

THE DONOR IMPACT EDITION

SPRING 2022

Invention

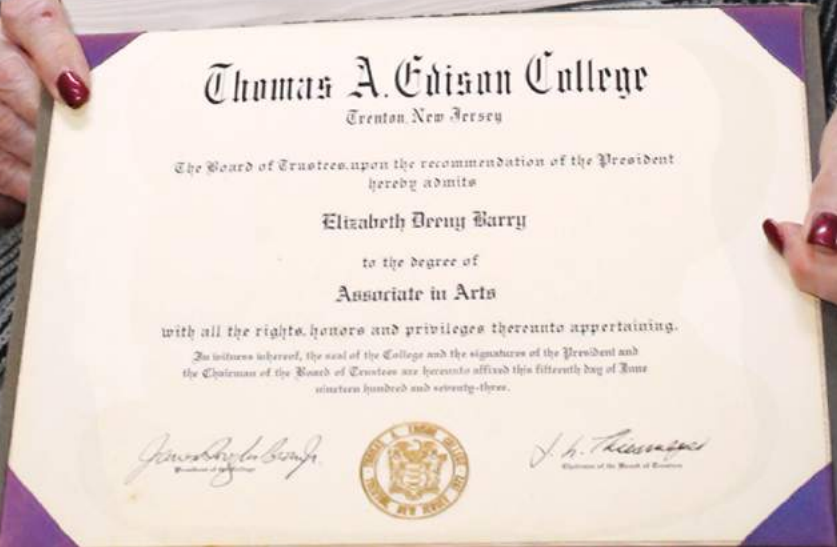
THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS

UNIVERSITY



FIRST - in - CLASS

Bette Ewing, AA '73



Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,



As the newly appointed chair of the Thomas Edison State University Foundation Board of Directors, it gives me great pleasure to thank everyone who generously supported the University in 2021. As stewards of the Thomas Edison State University Foundation, my board colleagues and I are truly inspired by your commitment and generosity. Your support directly translates into opportunities for students and helps us to expand programs to meet their evolving needs.

Despite the challenges of the last two years, 2021 was a year of perseverance, growth and progress for the University and the Foundation and there is a lot to celebrate. Thanks to the extraordinary support from alumni, friends and patrons, fundraising revenue increased 22.5 percent over last year. You, our community of donors, demonstrated the transformative power of giving by contributing more than \$600,000 in scholarship support. That funding not only provided financial resources, but also inspiration and empowerment to the 171 students who received scholarships this year.

Our mission to reimagine higher education for adults is realized in many ways through your philanthropic support. On behalf of the Foundation and our Board of Directors, thank you for your investment and confidence in our work and our students. As we celebrate Thomas Edison State University's 50 years of innovation and transforming student's lives, your partnership has been, and will continue to be, key in that success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Gloor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Nancy" and "Gloor" being capitalized and prominent.

Nancy Gloor
Chair, Foundation Board of Directors

Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,

It is immensely gratifying to be at the helm of this distinguished institution as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

Fifty years ago, Edison College was established and named after one of the most prolific inventors in history. In adopting the ethos of its namesake, Thomas Edison State University has never ceased inventing new and innovative pathways to degree completion for adult learners eager to change their lives and advance their careers. Along the way, we have evolved into a comprehensive, student-first institution serving an ever-expanding community. I am enormously proud of what we continue to achieve together.

In this issue of *Invention*, we are honored to reflect on the institution's formative years with President Emeritus Dr. George A. Pruitt and celebrate the ways we continue to break down barriers to degree completion while reimagining TESU's future. This issue also serves as the Thomas Edison State University Foundation's Donor Impact Report, highlighting the significant contributions of our community of supporters who inspire and advance the mission of the University with their own generosity and vision.

We are delighted to introduce you to Elizabeth "Bette" Ewing. As the first graduate to cross the stage during Edison College's inaugural Commencement ceremony in 1973, Ewing blazed a trail for 69 of her fellow grads who assembled that day in Trenton, N.J., and the 65,000 alumni that have followed since. As a donor, Ewing has continued to support TESU over the years, and we are grateful for her commitment in supporting the next generation of students. We also learn about Shrabanee Shah, BSBA '21. As a proud alumnus and supporter, Shah has overcome obstacles in earning her degree to join with fellow alums to 'pay it forward' by reducing the burden of cost to students. I'm especially pleased to share our "Ripple Effect" sidebars from alumni. In this series, they share the extended impact their degrees continue to have in opening doors, advancing their careers and communities, inspiring others and enriching their personal trajectories. We also meet Giovanna Grantham, an IT consultant and student who is leveraging prior learning options at TESU. She was one of only two students selected nationwide to receive the American Council on Education's (ACE) Student of the Year Award. We are enormously proud of her accomplishments as she nears degree completion.

As we honor and celebrate TESU's 50th Anniversary and the University's rich history, we thank you, our students, alumni, friends and supporters for being part of our legacy. Together, we are redefining the future of higher education, empowering current and future generations of adult students and boldly jumping into our next 50 years.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Invention*.



Merodie A. Hancock, PhD
President





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❖ Paying It Forward: Shrabanee Shah, BSBA '21

For Shrabanee Shah, BSBA '21, a single green cord is more than regalia, it symbolizes personal triumph and commitment to the next generation of alumni.

The green TESU Philanthropy Cord recognizes graduates' spirit of giving and provides scholarship support to future learners. From easing the burden of cost, to reducing the time to graduation, TESU's scholarships have helped clear a pathway to a degree for thousands of alumni.

Shah was one of those students. She is now a proud alum and supporter.

"The financial strain can be the weakest link," noted Shah. "I had to overcome many obstacles while earning my degree. The scholarship support I received gave me the freedom to focus on my courses and worry less about how I was going to pay my next tuition bill."

Shah, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), was a recipient of several TESU Foundation sponsored scholarships that included funding from The Gertrude Hirsch Foundation,



The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation and The Robert A. Mills Foundation. With a personal commitment to 'pay-it-forward' for others, Shah purchased and proudly wore her green Philanthropy Cord during the University's 2021 Commencement.

When she began her BSBA degree with an area of study in Hospital Healthcare Administration, her goal was to complete her degree in two to three years. However, chronic health challenges scuttled those plans.

"I not only had to take a year off from my studies; I never thought I'd fulfill my dream, until I reached out to the University's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator," noted Shah. "She guided me back on track and kept me on the road to completing my journey. Her constant encouragement and support were the keys to my success. Today, at the age of 62, I have accomplished my dream, and I am grateful for the confidence I have gained."

For Shah, the Philanthropy Cord is a sign of personal triumph and indicates she is proud to support those working toward a degree.

"It was very moving to see so many fellow graduates wearing green cords at Commencement," she added. "I am a firm believer that charity begins at home and one of my 'homes' is with the University that gave me a chance. So, why not share it? Why not give back? As a former student, I hope to set an example by donating and opening the doors for future alumni."

Visit [here](#) to learn more.

