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The following statement has been released by Dr. George A. Pruitt, President of Thomas A. Edison State College on the Report of the Commission for the Future of State Colleges:

On Friday, February 17, the New Jersey Board of Higher Education was presented with the Report of the Commission on the Future of the State Colleges. I wish to join with others familiar with the work of this Commission in applauding its members for the diligent and conscientious effort given to a task of enormous complexity and pregnant with major consequences for public higher education in New Jersey.

I wish, however, to express my opposition to the Commission's fundamental recommendation that the nine State Colleges be brought together in creating a unitary University of New Jersey system. I generally concur with the Commission's recommendations in the nongovernance areas. I am particularly pleased with the specific recommendation relevant to Thomas A. Edison State College. This conclusion of the Commission is consistent with Edison's perception of its mission and future aspirations. It is my hope that the Commission's excellent substantive objectives do not get lost in the certain controversy over the governance issues.

The nine State Colleges in New Jersey are afflicted with two major problems: they are over-regulated, and under-funded. In my opinion, the Commission's recommendation of creating a central Board and administration would compound rather than alleviate these problems. It would not remove the regulatory burden from which the Colleges suffer; rather, it would transfer the external approval authorities from several diverse agencies to a new one. There is little reason to believe that the regulatory burden itself would be eased. The funding dilemma would be aggravated by the creation of a tenth professionally staffed entity to join nine others in a pot containing already limited resources for its current occupants.

The Commission suggests that a central system administration could speak with a louder and more distinct voice than the nine separate and diverse voices now heard throughout the State. My view is that nine strong voices separate but in concert can be more effective than one from a system.

Edison State College has a unique anxiety about the model being proposed. While each of our institutions are different, our eight other institutions have more in common than they have unique. For Edison, however, we are more unique than similar to our colleagues. The fundamental tendency of all systems is to standardize and homogenize. Those tendencies if not resisted

would be disastrous in terms of Edison's ability to conduct its special mission as now perceived and reinforced by the Committee's recommendation concerning us. I would add, however, that I am cautiously reassured by Empire State College's effectiveness within the State University of New York System.

The final concern is as to whether or not the new system would achieve its expected ends. The Commission describes a number of laudable objectives and then concludes that the systems approach is the best way to achieve these objectives. I would suggest that thirty years of National experience with systems has not provided convincing evidence that this is the case. I am particularly mindful of the writings of Professor Louis Mayhew on this subject. He concluded that there exists no objective evidence that centralized systems which were created in other states to achieve the same results sought after here, has been attained. The only difference between the highly centralized California system and the highly decentralized Michigan system is that the taxpayers of California spend considerably more on overhead and administration than do the taxpayers of Michigan. The report of the Commission attempts to maintain some semblance of current institutional identity by providing for the retention of local Boards. The evidence, however, with systems taking this approach suggests that these local structures serve more of a public relations function with local communities than any real individual governance authority.

As in most issues of great importance and complexity, solutions to problems are not obvious or easy. For every benefit there is a cost. It is my sincere belief that the cost suggested by the Commission to achieve laudable objectives for the institutions and citizens of this State is too high. It is my hope and request that the Department of Higher Education and the Board of Higher Education seek to strengthen the State Colleges and support the Commission's recommendations within the context of the current government structure.