

# TCNJ 2027: EXTENDING OUR EXCELLENCE



## CONTEXT

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In the early 2000s, TCNJ worked to “bring about transformative change in the educational experience of TCNJ students.” Through this academic transformation, the college increased learner-centered activities in the classroom and introduced programmatic innovations, such as Liberal Learning, the First Seminar Program, and the Mentored Undergraduate Research Experience. The course load for students decreased from five to four per semester to allow for more in-depth and frequently longer classes. Faculty workload shifted so that faculty could more fully develop as teacher-scholars. Central to the experience was the opportunity for students of all disciplines to conduct mentored research, scholarship, or creative activity with faculty members.

The success of this transformation in achieving its goal of delivering a high-quality, affordable education is reflected in many ways. Most notably, the four-year graduation rate skyrocketed and remains today as one of the top 10 among all public institutions of higher learning in the country. The number of graduates going on to earn doctoral degrees also jumped, placing TCNJ second in New Jersey behind only Princeton in a number of studies measuring the baccalaureate-origin institutions of PhD recipients. Phi Beta Kappa’s decision to award a chapter to TCNJ and the Council on Undergraduate Research’s selection of the college as a recipient of its inaugural “Campus-wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishment (Master’s-level)” are among the many honors received following the transformation.

While this transformation focused primarily on elevating the academic experience, the resulting outcomes have extended well beyond the classroom and have become points of pride by all those who work and study at the college. A commitment to excellence is firmly ingrained as part of the TCNJ ethos.



## THE VISION FOR TCNJ

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The transformative power of education to develop critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and lifelong learners and leaders is central to The College of New Jersey's mission. Through an academic transformation in the early 2000s, TCNJ realized this across its undergraduate programs and limited number of graduate programs. We now have an opportunity to further our public mission by preserving the distinctive educational quality and outcomes long associated with TCNJ and extending such excellence to new audiences. We express this vision in a new strategy for the college, *TCNJ 2027: Extending Our Excellence*.

Through this strategy, TCNJ intends to make good on its commitment to promote access for historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. A student body that more closely mirrors the region's and the state's populations will enrich the educational experience and promote better outcomes for all students. *TCNJ 2027* uses *We Are TCNJ: A Strategy for Inclusive Excellence* as a blueprint for both promoting greater access and building the diverse and inclusive community to which we aspire.

The college has long extended its reach across the campus boundary into nearby and more distant communities. Building on our foundational strengths in education and health, the college will deepen and broaden its community and employer partnerships to ensure sustained relevance and impact to the Greater Trenton region, across the state, and beyond. Engagement and education not only form the basis of mutually beneficial partnerships, they also create new access channels to TCNJ offerings and excellence.

TCNJ has been serving a limited number of working professionals through its targeted graduate programs. While the recent introduction of the MBA and MPH programs expanded the college's reach to this audience, untapped populations of interested learners remain. We can extend our impact by developing advanced degree and certificate options tailored to the needs of regional professionals and in-demand industries. Offering instruction online will allow the college to further extend its reach.

In developing additional graduate offerings, we will also have the opportunity to serve our undergraduates, many of whom seek career alignment. By developing 4+1 and other dual-degree programs, we can offer them flexible pathways to advanced credentials.

The needs of our undergraduates have changed in other ways. The demand for academic, social, and emotional support has grown. And while our students have shown a desire for more flexible and digital modes of delivery, they also expect high-level physical facilities and amenities. Continued excellence requires ongoing innovation and investment to ensure our curricular and co-curricular experiences remain relevant to this generation of students.

By extending excellence in these ways, TCNJ will realize another important goal: ensuring that the institution continues to flourish for generations to come. Higher education in the United States is facing strong headwinds. A demographic decline of 18- to 24-year-olds has significantly increased competition for students. That competition, coupled with concerns about affordability, has forced institutions to invest significantly in merit- and need-based aid. Economic realities have also severely limited the ability of colleges and universities to raise revenue through tuition increases. State funding of public institutions, which has decreased for decades, remains constrained. This is the environment in which TCNJ has been operating — we have not been immune to the financial pressures and impact.

*TCNJ 2027: Extending Our Excellence* will require targeted investment and will generate new sources of revenue. By setting priorities, operating strategically, and acting with an eye toward the future, we will fulfill our mission in exciting new ways and position the institution for financial sustainability.