Ripple Effect



❖ Sze Hian Leong, BSBA '85

"The diversity of the subjects that I studied for my TESU degree broadened my outlook in life, and I began to focus more on human rights issues and serving my community. Later, I developed an interest in filmmaking, and I am the executive producer of the movie ILO, which won 40 international awards. I also volunteer as a pro bono financial counselor and radio talk show host. I am the past president of the Singapore Professional Center, the Society of Financial Service Professionals, the Institute of Administrative Management and the human rights organization, MARUAH."

Leong also serves as an Alumni Ambassador.

Let us know how earning your degree opened doors for you to help, inspire, advance, encourage and ultimately change the world around you for the better. Visit [here](#) to share your story.



*A Pioneering Institution
Celebrates Its First Graduate*

FIRST - in - CLASS

❖ **Bette Ewing, AA '73**

A fractured leg turned out to be exactly the break that Thomas A. Edison College's first graduate needed.

When Elizabeth 'Bette' Ewing's young son broke his leg in 1973, her misfortune would not only lead to opportunity, it would blaze a trail for the 65,000 alumni that followed.

Unable to complete her on-ground courses at Monmouth

College (now Monmouth University) while tending to her son's recovery, Ewing had no other choice but to withdraw from her academic program. Assuming that the time and effort she had already devoted toward earning her degree would be lost, she was crestfallen. But a newly launched New Jersey state college would change all that.

"I was devastated. My little boy needed me, and, I thought, I am never going to earn my degree," Ewing recalled. "My scholarship money was lost, and I assumed my hopes of becoming a public school teacher were dashed."

Then, Ewing heard about Thomas A. Edison College [later, Thomas Edison State University] from a friend and immediately began to investigate.

"Once I enrolled, I took the opportunity to transfer my previously earned credits into an associate degree program. Earning that degree was pivotal," she exclaimed. "Never in my wildest dreams, however, did I imagine I'd be the first person to walk across the stage during Edison College's first Commencement ceremony to receive my diploma. Being 'the first' in anything this significant

is a big responsibility and my parents were in the audience, so I felt I had to make a good impression. I was thrilled...I was over the moon!"

On June 15, 1973, by virtue of her last name at the time, Elizabeth 'Barry' was first to cross the stage during the ceremony at the New

part or all of their work toward a baccalaureate or associate degree without formal attendance at a campus."

With her associate degree now in hand, she was hired as a paraprofessional by the Pemberton Township, N.J., school district. She continued her

catalyst in my ability to support myself and have a rewarding and wonderful career," she noted. "This was vital – you couldn't break into the teaching field without recognized academic credentials, and a partial degree did not count. I loved everything about the teaching, and I would not have gotten there had Edison



Jersey State Museum ahead of 69 fellow grads who had assembled in alphabetical order for the event. That short walk provided all the validation she had longed for. Evaluating and applying transfer credits toward an accredited degree program for adult learners like Ewing became part of the institution's DNA and a capability that a legion of graduates has leveraged since.

"I was so grateful to finish my degree, and, without Edison College, I don't know how I would have done it," Ewing recalled.

Fifty years ago, Thomas A. Edison College was established with a unique mission to: "...enable individuals to receive academic recognition for skills and knowledge acquired in a variety of ways and permit New Jersey residents to complete

education, earning a bachelor's degree from Trenton State College (now The College of New Jersey) in 1978, and spent the next 30-years as an educator for the district, before retiring in 2003.

"Once my associate degree was on my resume, it became a

College not given me that head start and helped me believe in myself."

Not only is Ewing the University's very first alumna, she is also a proud supporter.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 6 >



Ripple Effect



Delane J. "DJ" Weltch, BA '16

"Before attending TESU, I was a residential supervisor for the Trenton Education Development Corporation and worked in a sequence of supply chain and logistics jobs while in community college. My TESU degree allowed me to transition to managerial roles for my current employer, Amazon.com, Inc. During the past nine months, I have distributed more than \$100,000 in supplies and monetary donations in New Jersey through ongoing charitable efforts and Amazon's community initiatives. With my degree, I can now provide a better life for my family. I believe everyone can make an impact on their community and reach new levels of success by challenging themselves."

Let us know how earning your degree opened doors for you to help, inspire, advance, encourage and ultimately change the world around you for the better. Visit [here](#) to share your story.

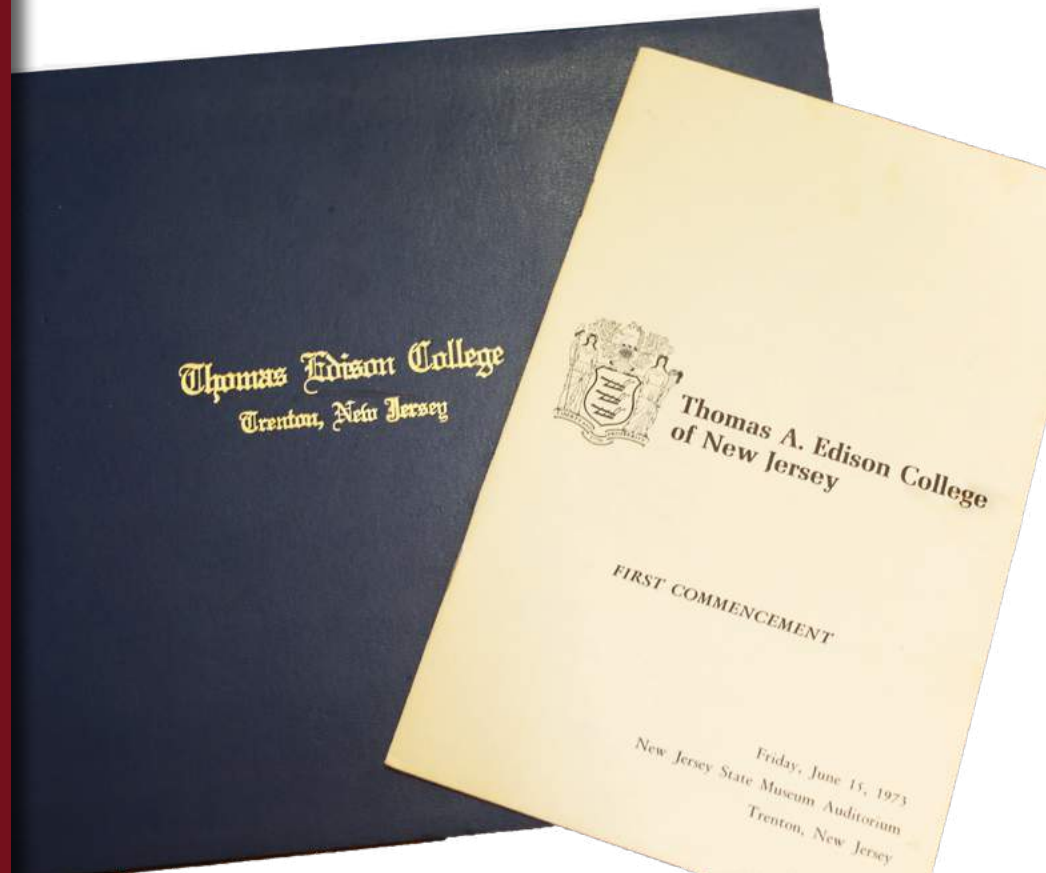
"The University has grown considerably in the last 50 years, and I am delighted to be able to give back so that others might have the same wonderful experience as I did," she noted. "Supporting the University is important to me because of the opportunities it gave me, and I know the University continues to open doors for thousands of students who may have otherwise not had the opportunity to finish. The institution's efforts in supporting military students during their degree journey are especially important. Service members must have the flexibility to come and go at a moment's notice without losing momentum in their courses. TESU allows them that flexibility."

