

Higher Education Has **NEVER BEEN** More Important

by Steve Beatty, NJEA VP

As society begins to emerge from challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our community colleges have never played a more critical role. Many of our students have seen life as they knew it upended and changed in ways they could never have imagined. Yet, as educators, we remain steadfast in our commitment to being there for our students – both academically and emotionally – as they navigate these difficult times. I commend you for your continued commitment to New Jersey's future through your unwavering dedication to your craft, your institutions, and your students.

Our community colleges continue to offer a high-quality, affordable education to all those interested and willing to work, and, in doing so, they serve as a gateway to a better life for countless students who pass through their doors. The institutions that mean so much to so many would mean hardly anything if not for the unmatched efforts of the faculty and educational support professionals (ESPs) who bring these colleges to life.

The impact of your voice is felt around the state in every facet of our 200,000-member union. By bringing forth issues that relate specifically to higher education, we're better able to advocate and fight for policies that impact K-12 schools and our community colleges. We are all one in our fight for a more robust public education system, and when we stand together, we stand to make progress.

Whether you're dealing with recalcitrant or hostile boards of trustees, college



presidents, or regional politicians, we stand beside you. We stand arm-in-arm with you ready to advocate for environments conducive to academic freedom and student learning. If the ESPs are mistreated or privatized, we are prepared to push back together. If a college president is trying to institute new, harmful policies that would put educators at risk or restrict

academic integrity, we are ready to activate the strength of our union to uphold our values. As union members, we are only as strong as our collective commitment to one another; our commitment has never been stronger.

We must be willing to find our power and organize with intention and deliberate goals in mind. We must continue to be unafraid to use our voices in the political arena as we advocate for common-sense policies and political leaders who possess common sense. At the state level, we've been working with Secretary of Higher Education Brian Bridges to identify shared visions and goals as we look to find common ground and areas where we can collaborate.

I was thrilled that the NJEA Higher Education Conference returned to an in-person setting this year. I enjoyed seeing you and working with you during the conference. NJEA is stronger when all of our voices are heard, and we are thankful for your willingness to share your voice as we work together toward our common goals. Thank you for all you do for our colleges and unions.

Spiller and Robertson join Dr. Biden, U.S. Secretary Cardona for ARP event at Bergen Community College



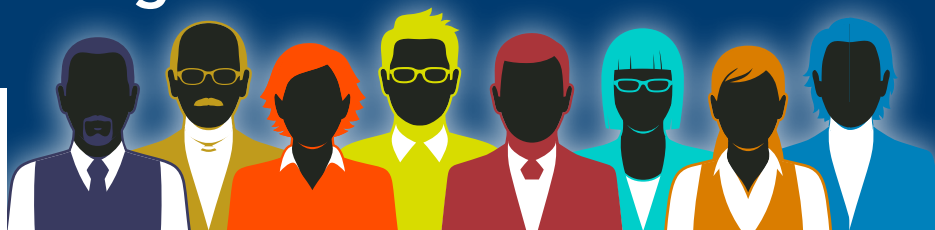
NJEA President Sean M. Spiller and Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson joined First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona at Bergen Community College on Jan. 20, 2022 to discuss the critical role that the American Rescue Plan (ARP) has played in supporting students, K-12 schools, community colleges, and educators.

Dr. Biden announced \$198 million in federal funding for institutions of higher education with "the greatest need" such as community colleges.

Both Dr. Biden and Secretary Cardona praised Bergen Community College for assisting students with child care, mental health services, and paying outstanding tuition balances during the pandemic.

A look at the NJEA Higher Education Conference

By Zaida Nogue, Camden County College



As a new Vice President of the Camden County College Association of Administrative Personnel, I attended the NJEA Higher Education Conference and Collective Bargaining Summit in April. I wanted to learn more about NJEA. My experience was enlightening and informative. When we consider our dues, we often think “what is the money used for?” When you attend the conference, you understand. The partnerships with other organizations to bring us the benefits that allow us to recoup the funds, the work done to assist those colleges who are not being treated fairly, and the webinars and sessions, such as collective bargaining, to help us understand our benefits are just a few.

I encourage those who are considering running for a position whether it is on a committee or executive position to attend the conference. NJEA will sponsor a union member to attend at no cost to the member. It is a great opportunity to see the work done by NJEA.



Above – Mecheline Farhat, Higher Education Committee Chair/Bergen Comm. Clg. Faculty Assn.



Above (l-r) – Kerry Frabizio, Warren Co. Clg. Faculty Assn.; Michael Ferlise, Higher Ed DA Rep., Lauren Drew, Hudson Co. Comm. Clg. Professional Assn.



Above (l-r) – Paula Williams, Melissa Krieger, Bergen Comm. Clg. Faculty Assn.; Ryan Brown, Rong Weng, Bergen Comm. Clg. Professional Staff Assn.



Above (l-r) – Sujatha Ramakrishnan, Tim Stafford, Mike Frank, Essex County College Faculty Association.



Higher Education Local Leadership Development Institute (LLDI) Graduates pictured (l-r) with Steve Beatty. Andrea Wilson, Camden Co. Clg. Assn. Of Administrative Personnel; Christine Petersen, Hudson Co. Comm. Clg. Adm. Assn.; and Candace Halo, Faculty Assn. of Co. Clg. of Morris

Who would you nominate for a Higher Ed 'Member of the Year' Award?

