

OP-Ed piece in the *Gloucester County Times* by Acting Dean, Rutgers-Camden School of Nursing:

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Opinion

As the leader of the newly established Rutgers School of Nursing – Camden, I feel compelled to comment on current discussions concerning the creation of a University of Southern New Jersey. I agree with the following premises: (1) New Jersey is a great state; (2) for a state to be great, it must have a great university; and (3) a great state should have a great medical school. However, I believe that a crucial point is being overlooked: *a great state needs great nurses.*

As the healthcare profession most trusted by the public, nursing has the privilege and responsibility to care for patients in health, illness and all points in between. Nurses are involved in the promotion of health when the school nurse teaches young children the importance of hand washing. Home health nurses assist individuals with chronic illness to manage their disease and improve their quality of life. Hospice nurses assist patients and families at the end of life. Nurses in our hospitals care for the acutely ill. Advanced practice nurses are critical to the provision of primary care. Nurse scientists improve the evidence base for health care. At every point on this continuum, a great nurse is needed. Great nurses are educated in university-based schools of nursing, by nursing faculty who are active scientists, scholars, and clinicians. Nursing students at university-based schools have opportunities to work with their faculty on the research and clinical practice breakthroughs that inspire and ensure excellent health care for New Jersey citizens of today and tomorrow. In addition, nursing students learn side-by-side with students in other fields, including medicine, social work, pharmacy, physical therapy, psychology, anthropology, education, business, and law. Students graduate with a robust intellectual curiosity and commitment to nursing practice based on evidence rather than tradition or routine. They aspire to become expert providers of nursing care, nurse scientists, nurse educators, and nurse leaders – all crucial to great health care in southern New Jersey and beyond.

Great nurses are currently in production at Rutgers School of Nursing – Camden, where we have access to the many benefits and opportunities that New Jersey's premier public research university offers. Clearly, the best plan for health care in southern New Jersey is to ensure that Rutgers – Camden remains a full-fledged partner with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and, as such, receives a fair and equitable allotment of the University's resources. This will best position Rutgers School of Nursing – Camden to respond to the burgeoning demand for a great nursing education and maximize the production of great nurses for our region.

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