While much has changed in the last 50 years – TESU remains grateful for alumni like Ewing, who believe that education has the power to transform lives. The more than 65,000 alumni are testament to the University's story, and the institution is proud that they are part of this legacy.

"We all want TESU to continue its mission way into the future. We want this kind of learning to continue and for TESU to have the ability to expand its programs and resources," she noted. "It's hard to believe that nearly 50 years have gone by since earning my degree. I am still grateful and that is why I remain connected."

Today, Ewing resides in Marlton, N.J., with her husband.

To learn more, visit [here](#).



TESU Employees Bear the Torch for Students: Tracy Tosti, AA '13

As a Thomas Edison State University employee and graduate, Tracy Tosti, AA '13, is a proud supporter of the University's activities and its students. She is also a regular donor to the TESU Foundation.

Tosti decided to pursue a personal goal of earning a college degree to build her self-confidence, expand her knowledge and set an example for her son. She chose TESU for its wide range of course selections and the career-focused options available. But, her career path was not a straightforward one.

"My path was a bit winding with a few detours and some hard decisions along the way. While in high school, I decided to pursue a skilled trade and by the time I graduated I was a licensed hairstylist," noted Tosti. "Later, on-the-job training I received in construction and project management qualified me for a facilities management position at TESU."



Tracy Tosti, AA '13, works in the University's Office of Student Financial Accounts.

As a result of earning a degree, Tosti was offered a position in the University's Office of Student Financial Accounts when a position opened in 2017.

"I've obtained my associate degree, but just like many adult learners, a few barriers got in my way: lack of time, intervening family priorities and then age. While this may not be a barrier for some, for me it was a reality. "

Tosti noted that she enjoys working with students, assisting them with financial matters and witnessing them realize their goal of degree completion while facing everyday barriers that she and many adult learners face.

"We have enrolled students who discontinued their studies because of a major life challenge and have trouble continuing due to external financial burdens," said Tosti. "To have the ability to collaborate with them to provide viable solutions to re-engage in their degree pursuit is very gratifying."

When not working with the TESU community, Tosti enjoys taking some "me time" at the gym. Connecting with their community, she and her husband also award a yearly scholarship to a deserving high school senior pursuing opportunities via a trade industry occupation through the Middletown Township Community Foundation in Pennsylvania.

Annual 5K Raises Funds for Students in Need

Thomas Edison State University graduates hail from all 50 U.S. states and more than 60 countries. While the pandemic has been challenging, it provided an ideal opportunity for those graduates and friends of TESU to take part in our first public Virtual 5K.

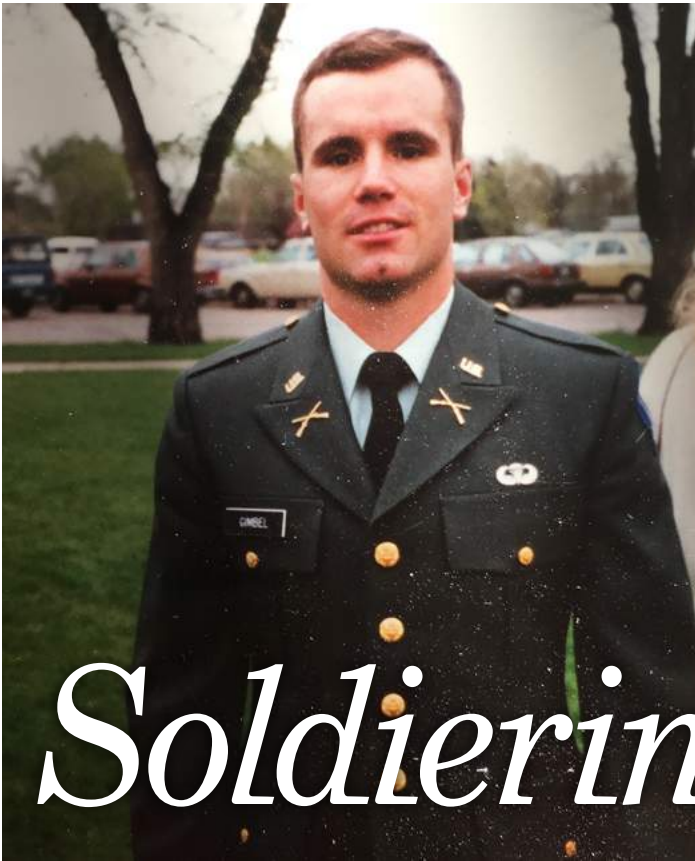
More than 60 alumni participated in last year's event to support TESU's Student Relief Fund. Thanks to their efforts, students facing unexpected financial need caused by the pandemic, national disasters or other challenges

received much needed financial support at a critical time.

Please join us May 27-July 5, 2022 for the 2nd Annual Thomas Edison State University Virtual 5K. By running, walking, biking or whatever activity participants choose, participants support TESU students in a significant way as a portion of every registration will contribute to the TESU Student Relief Fund.

Register [here](#).





Soldiering On

Former U.S. Army Ranger and current life sciences company CFO, Ron Gimbel, establishes scholarship fund for military service members in STEM-related fields.

Ron Gimbel's experiences as a U.S. service member deeply influenced his values and professional life. He is now channeling that passion into a scholarship program for active-duty military and veteran students.

"Three themes from my former military experience continue to influence me to this day: discipline, pragmatism (keeping things simple) and leadership," said Gimbel, who also serves on the TESU Foundation Board or Directors. "During the time I served, I learned a lot about leading and working with people in stressful environments, motivating them and meeting them where they are."

His introduction to military life began after he earned a Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) Scholarship at Colorado State University. For qualifying students, ROTC programs provide scholarships that cover most, or all, of the cost of four-year post-secondary education. In exchange, students must fulfill active-duty service in their chosen branch of the U.S. armed services.

"I became interested in the idea because a high school mentor who had completed the ROTC program four years earlier recognized that I would be a good fit. Also, I would not have been able to afford college otherwise," noted Gimbel.

Within weeks of graduating with his bachelor's degree in finance, Gimbel entered the U.S. Army's 16-week Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC) that he refers to in retrospect as an 'indoctrination.'

"After completing IOBC, I volunteered and completed Army Ranger School. From there, I joined the 101st Airborne Division and served as a platoon leader during Operation Desert Storm, a rifle company executive officer and a headquarters executive officer," noted Gimbel, who rounded out his military career at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Soon after, he returned to Colorado State and earned an MBA degree in accounting and taxation.

