

Higher Education Healthcare Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2012

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Nat Bender, Communications Director
American Federation of Teachers NJ
(908) 377-0393. nbender@aftnj.org

Cliff Freid, New Jersey Area Director
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU
(917) 687-2635. cfreid@cirseiu.org

Ed note: The full text of the coalition's *Legislative Framework for the Reorganization of Higher Education in New Jersey* is online at

<http://aftnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/legislativeframework052112.pdf>

A framework for moving higher education forward

Higher education and healthcare workers issue recommendations for legislation

EDISON, N.J.—Representatives of the doctors, nurses, professors and all levels of workers at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), Rutgers and Rowan today publicly issued recommendations for legislation for any higher education realignment. The coalition of labor unions, representing more than 30,000 public workers, endorsed a framework that provides more direct support for Southern New Jersey, while protecting University Hospital in Newark and UMDNJ health and community services throughout the state.

“We need a public discussion among legislators and all stakeholders to safeguard the critical education, healthcare, research and community outreach functions of our institutions,” said Alex Bernstein, Executive Director of the American Association of University Professors at UMDNJ on behalf of the Higher Education and Healthcare Coalition. “If our goal is to maintain critical services to the citizens, patients and students of New Jersey, we need a thorough fiscal analysis and answers to questions through an open legislative process.”

The union coalition’s framework includes more resources to Southern New Jersey, with direct state funding and a local governing board for Rutgers-Camden. The school would have enhanced flexibility to collaborate with institutions such as Rowan University, which is taking steps to become a research university (currently only New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers and UMDNJ are designated state research universities). “The community campaign in support of Rutgers-Camden has never been just about a name,” said Adrienne Eaton, President of the Rutgers faculty union AAUP-AFT. “We welcome discussions about an arrangement that would provide resources necessary to further research throughout Southern New Jersey and enhance the region’s economic viability, but Rutgers-Camden must remain a part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.”

[MORE]

The Higher Education Healthcare Coalition (HEHC) is an umbrella group comprised of UMDNJ, Rutgers and Rowan labor organizations. The coalition’s mission is to ensure that any reorganization of healthcare education in New Jersey makes each of the institutions stronger and enhances the quality of higher education in New Jersey. The coalition maintains that any reorganization must protect the services currently provided, the skilled professionals who provide those services and the New Jersey communities that rely on these services.

Higher Education Healthcare Coalition

PAGE TWO: A framework for moving higher education forward

UMDNJ provides vital health care services throughout the state and access to these services must be safeguarded. “University Hospital is a Level One trauma center and is the largest Charity Care facility in the state,” said Jean Pierce, Public Policy Staffer for the Health Professionals and Allied Employees (HPAE) union, which represents nearly 4,000 UMDNJ employees statewide. “University Hospital must continue to be supported by state appropriations so that it can continue to fulfill its mission and commitment to the community and to maintain its role as a leading teaching hospital.”

The coalition is calling for any changes in the institutions’ structures to be made in a manner that protects the workforce and working conditions and maintains the current union contracts and representation. Kathleen Hernandez, Executive Vice President of the Communications Workers of America, Local 1031 said, “From the department secretaries to professors and doctors, maintaining academic and medical personnel is important for the students, patients and citizens who depend on our services.”

Since the Governor has been calling for a merger of higher education and medical institutions, the union coalition has been asking for public hearings and planning that involves all community stakeholders. The coalition is acting to protect these public institutions, enhance higher education opportunities, safeguard quality patient care and advance medical and academic research.

[END]

The Higher Education Healthcare Coalition (HEHC) is an umbrella group comprised of UMDNJ, Rutgers and Rowan labor organizations. The coalition’s mission is to ensure that any reorganization of healthcare education in New Jersey makes each of the institutions stronger and enhances the quality of higher education in New Jersey. The coalition maintains that any reorganization must protect the services currently provided, the skilled professionals who provide those services and the New Jersey communities that rely on these services.