly opposing facts:

In New Jersey gives out the most need-based financial aid per student in the nation, an average of \$975 per undergraduate in 2010-11, according to the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.

In New Jersey student college debt increased per student in 2011 to an average of \$27,610, the 10th-highest in the nation, according to The Project on Student Debt 2012 report.

Greer said the problem was that New Jersey state college tuition had risen while state aid had been reduced. Middle-income students don’t qualify for need-based aid such as TAG and must rely more on loans, and since need-based aid does not cover all costs, low-income students are supplementing with loans.

Students who don’t graduate still must pay back loans without having a degree that might lead to a better-paying job.

Taxpayers are left to wonder how much money was spent on grants to students who did not graduate.

“Taxpayers have a right to know what they’re getting,” said AIR’s Schneider.

Greer said financial aid could no longer afford to be a “one size fits all” model and should be adapted to fit different programs and student populations. College costs must also be controlled.