Gimbel recently joined Flagship Pioneering, a biotechnology-focused life sciences and sustainability firm in Cambridge,

Mass., as its chief financial officer of Operations. In his day-to-day role, he is responsible for building and leading the Flagship Labs and Enterprise finance team in creating and implementing standard processes in financial operations, planning and analysis, accounting and controls. Prior to his current position, he spent nearly 25 years at Bristol Myers-Squibb.

“I admire TESU’s academic model in that it allows U.S. service members and veterans to obtain credits toward their degrees based on the skills they developed during their military training,” said Gimbel. “This provides them a much-needed head start financially and makes the prospect of earning a degree much less daunting. The process is also an important linchpin as they transition to a civilian career. I don’t think there’s a platform – particularly one that acknowledges prior military experience – quite like TESU’s.”

Gimbel joined the Thomas Edison State University Foundation Board in 2015 and has been an avid supporter since. In March 2021, he created the Ron Gimbel Military and Veteran Scholarship Endowed Fund. The fund gives preference to active-duty military, veteran or military dependents who have applied to or are enrolled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-related degree programs. His gifts to the University over time have been matched by his former employer, Bristol Myers Squibb, further amplifying the impact of his support.

“I enjoy hearing TESU students’ stories and figuring out ways that

the Foundation Board can make a difference. I embrace the concept of offering people the opportunity to advance themselves in a nontraditional way to change their lives while balancing a military or professional career,” noted Gimbel. “One of the things I was trying to accomplish with the scholarship fund was bringing together the two aspects of my life that I find so enriching: my former military experience – which I leverage every single day – and my work with companies that are at forefront of saving patients’ lives.”

According to Craig Smith, director of Military and Veteran Enrollment and Outreach at TESU, Gimbel’s support and his ability to relate to military students has a profoundly positive effect on their academic success as well as their capacity to transition to civilian life.

“Ron Gimbel’s leadership in supporting scholarships for U.S. military and veteran students has direct and enduring consequences on one of the most deserving segments of our student population,” said Smith. “The scholarship will open the doors to advancement for them and their family members by removing the financial barriers to degree completion.”

Gimbel and his wife, Cheryl, recently relocated to the Boston, Mass., area with their two dogs. The couple has two adult children. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time outdoors.

To learn more about military and veteran support at TESU, visit [here](#).



It was my goal to complete my Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Electrical-Mechanical Systems and Maintenance this year. Completing that degree will provide advancement potential and help me to be more competitive in my field of naval aviation. The knowledge I’ve obtained in my courses has already served me well in my professional life, allowing me to be an even stronger U.S. Navy technician, communicator, leader and sailor. The tuition assistance program offered to active-duty military members is an amazing program, however, my funding was completely exhausted for the remainder of this fiscal year. To continue my education at my current pace, it was essential that I secure additional funding support. I have maintained a 4.0 GPA while serving and can now continue to strive for this level of excellence with the support of the Ron Gimbel Military and Veteran Endowed Scholarship Fund. I am grateful to have been chosen as a recipient, and I am truly thankful to all TESU donors and everyone who made my scholarship award possible.”

Robert Chase
Heaven School of Arts, Sciences,
and Technology student

PSEG FOUNDATION SUPPORT HELPS STUDENTS THRIVE IN THEIR COURSES AND CAREERS

❖ **\$200,000 Grant Expands TESU's Student Success and Career Development Initiatives**

Funding fuels TESU's expanding student support endeavors, career development assistance, new academic program development, and diversity and inclusion efforts.

Ongoing PSEG Foundation funding will help Thomas Edison State University (TESU) continue to meet the unique needs of its adult learners in the post-pandemic workforce. At the center of this effort is eliminating the most persistent barriers to degree completion.

"PSEG Foundation has been a steadfast ally in our efforts to shepherd our students to degree completion and beyond," noted Dr. Jasmeial "Jazz" Jackson, chief Student Success, Equity and Inclusion officer at TESU. "Thanks to their ongoing support, we also have the ability to weave the themes of diversity, equity and inclusion across more touchpoints spanning student support, persistence and success."

PSEG Foundation support has already enhanced the University's Cloud Computing degree program initiative being developed in the Heavin School of Arts, Science, and Technology.

In addition, funding is supporting efforts to identify and increase TESU's investment in human resources and technological platforms that will continue to serve students' evolving needs.

"The funding is vital in allowing us to redouble our student success initiatives and continue to break down barriers to degree completion. This includes enhanced student support and increasingly customized, strategic and comprehensive academic advising, peer coaching, tutoring and career services," said Dr. Cynthia Baum, provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs. "Our recently launched Office of Career Development, in particular, allows us to focus on providing a broader range of career guidance and job search assistance for both current TESU students and alumni."

As a devoted partner over the years, previous funding from the PSEG Foundation assisted TESU in launching an online portal through which more than 14,000 U.S. service members and veterans discovered how their military training equated to college credits, viewed potential degree programs aligned with



PSEG
Foundation

their training and estimated the cost of their education – all before applying. Recent funding will provide resources toward expanding that capability to include non-military/civilian students and alumni.

Demonstrating the power of philanthropy, PSEG Foundation's investment in the University's work served as the catalyst in the University's ability to obtain a \$483,496 Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge grant from the N.J. Office of the Secretary of Higher Education - \$233,496 of which will be utilized to build increasingly inclusive learning communities across peer coaching efforts and tutoring at-risk students.

Maria Spina, program manager, PSEG Foundation stated, "PSEG is proud of our partnership with Thomas Edison State University. Together we are seeking to provide opportunities for all students through diversity and inclusion focused initiatives that move individuals forward in their careers and professional pursuits."

TESU Launches Office of Career Development

In its ongoing commitment to responding to the needs of working adults, Thomas Edison State University launched the Office of Career Development in January 2022 to assist students and alumni in identifying and advancing their professional goals.

The Office of Career Development offers students and alumni one-on-one career assistance, encompassing resume, CV, cover letter and social media profile reviews as well as career decision making, job hunting and interviewing. The office also hosts regular webinars and presentations to ensure that students connect their career paths with their TESU curriculum and successfully apply what they learn to the workforce.

Ongoing webinar topics include:

- Developing a concrete career plan.
- Writing, updating and polishing a resume/CV, cover letter or LinkedIn profile.
- Searching for new professional opportunities.
- Preparing for job interviews.

- Identifying and articulating skillsets for potential employers.
- Connecting with job opportunities.
- Negotiating job offers.
- Building a professional network.
- Advancing education or applying to graduate or professional school.

The Office of Career Development recently partnered with College Central®, a career advancement network offering an easy-to-use, mobile-friendly platform that instantly connects students and alumni to employers and job opportunities. Users can search available job openings, stay up to date on career-related programs and events, schedule career coaching appointments and expand networking relationships with fellow students and alumni.

To learn more, visit [here](#) or contact the office's director, Ceil O'Callaghan, by emailing cocallaghan@tesu.edu.



