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"New Jerseyans see the state's colleges and universities as having high quality, as well as high value, even with their consistent concerns about college affordability," said Darryl Greer, senior fellow for higher education strategic information and governance at Stockton.

"However, they have specific ideas about what students and colleges need to do to increase value -- principally, to partner with business to create more practical in-college experiences, such as internships," Greer said.

New Jersey's tuition rates rank among the highest in the nation. But most of those polled thought the state's colleges had good reputations. Nearly 77 percent ranked New Jersey colleges as good or excellent. The state's four-year colleges had the best reputations, with 86 percent of those polled saying they were of the highest quality when compared with New Jersey's two-year and online colleges.

Among the other findings:

- Those polled said problem solving (82 percent), writing (81 percent) and communicating (80 percent) were the most important skills gained in college.
- Half of the people surveyed thought colleges should partner with businesses to make changes on campus, while 35 percent said the schools should partner with government and 12 percent said the colleges should make improvements on their own.
- Though the public is concerned about the rising cost of college, few of those surveyed said they would chose a school based on price. According to the poll, location (25 percent) was the chief reason for selecting a college, followed by the programs offered (24 percent), price (20 percent) and quality (14 percent).

The poll was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute. The Educational Testing Service Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy, a philanthropic arm of the testing company that produces the SAT and other exams, provided a grant to help pay for the poll and roundtable discussions hosted by Stockton's Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance project.

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