In 2016, NJEA established an annual award that recognizes the accomplishments of higher education members in the employment categories of faculty, support (ESP), and administrative. The criteria and process for nomination or self-nomination for the award are detailed at <http://www.njea.org/membership/higher-education>. The deadline to send nominations to the NJEA Higher Education office is November 1, 2022. They can be emailed to kperry@njea.org or mailed to the Region 29 office.

The awards will be presented at the annual NJEA Higher Education Conference scheduled for April 14-16, 2023. Go to <http://www.njea.org/membership/higher-education> to read the criteria and decide who you think should be nominated for this important recognition of service to the higher education community.



Organizing for power

By Chris Aikin,
Field Organizing Specialist,
NJEA UniServ-Central

First, greetings to everyone in the NJEA Higher Ed membership! I am new to NJEA staff, but have worked with higher ed unions in New York and New Jersey. I'm excited to get to work with all of you and your local associations. At the recent NJEA Higher Ed Conference, I facilitated two discussions among attendees: (1) Building Local Power and (2) Organizing to Support Contract Negotiations. In both sessions I was struck by the potential for NJEA higher ed locals to build more power through internal member-to-member organizing as well as external organizing with natural allies in their communities as well as the larger labor movement. It's always exciting to talk about what's possible, but talk can sometimes become theoretical and illusory without commitments to action. With that in mind, I'm hoping to work with individual locals, statewide leadership of the NJEA higher ed membership, and the talented NJEA staff in a variety of departments to help develop and marshal resources to build union power on campuses around the state. Some of the next steps could include:

- Trainings in membership recruitment and retention
- Power-mapping for bargaining and issue campaigns to discuss potential allies (and how to overcome obstacles) on campus, in the community, and among elected officials
- Workshops on best practices for membership to strengthen the union's voice in legislative matters and higher education policy statewide

As we develop more opportunities for locals to build power, we must keep in mind that any real organizing work *"must"* start with members engaging other members. I'm looking forward to meeting more NJEA higher ed members and working with the great NJEA staff – from Field Reps to Government Relations to Communications, all of whom can help provide the resources locals need to build their own power, win strong contracts, and effectuate real change for more just working conditions and learning conditions in NJ Higher Ed.



NJEA's Executive Committee celebrated Peter Helff's 80th birthday, before the scheduled meeting, on Friday, March 18, in Somerset. President Sean Spiller applauded Peter's many decades of leadership and advocacy, representing Higher Education and Bergen Community College.

(Pictured l-r) NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, Bergen County Education Association (BCEA) 2nd VP Esther Fletcher, BCEA President Sue McBride, BCEA 1st VP Andy Policastro, NJEA President Sean Spiller, NJEA Executive Committee member Robert LaMorte, and NJEA VP Steve Beatty joined Peter Helff (center) as he prepared to cut his birthday cake.

If you would like to submit an article for the Fall 2022 issue of the *HE News*, submission deadline is August 1, 2022 to reg29_Higher_Ed@njea.org

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NJREA –

Thomas Harrington

Ocean –

Jayanti Tamm

Passaic –

Christopher Mueller

Union –

Paul Belmonte

Warren –

Kerry Frabizio

Higher Education representatives to:

NJEA Executive Committee –

Peter Helff

NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA) –

Mecheline Farhat
Michael Ferlise

NJREA: Investing in YOUR future

by Joan Wright, President, New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA)

For active higher education members considering retirement, make sure you join the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA), the only organization that represents retired NJEA members. NJREA's power is in the advocacy of its members, and it's that collective power which helped the organization mark its 102nd anniversary on January 13, 2022.

Standing up for ourselves – In today's economic climate, there are those who feel your hard-earned pension and health benefits are entitlements that should be reduced. In 2018, NJEA/NJREA successfully lobbied and advocated to keep higher education employees in the School Employees' Health Benefits Plan (SEHBP). Talking to legislators about the impact of increased medical insurance and the loss of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is an activity NJREA members regularly conduct.

Benefits of membership – As an NJREA member, you also belong to NJEA, NEA-Retired, and a retiree association in the county from which you retired (CREA). CREA meetings include up-to-date information on our pension and medical insurance and the opportunity to speak to an NJEA staff person who can answer specific concerns. NJREA members continue to receive the monthly *NJEA Review*, the nationally award-winning quarterly *NJREA Newsletter*, the bi-annual *NJEA Higher Education Newsletter* and a CREA newsletter – many of which feature

articles on Medicare and Social Security and how they impact retired New Jersey public employees. Additionally, NJREA and CREAs are involved in philanthropic activities including food and clothing collections, assistance to students with medical needs, and, of course, the annual awarding of community college, college and university scholarships. In addition to retaining any NEA insurance purchases, you're eligible for the same NJEA/NEA member benefits you now enjoy.

Membership dues – The NJREA membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. A retiree may be an annual or lifetime member. Based on the county of retirement, 2021-22 annual dues for a certificated retiree are \$98-\$113. Lifetime certificated dues are \$1,295-\$1,470 and can be paid in five installments after retirement. ESP rates are \$56-\$71 for annual and \$755-\$930 for lifetime membership. Like to plan ahead? Pre-retirement lifetime membership is also an option and can be paid in 10 installments prior to retirement.

Invest in your security – Most importantly, as an NJREA member, you can phone NJEA headquarters to get immediate assistance should you have problems with your pension or health benefits. Guidance on working after retirement and assistance to surviving spouses/partners is always available to NJREA members.

How to join – Call NJEA Membership at 609-599-4561, ext. 4123, and join today.



Wright

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

2022

Nov. 10-11

Higher Education
at NJEA Convention

2023

April 14-16

NJEA Higher Ed Conference &
Collective Bargaining Summit