Ceil O'Callaghan serves as the director of the TESU's Office of Career Development.

Ripple Effect



Dana Catapano, BA '17, currently enrolled in MSM degree program for Nonprofit Management

“During a 10-year span, I had been taking classes at various community colleges until starting my family took me off course. I was working in the early childcare field when I discovered TESU. After earning my BA, I qualified not only for jobs but for a career. I’ve been promoted three times for the statewide nonprofit for which I now work and manage its marketing and communications efforts. But the biggest impact lies in what I’m doing for my community. I now assist New Jersey residents with their basic needs at no cost to them.”

Catapano also serves as a TESU Alumni Ambassador.

Let us know how earning your degree opened doors for you to help, inspire, advance, encourage and ultimately change the world around you for the better. Visit [here](#) to share your story

then & now

70s

1972

Edison College, known today as Thomas Edison State University, is established by the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education and the first student enrolls.

1973

The Board of Trustees is established, appointing Dr. James D. Brown as the school's first president and changing the school's name to Thomas A. Edison College.

The first Commencement ceremony is held at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, N.J., for a class of 70 who earned Associate in Arts degrees.

1975

Thomas Edison awards its first baccalaureate degrees: Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

1978

Dr. Lorraine R. Matusak is named the second president and the institution moves into the historic Kelsey Building in Trenton.

80s

1982

The first independent study course is launched, a precursor to Guided Study courses.

Dr. George A. Pruitt becomes the University's third president.



1983

The Thomas A. Edison State College Foundation, Inc., is established as an independent charitable organization benefitting the College.

1986

The College is awarded a three-year \$1.8 million challenge grant to create a network for students to access services and courses via a computer network, known as the Computer Assisted Lifelong Learning (CALL) Network.

1987

The first courses using the CALL Network are launched to student as a precursor to online courses.

90s

1991

The Trenton Office of Policy Studies is launched, a forerunner to the Institute of Public Policy to be established in 1994.

1994

Thomas Edison gains approval for its first graduate program, the Master of Science in Management.

1995

The On-Line Computer Classroom is introduced, enabling students with a computer and modem to take classes via the CALL Network.



1996

The award-winning townhouse preservation project begins to restore five historic townhouses on West State Street in Trenton, N.J.



00s

2000

Thomas Edison is one of only 60 institutions in the country selected by PBS as a partner in the “Going the Distance” program where students can earn a degree through courses televised on PBS stations.

2004

Gary and Diane Heavin make a landmark \$2 million gift to establish the Gary and Diane Heavin Endowed Fund and the Heavin School of Social and Behavioral Sciences is named in their honor.

The College establishes schools led by deans that guide the academic enterprise of the institution.



2008

The RN to BSN/MSN receives initial accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Accreditation.

10s

2015

The New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education grants university status to the College.

2016

The University opens Glen Cairn Hall, home to the University’s W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing.

The first cohort of the University’s first doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice, begins classes.

2018

Dr. Merodie Hancock becomes the University’s fourth president.



2019

The second doctoral program is launched, a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

Wells Fargo donates historic N.C. Wyeth Painting, largest gift in the University’s history.

20s

2020

TESU becomes innovative partner providing college credit for edX’s MicroBachelors® Programs, a novel undergraduate-level credential.



The University held its first virtual Commencement ceremony in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and helped the Class of 2020 celebrate safely.

2021

The University returns to in-person commencement ceremonies, celebrating the classes of 2020 and 2021.

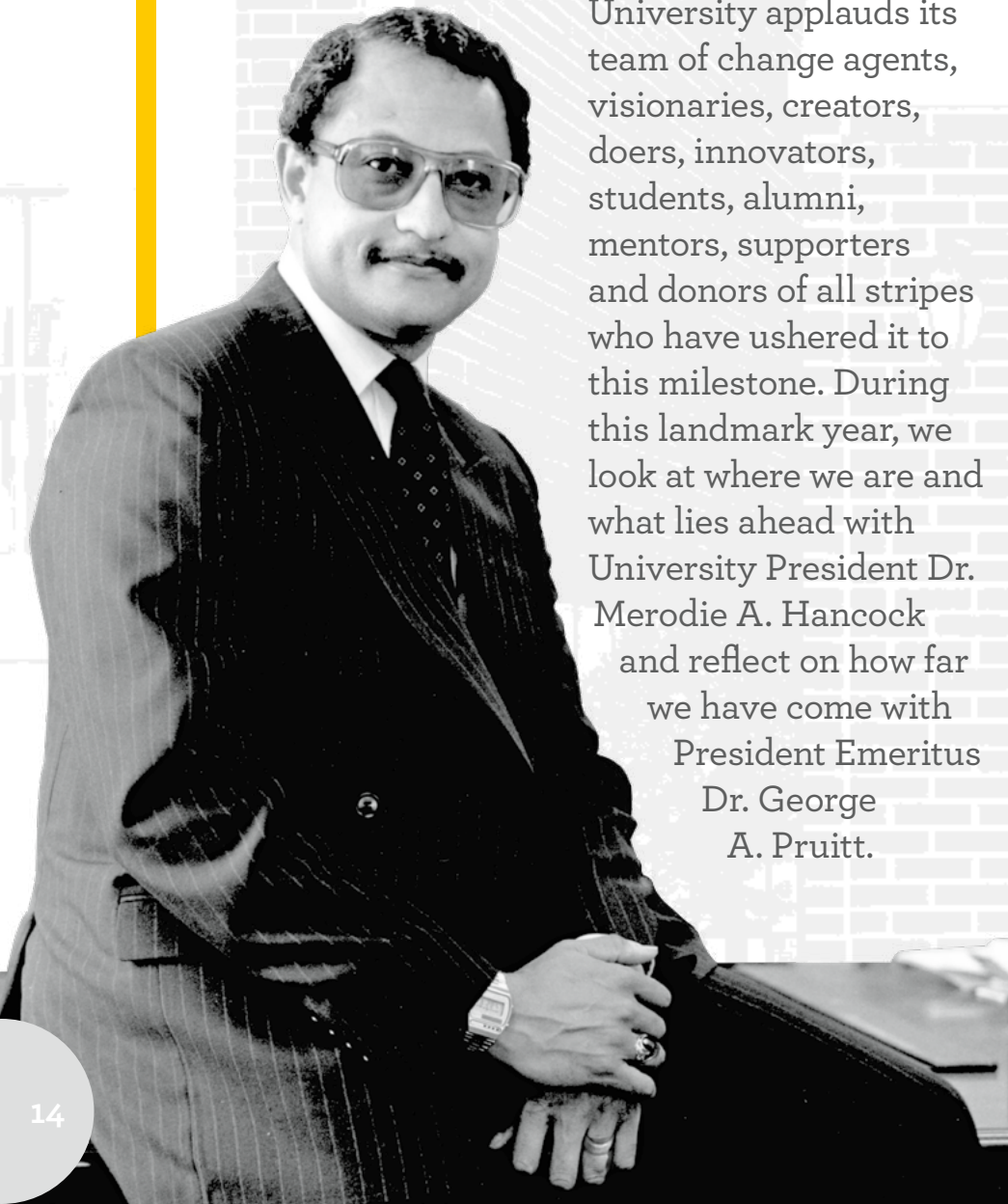
2022

The University celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Building a Lead in Each Leg of the Race

THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

Celebrates 50 Years of Distinction



As TESU celebrates its 50th Anniversary, the University applauds its team of change agents, visionaries, creators, doers, innovators, students, alumni, mentors, supporters and donors of all stripes who have ushered it to this milestone. During this landmark year, we look at where we are and what lies ahead with University President Dr. Merodie A. Hancock and reflect on how far we have come with President Emeritus Dr. George A. Pruitt.