## THE ELEMENTS OF *TCNJ 2027*

*TCNJ 2027: Extending Our Excellence* preserves the distinctive educational quality and outcomes long associated with The College of New Jersey and extends them to new audiences through new offerings and modalities.

The strategy embeds three primary commitments:

- Reimagine and strengthen the undergraduate curricular and co-/extra-curricular experience to maximize TCNJ's value to students and society
- Further extend the college's impact and reach beyond the undergraduate core, bringing TCNJ's educational excellence and partnership to additional graduate-level/lifelong learners and communities
- Develop foundational capabilities to achieve educational excellence and ensure resources are aligned with strategic plans and priorities

Supported by a foundation of enhanced capabilities and actions, *TCNJ 2027* has four strategic goals, each with phase I priorities (most intense activity in FY23 and FY24) and phase II priorities (most intense activity in FY25 and FY26).

**Undergraduate Enrollment:** TCNJ will educate more students from a wider range of backgrounds.

### Phase I Priorities

- Expand transfer pathways from four-year and community colleges
- Increase capacity in high-demand academic programs

### Phase II Priorities

- Assess dual-enrollment pilot program for academically advanced high school students and expand accordingly

**Curricular Experience:** TCNJ will support the teacher-scholar model and deepen the impact, efficiency, and appeal of its curricular experiences.

### Phase I Priorities

- Develop 4+1 programs and other flexible pathways to graduate credentials
- Enhance instructional capacity by modestly increasing average class sizes at the department level, bolstering digital learning, and expanding the academic calendar for more robust enrollments in the winter and summer terms

### Phase II Priorities

- Transform the general education curriculum (liberal learning/core) to prepare students for college and lifelong success
- Integrate high-impact career-readiness experiences into the academic curriculum

**Co-/Extra-curricular Experience:** TCNJ will deepen the impact, efficiency, and appeal of its co- and extra-curricular experiences.

### Phase I Priorities

- Support an appropriate portfolio of residential options and sustain housing quality



## THE ELEMENTS OF TCNJ 2027 (continued)

### Phase II Priorities

- Promote active citizenship and enhance co- and extra-curricular and leadership programs that improve key student outcomes

**Lifelong Learners & Community Impact:** TCNJ will diversify its offerings to learners beyond the bachelor's degree and, through education and engagement, will matter more to our state and community.

### Phase I Priorities

- Expand graduate and continuing education structure and programming to serve graduate students and lifelong learners

### Phase II Priorities

- Assess areas for sustained state and community impact and distinction, building on our foundational strengths in urban education and urban health

**Foundation for Strategic Excellence:** TCNJ will build capacity and operate to achieve educational excellence with financial sustainability.

### Phase I Priorities

- As an extension of this strategy, implement *We Are TCNJ: A Strategy for Inclusive Excellence*, a plan for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Bolster marketing to attract applications, increase visibility, and highlight brand
- Build cultural and physical capacity to support excellence and extend high-quality educational experiences to new modes of instruction





## ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF *TCNJ 2027*

The college's vision for *TCNJ 2027* is an invigorated, eminent, inclusive institution of public higher education with the relationships and financial means to pursue and realize its promise. Implementation of the strategy will enhance the college experience for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners. Compared to 2022:

- TCNJ undergraduates of 2027 will be part of a more diverse student body, have expanded access to high-demand fields, be even more employment- and graduate school-ready with career-aligned curricular paths and support, have streamlined pathways to graduate degrees and credentials for employment/advancement, and have closer bonds and continued involvement with their alma mater
- TCNJ alumni, graduate students, and continuing-education pursuers of 2027 will select from a more extensive menu of programs, certificates, and degrees; have access to interdisciplinary pathways to advance their careers; experience new flexible learning modalities; and have the option of turning to TCNJ for lifelong learning opportunities
- TCNJ faculty and staff of 2027 will be supported in their careers through expanded professional development, have access to/training in high-impact and career-aligned teaching and learning methods, and see the benefits of administrative efficiencies and strategic investments aligned with *TCNJ 2027*
- New Jersey and beyond in 2027 will have a public higher-education option that delivers on its promise of excellent outcomes, and its communities will collaborate on and benefit from TCNJ partnerships in high-need industry sectors (particularly education and health)