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by  
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I moved to New Jersey and assumed the presidency of Thomas A. Edison State College in December of 1982. On a visit to the College two months earlier, I turned on the television to watch a Governor in the freshman year of his first term tell the people of New Jersey that we faced a \$150 million revenue shortfall and that drastic measures were necessary to save the state's fiscal condition. I saw a Governor who was late to organize his administration because he had been elected by the slimmest margin in the history of the state and it wasn't until the last minute that this executive, in fact, knew that he would be the Governor.

My first week in office I met with my colleague presidents and the Chancellor of Higher Education to prepare for a salary and staff retrenchment. My colleagues turned to me and said, "Welcome to New Jersey."

Well here, almost 4 years later to the day, you don't hear many jokes any more about New Jersey. That same Governor who squeaked into office by the narrowest of margins was reelected with the largest plurality in the history of the state, and when my colleagues and I meet we now sit in a position of national leadership, planning the reinvigoration of higher education in our state and the creation of national models for our colleagues across the country.

Over the last 25 years most of us, New Jersey included, have been centralizing and regulating education to the extent that we have fundamentally destroyed its responsiveness to the dynamic needs of our society, our community, our citizens, and our students.

Last month I visited an Indian reservation outside of Phoenix, Arizona, and I spent the day touring the schools on this reservation. I met a principal who pulled out a black ring binder slightly larger than the New York City phone book and showed it to me saying, "This runs my school, I don't. This is the procedures manual from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This prescribes for me what I can do, cannot do, and how I must do or not do what it says I can do or not do, and that my principle job is identifying the proper form and filling it out for the appropriate situation."

With all respect, Mr. Secretary, one of the worst public school systems in America is wholly owned and operated by the Federal Government of this country, and while I know the Bureau of Indian Affairs is not within the direct jurisdiction of the Department of Education, wouldn't it be wonderful if the federal government took its control of that system and created a model of the excellence that you have been so eloquent in calling for the rest of us to emulate.

A study done in 1974 in Maryland concluded that there were more people in external agencies in that state regulating the administration of higher education in Maryland than doing the administration of higher education in Maryland.

To protect the public from bad decisions, we've eroded the authority to make good decisions. We've confused accountability with regulation and systematically destroyed incentives for creative leadership and achievement.

As someone who has spent his life in public higher education over the last 20 years in 5 universities in 4 separate states, I can tell you that the reforms taking place in this state are important, dramatic, and transforming in their nature. The most significant element of this reformation is a package of three bills, affectionately known to us as the "autonomy" legislation, which was signed into law on July 9 of this year. This legislation is the cornerstone of an initiative to fundamentally alter the relationship between institutions of higher education and the institutions of state government.

This legislation, which was hard-fought and won after three years of argument, debate, and political struggle, decentralizes authority and control, challenges our institutional leadership to produce educational results justifying our institutional rhetoric, gives us the tools to create our own future, and demands that we stand accountable for the results.

Achieving this legislation was not easy, and its promise is yet to be fully achieved. We had to build a consensus between the administration and trustees of nine autonomous colleges, the New Jersey Department of Higher Education, and finally secure the

leadership of this Governor, into a political force able to overcome the natural inertia of all governments to do something that is most foreign to the nature of any government or bureaucracy, namely the relinquishing of authority and control. Our idealism was strenuously tested in the process.

We are now pursuing the implementation of this legislation. Predictably, each level and layer of the state bureaucracy is busily interpreting this legislation to define autonomy as "autonomy from the other guy but not me." The jury is still out as to whether we will be completely successful in operationalizing these reforms.

The second aspect of our current excitement is over something we call "The Governor's Challenge Grant Program." Two, maybe three, years ago Governor Kean in his State of the State Address challenged public higher education in this state to be better, more than better, to be among the very best in this nation. Quite candidly, that challenge was not special, particularly novel, or unique. In fact, I've probably heard something similar from each of the governor's in each of the four states I mentioned earlier. What was truly extraordinary came the next month in his annual budget message. He proposed that if the institutions of public higher education in this state, consistent with their unique individual strengths and missions, could develop powerful educational initiatives, national models of excellence when evaluated by the

highest of standards, then he would work to create the resources to fund them. Well, we did, and he did. The entire program will probably exceed \$25 million over 3 years. As a result, many and diverse educational prototypes for the coming decades are being put together right now in New Jersey. So you see, my earlier reference to our national leadership was more than the expected boast of a native, but the consensus position accorded us by our colleagues all across this country.

Mindful of the time constraints of our circumstances this morning, I'm really trying to make one rather simple point; all of us - governors, college presidents, cabinet secretaries, heads of major corporations - do what we do because we are people motivated by the desire and need to serve our society through the quality of our work. All of us have our hand at the wheel for but a limited time, and all of us would like to think that when we no longer stand on the bridge, our good deeds and efforts will survive our terms in office. But our history has shown that the inertia of the enterprises over which we preside is formidable in its resistance to change.

My colleagues in institutions and associations have, and will, come to you and say that we need more money, and we do; we always have, and we always will. Our ability to find valid and creative ways of using money will always outstrip your ability to provide it. But what is more important to effective education than money, is the ability to turn on and challenge the vision and energy pent up in our educational institutions.

Unshackle us, give us the tools, challenge us to be adventurous, to be risk-taking, and to do all of those things that we want to do anyway. Hold us accountable; get out of our way, and we will build the educational system that we all wish for us to achieve.