In Pruitt's view, effective university leadership is akin to a successful relay race in which each runner gains an incremental lead during each leg of the journey.

"What you hope for an institution is that you run a successful leg and pass the baton off to the next teammate who runs an even stronger leg," noted Pruitt.

Pruitt, who smoothly navigated several sprints during his 35-year career as president of the institution, is as much at home with the exhilaration of that endeavor as he is the profound weight of it. The institution was still in its formative stages when he assumed the role of president in December 1982. He and a small but mighty team soon set to work on reimagining an already groundbreaking approach to a college degree for adult learners.

Although he would become a national leader in higher education, he remains deferential to his predecessors and the teams that have worked alongside him.

"Even though the institution was only 10 years old when I arrived in 1982, a good conceptual

TATE UNIVERSITY

ive Leadership and Innovation

Celebrating our heritage. Envisioning our future.

framework had already been established by Edison College's first and second presidents Drs. James D. Brown and Lorraine R. Matusak," said Pruitt. "Dr. Brown launched this institution when there was no precedent and no roadmap or recipe book, and he did everything right. It was a great base from which to start. This groundwork allowed us to create methodologies and processes that were driven by the characteristics of the adult learners we served. We were breaking down the former barriers of time and place for our students and there was a pervasive missionary zeal centered on creativity and innovation. People were attracted to the college because we were different, and we maintained that distinction."

Chartered as Edison College by the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education in 1972, the institution was among the first of its kind. The resolution establishing the school noted that it was created "To enable individuals to receive academic recognition for skills and knowledge acquired in a variety of ways and would

permit New Jersey residents to complete part or all of their work toward a baccalaureate or associate degree without formal attendance at a campus."

Since then, the University has grown to a state-of-the-art online education provider offering more than 100 areas of study spanning associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs.

"By 1983 we had an executive team in place, and we knew we were creating something important," said Pruitt. "We felt the burden of that responsibility and in spearheading a movement," he recalled. "Being able to articulate a vision and create a sense of purpose that members of the institution can align around was key to that movement. A major function of the presidency

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Dr. George A. Pruitt, Dr. Pamela Pruitt, the executive director of Rider's Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and Dr. Merodie Hancock at Greater Trenton's fourth annual Caren Franzini Capital City Award Celebration on Dec. 6, 2021. George and Pamela received the Caren Franzini Capital City Award at the event.

is focusing on the mission while attracting the most talented people you can find, and then turning them loose so they can be successful.”

Hancock, the current president, agrees that the success of an institution relies largely on such synergies.

“I inherited a talented, cohesive team and a movement that continues to shape our future,” noted Hancock. “The best day is when we are directing hundreds of graduates to the stage during the Commencement ceremony. The energy is palpable, and I am always incredibly motivated by that. It’s doubly gratifying to see the exhilaration in the faces of the TESU staff who facilitated that moment. You can see the same energy in our teams’ collaborations on new projects,

our University events, programs and initiatives developing every day across our institution.”

Hancock was inducted as the institution’s fourth president in March 2018 after being unanimously selected for the role by the institution’s Board of Trustees. According to former Board Chair Brian Maloney, she stood out because of her passion for supporting adult learners and for her potential to shepherd the institution to its future state.

Though she strongly identifies with Pruitt’s relay race analogy, not far from the starting block, she ran headlong into a ‘new normal’ that no one could have predicted. An increasingly competitive and fragmented higher education marketplace, shifting enrollment sentiment, unpredictable state

and federal funding – and a gamechanger in the form of a persistent global pandemic – all defined a new reality.

“We did not know a pandemic was coming, but if you looked at our behavior in the months leading up, you would have sworn we had,” said Hancock. “We were amid organizational process improvements that positioned us well when the time came. In addition, our nursing students and alumni were already in our community collaborating with healthcare facilities and local organizations. When the COVID vaccines became available, they were quickly mobilized to help facilitate distribution to as many residents as possible.”

According to Hancock, the higher education ecosystem is changing in profound ways, with

the pandemic causing everyone to reassess the value and nature of higher education now, and what it will mean in the future.

“Reassessment is always a good thing. My challenge was in bringing our student, alumni and employee success initiatives already in play to fruition against this shifting backdrop. I credit the TESU team for its ability to adapt quickly while expanding our academic programs, enterprise technology systems, career services support and our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) endeavors while growing our educational and workforce partnerships – all in the face of the changing world,” she said.

To permanently weave the themes of DEI into the University’s mosaic, Hancock launched the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council (DEIC) in 2020, comprised of staff from every corner of the University and its affiliate, the New Jersey State Library. The mission of the DEIC is to generate dialogue, engagement and growth regarding diversity, equity and inclusion across the two institutions. In 2021, she appointed the University’s first chief Student Success, Equity and Inclusion officer. Thanks to these efforts, increased focus is given to global perspectives and empowerment as well as cultural and identity pluralism as the institution engages more fully with its diverse students in eliminating barriers to degree progression.

As TESU celebrates its milestone anniversary, Hancock noted that the work of donors and supporters has never been more meaningful.

“Our donors have allowed us to expand student-facing services and support, establish exciting new programs and create indelible bonds within our community,” she said. “During the recent fiscal quarters, we were able to award COVID relief/emergency scholarship funding and debt relief to nearly 1,000 enrolled students and maintain tuition discounts we instituted in 2020 for full-time New Jersey students. We were

of staff who came over from Educational Testing Service (ETS) who helped us create an academic model built around evidence and data. That data gives you a leg to stand on with cynics. It was sometime during my first six months that I turned on the television just as New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean was announcing a fiscal crisis that would result in massive budget cuts in higher education. It quickly devolved into a high-anxiety time because

“Our donors have allowed us to expand student-facing services and support, establish exciting new programs and create indelible bonds within our community.”

- PRESIDENT MERODIE A. HANCOCK -

also able to secure more than \$4 million in investments supporting our mission and our adult learners through federal, state, corporate and individual grants and donations. The funding is a testament to our supporters’ belief in the power of educational access for all and their desire to make it attainable through multiple avenues.”

This resilience in its learners and leadership has become the institution’s trademark. However, before it became a ubiquitous figure in distance learning, its academic model was sometimes met with suspicion and buffeted by external fiscal pressures.

