



May 23, 2013

More NJ Students Head Out of State for College Than Come In

New Jersey has the dubious distinction of leading the nation in the brain drain. Every year, about 31,000 New Jersey high school seniors leave home to attend colleges and universities in other states. But a mere 4,000 out-of-state students move to New Jersey to attend college. That's a net loss of about 27,000 students.

It's an issue Dr. Susan Cole, president of Montclair State University, has been following for years. "I've spoken to six governors about this issue," she said.

Dr. Cole attributes the exodus of students to three problems — capacity, programs and rising tuition. She says surrounding states have taken advantage of New Jersey's high tuition and have been recruiting New Jersey students.

Millburn High School guidance counselor Nancy Siegel has seen the brain drain first hand. She says 85 percent of the graduates from the class of 2012 are now attending out-of-state colleges and universities. "These are high performing students who work hard ... They're looking for names, the best school," said Siegel.

This brain drain has a financial impact. New Jersey loses about \$4 billion in tuition every year. And the financial toll is even greater if you consider these students, who will one day buy a house, pay taxes and contribute to the local economy, don't typically come back to New Jersey after they graduate.

But New Jersey is hoping to stem the tide of the brain drain by spending millions on capital projects at colleges and universities across the state. Higher education officials hope these new and improved facilities will convince more New Jersey high school seniors that they can get a quality education right here at home.

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