



Stockton Board Votes to Petition for Change To Be Recognized as Comprehensive University

Change Would Highlight Stockton's Evolution and Reflect Its Current Status

For Immediate Release; with photo attached

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Galloway Township, NJ - The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey today took a historic step toward changing its official designation and name to that of a university, to more accurately reflect Stockton's current status.

The Board of Trustees voted to authorize President Herman Saatkamp to petition the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to officially classify Stockton as a comprehensive university, a designation for which the college has met the requirements for the past five years.

"Stockton's mission stresses excellence in teaching and dedication to learning, and that will continue to be the heart of the distinctive Stockton experience," said President Saatkamp. "Stockton's tradition of community service will also remain strong as we transition into our next phase as a pre-eminent institution of higher education."

Comprehensive universities emphasize teaching, and offer master's degrees in a variety of academic disciplines and professional fields, as opposed to research universities, which place more emphasis on faculty members' research publications in refereed journals and books for promotion and tenure.

"The college already has comprehensive university status in its classifications by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Princeton Review*," said President Saatkamp.

Curtis Bashaw, chair of the Board of Trustees, said the board is pleased with the Stockton community's support for the change. "Alumni, faculty, staff, students, and of course, we board members, are enthusiastic about taking this distinctive step in Stockton's impressive academic evolution."

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Stockton is ranked at #9 among public Regional Universities of the North by *U.S. News & World Report* in its 2015 edition of “America’s Best Colleges.” Stockton also is ranked overall at #41 out of 135 public and private Northern universities by *U.S. News & World Report*. Stockton advanced in both categories this year, continuing its top tier designation.

Stockton’s graduate programs have grown to 13 since the first master’s degree program, the Master of Physical Therapy, was approved in 1994. The first doctoral program, the Doctor of Physical Therapy was approved in 2006.

Whether to seek a change had been the subject of research and internal discussion for nearly two years. Faculty, staff, students, prospective students and parents, alumni and over 1,400 members of the public in South Jersey were surveyed, and “town hall” discussions were held for the Stockton community.

The results of the surveys, independent research and other feedback led the Pan-College Task Force on University Status, comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of the community, to recommend on Sept. 3 that the president ask the Board of Trustees to pursue the change. Its full report and related information is available at Stockton.edu/universitystatus.

The Task Force report said the change would be beneficial for the following reasons:

- To align with Stockton’s current reality (as evidenced by its Middle States and Carnegie Foundation designations— both of which already consider the college a university and measure it against other such institutions in their rankings);
- To reaffirm the college’s mission and culture of high quality teaching, as well as its commitment to the liberal arts and sciences, general education, and research standards set by programs; and
- To showcase the institution’s accomplishments, expansion to serve the regional needs of graduate students, and successful growth in careful, measured progress over time.

Other potential benefits outlined in a report presented to the full Faculty Senate earlier this year, included:

- To enhance the potential for recruitment, particularly among international students and faculty, where the word “college” causes confusion. The change would also benefit Stockton in forging partnerships with institutions in other countries;
- To enhance the potential to attract more graduate students to Stockton’s growing programs;
- To capitalize on the perceived increase in status that the name “university” confers within higher education and among the general public. This may aid in fundraising as well as recruitment.

The change also would highlight Stockton’s tremendous growth in academic achievements and new programs as well as its new facilities, including instructional sites in three counties.

Potential considerations included the implications for the college’s self-definition as “distinctive” and different from other state institutions, a report to the Faculty Senate noted.

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Stockton's culture as a community committed to student-centered education would remain intact, a consensus concluded. "Changing the school's designation to a university would not alter expectations for teaching, scholarship, and service," a Task Force subcommittee said.

The estimated costs of a name change, which are expected to be phased in over five or more years, range from \$654,208 to \$956,082, depending on what is included. The range covers replacing signage and updating institutional and marketing materials such as stationery, business cards, flags, seals and banners. Some of those materials are updated and reprinted annually and their costs would be absorbed in existing budgets.

Some items of historical significance may not be changed.

There are many more steps to changing a college's name. For a complete list, [click](#) or visit Stockton.edu/universitystatus.

President Saatkamp will submit a petition for the change to Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks for review by the state Office of Academic Affairs staff, with the assistance of external consultants.

Secretary Hendricks would provide the New Jersey Presidents Council, which represents the state's public, private, religious and community colleges and universities, with all materials related to the petition for a name change, seeking a recommendation.

After reviewing the Presidents Council recommendation, the Office of Academic Affairs staff and consultants' findings, and all reports and recommendations related to the petition, Secretary Hendricks would make a determination.

Photo caption:

Members of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey Board of Trustees and the Stockton community applaud the move to seek a change in the college's status to that of a university.

Photo by Margot Alten/The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

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