“An institution that had no full-time faculty or physical classrooms during the 80s drew a great deal of skepticism,” said Pruitt. “But we had a core group

suddenly there were no public resources available, and we knew that we weren’t going to be able to count on any substantial state investment. As a result, we had to figure out how to continue to establish ourselves as a credible force in higher education without a safety net.”

Relief would come in the mid-1980s when Kean signed Bills 1173 and 1177 creating the State College Autonomy Act. The act shifted operational control from the state to its higher education institutions in key areas. There would be no more waiting years to purchase much-needed equipment or fill crucial job openings. Colleges and universities now had full control over their missions, payrolls, leadership appointments,

CONTINUES ON PAGE 18 >

admissions policies and degree requirements. In an interesting side note, Pruitt was gifted the pen used to sign the bills by the governor himself and it is displayed in his office today.

Subsequent turning points continued to bode well for the institution's livelihood. In 1987, the college launched the Computer Assisted Lifelong Learning (CALL) Network, enabling students to take courses and access college services via a dial-up network. Development of this new type of course delivery was supported by a competitive \$1.8 million multiyear Challenge Grant awarded by the N.J. Board of Higher Education. The advancement established a pattern in the institution's ability to harness technology in course delivery.

This spirit of innovation remains at the forefront of the University's mission. Under Hancock, the University's working teams continuously deploy new course technologies and platforms that enhance the student lifecycle, enrich course experiences, improve operational efficiencies and align institutional processes.

"Our ability to leverage emerging technologies and the insight it provides is invaluable as we work to better identify prospective learners and engage more fully in the student lifecycle. These platforms help us monitor our students' academic success in real time, provide them with 24/7 support, offer at-risk students needed attention, optimize TESU's workflows and calibrate business processes to our strategic goals," said Hancock. "As we move through the institution's Middle States

Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) 2022 reaccreditation process and align these priorities with their standards, these technologies will take on even greater significance."

Similarly, as Pruitt reflects on his points of pride, he said that the institution's ability to pioneer without compromising quality has always been at the top of that list. He is also proud of growing the institution's RN-to-BSN program into the largest nursing school in the state at the time. He pointed to establishing the venerable John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy as another significant accomplishment. A think (and do) tank, the institute remains focused on providing measurable, informed analysis centered on New Jersey's key public policy challenges in its new home at Kean University.

"I'm also proud of our work in creating distance education options and unprecedented access to a college degree for a generation of adult learners. I'm especially gratified that we made degree completion feasible for thousands of active-duty military students and veterans; and, that we built a small but elegant, campus that changed the face of Trenton's Capital District," he said. Gaining university status in 2016 and building TESU's graduate programs, rounded out his list of proud turning points.

Both Pruitt and Hancock agree that the basis of such accomplishments often rests on establishing a community, consensus and an ethos around the value of higher education.

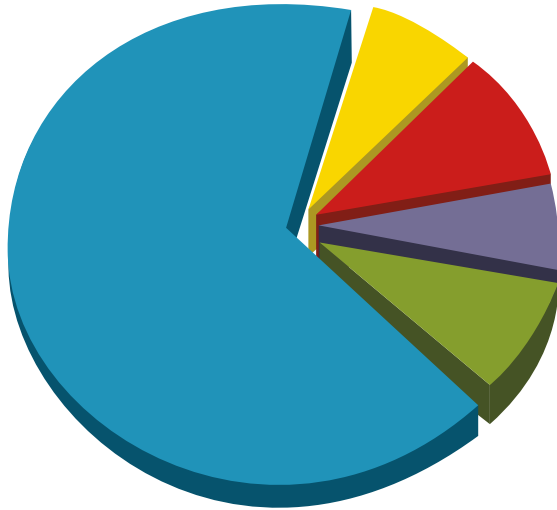
"I think we are truly succeeding in ensuring that education is

available to everybody who desires it, in a format that fits their aspirations and learning style," noted Hancock. "One of our challenges is that we are educating for today and workforce needs are notoriously fluid. Despite that, the institution does a tremendous job of building curriculum platforms that are relevant and dynamic, and consider employers' needs both today and in the future. I've always viewed education as something that economically empowers people and entire communities. Our ability to enhance the innovation that fosters enrollment growth and expands our educational partnerships will continue to solidify our position."

The analogy between effective leadership and a successful relay race is especially significant as the University celebrates 50 years of serving adult learners. The symbolic passing of batons unleashes new opportunities to flourish and innovate, keeping TESU and New Jersey at the forefront of academic and career success.

*To learn more about Hancock's educational and professional journey, read the *Invention* magazine winter 2018 cover story, *University Selects New President*. For more on Pruitt's 35-year professional trajectory read *Invention* magazine's fall 2017 cover story, *Transformation*; or, visit [here](#) to view back issues of the magazine. Be sure to join us as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary milestone with a yearlong series of events that will honor TESU's rich history while we plan for an even bolder next 50 years!*

Foundation Financials



WHO GAVE BACK

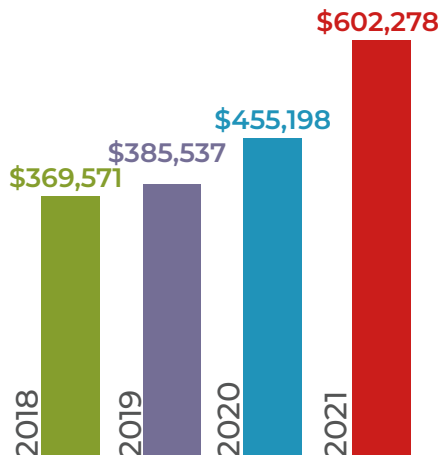
- Friends - 9.62%
- Employees - 6.43%
- Alumni - 8.91%
- Foundation Board - 6.85%
- Corporations/Foundations - 68.17%

| | YE 2021 | YE 2020 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Support & Revenue | | |
| Contributions & Grants | \$708,117 | \$791,638 |
| Special Events | \$150,989 | \$151,954 |
| Donated Services & Auction Materials | \$283,729 | \$268,411 |
| Donated Securities | \$38,019 | \$10,917 |
| In-Kind Contributions | \$1,350 | \$0 |
| Net Investment Return | \$1,693,403 | \$1,063,171 |
| Total Support & Revenues | \$2,875,607 | \$2,286,091 |
| Expenses | | |
| Program Expenses* | \$1,089,631 | \$1,000,811 |
| Management & General | \$35,133 | \$23,827 |
| Fundraising | \$75,961 | \$70,051 |
| Total Expenses | \$1,200,725 | \$1,094,689 |
| Change in Net Assets | \$1,674,882 | \$1,191,402 |
| Net Assets, Beginning of Year | \$12,213,027 | \$11,021,625 |

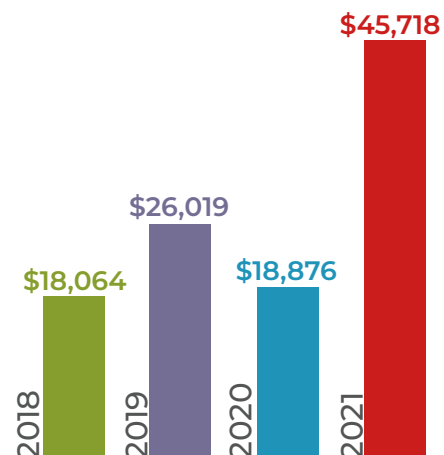
Net Assets, End of Year **\$13,887,909**

*Program expenses include TESU Foundation grants awarded to the University, scholarships, events and other donated services.

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



MATCHING GIFTS



NET ASSETS (as of December 31)

| Restriction | 2021 | 2020 |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Without Donor Restriction | \$6,501,158 | \$5,711,869 |
| With Donor Restriction | \$7,583,969 | \$6,501,158 |

On the Links

27th Annual TESU Foundation Golf Classic Raises Nearly \$80,000 for Scholarships

More than 100 golfers and guests returned to The Ridge at Back Brook in Ringoes, N.J., on May 17, 2021, for the Thomas Edison State University Foundation 27th Annual Golf Classic.

While participants always enjoy the chance to play at one of the state's top-rated courses, this day represents much more than a round of golf. Nearly \$80,000 was raised due to the generous response of sponsors and golfers who supported the event.

Proceeds from the outing are directed to the TESU Scholarship

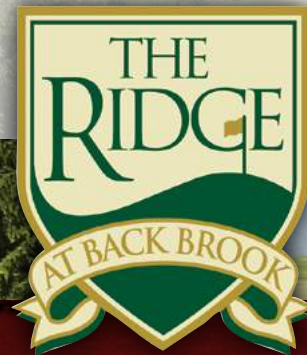
Fund providing resources for students to continue their journeys to earn a life-changing degree. Scholarships not only provide a meaningful source of financial support for TESU students, but also encouragement for academic and personal growth.

"Earlier this year, I was full of anxiety about how to afford to continue my education. It's because of donors that I will be able to complete my degree," a scholarship recipient pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in

English said. "Thank you so much, and please remember that your donations change lives!"

The outing featured a scramble format, and the first-place foursome was comprised of Matt Lamb, Ben Lamb, Mark Bush and Chris Tuleya.

To view the photo gallery from the event, visit [here](#).



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30th ANNUAL
THOMAS EDISON
STATE UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION

Grande Ball

Grande Ball Honors Leaders in Development and Delivery of COVID-19 Vaccine

NEARLY \$105,000 WAS RAISED TO SUPPORT NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND SCHOLARSHIPS



“Facing the COVID-19 pandemic has for the first time in most of our lifetimes put vaccines and those who discover them in the spotlight. The work of these remarkable individuals has saved countless lives, allowed us to spend time with our loved ones once again and given us a semblance of normalcy”

Tammy Murphy
First Lady of New Jersey

Supporters and friends of the Thomas Edison State University Foundation gathered in person once again to celebrate the Annual Grande Ball on Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, at Jasna Polana in Princeton, N.J. With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing a virtual affair last year, attendees enjoyed the sense of normalcy the event provided, thanks in part to the work of the evening’s two honorees.

Two extraordinary leaders involved in developing and delivering the COVID-19 vaccine were recognized with Spirit of Edison Community Leader Awards: Candice Long, president of Janssen Infectious Diseases & Vaccines, and Kemi Alli, MD, chief executive officer of Henry J. Austin Health Center.

“These women stood out so strongly, not just because of their own incredible accomplishments, but because collectively they personified the TESU spirit of creating knowledge, making it as impactful as possible and using it to improve the lives of as many people as possible,” remarked Thomas Edison State University President Merodie A. Hancock, PhD. “They are fundamentally motivated and inspired by a pure desire to improve

the lives of others – whether it’s during a global pandemic or simply during the course of their everyday lives.”

Long, a 25-year Johnson & Johnson (J&J) veteran with experience in many facets of the company, became president of Janssen’s Infectious Diseases and Vaccines in the middle of the pandemic. She led teams at the forefront of the effort resulting in the first single-shot vaccine for COVID-19.

Hancock recognized Janssen’s significant corporate contributions of more than \$200,000 in support of nursing scholarships at TESU. She was also proud to share that the University’s nursing students participated in bringing the J&J vaccine to many homebound and other vulnerable Trenton residents.

For more than 20 years, Alli has been helping shape and grow Henry J. Austin Health Center in Trenton, which primarily serves predominantly uninsured or medically underserved populations. She has worked tirelessly to educate the public about the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines and to distribute them to the Trenton

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community and throughout the state of New Jersey. Alli also serves as the chair of Thomas Edison State University's Board of Trustees.

New Jersey's first lady, Tammy Murphy, provided introductory remarks via video message where she commended the Spirit of Edison honorees' leadership in keeping communities healthy through their work in the development and delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Annual Grande Ball is also an opportunity to celebrate TESU's friends and corporate partners who share in the belief that education is a powerful tool that enhances lives, work and communities.

"The spirit of the Gala, and all we do at Thomas Edison and the Foundation, is to ensure our students succeed and continue moving forward on their academic journeys," Hancock said. "The funds raised from this event increase our ability to invest in new opportunities and provide critical scholarship support for our students as they balance their academics, careers, families and other responsibilities."

The TESU Foundation is grateful to the 2021 Gala Committee and all the generous sponsors, advertisers, attendees and donors who supported the event and helped make it a success. Nearly \$105,000 was raised from the event in support of new academic programs, scholarships and the University's innovative and flexible educational methods.

To view the gallery from the event, visit [here](#).



United in Purpose

Two TESU Foundation Board Leaders Discuss Their Enduring Connection with the University and Its Adult Learners and What They Enjoy Most About Their Roles

Nancy Gloor, chair of the Thomas Edison State University Foundation Board of Directors, left, became familiar with TESU's academic model in 2016 and quickly realized that she shared the institution's philosophy that higher education can profoundly change the course of lives. TESU Foundation Board Vice Chair Dr. Kimberlynn "Kim" Kleasen, right, shares that sentiment. In this Q&A, the two discuss what motivated them to join the TESU Foundation Board, why supporting TESU matters and what excites them most about the institution's future.



Why did you decide to join the TESU Foundation Board?

NG: Around 2016, I became aware of TESU through a connection on the Foundation Board. I was so impressed with the mission and work of TESU, that I also wanted to contribute to its success through the foundation. In addition, I thought the story of TESU needed to be told more broadly.

KK: The opportunity to be involved with an institution that is particularly reaching adults who may have had their education careers interrupted or never started was compelling to me. I am particularly excited to see where the next 50 years take TESU and can imagine the institution continuing to serve adults and students in ways yet unimagined who might otherwise find it difficult or impossible to continue their education.

Why is supporting TESU important to you?

NG: I deeply believe that education can profoundly change the course of one's life. That has been true for me personally and for so many people in my family. In the past, this opportunity was limited to people who were at the right age, who had an enormous amount of time to commit and who had access to the means to afford that. TESU removes all those barriers and makes this opportunity available to a much broader group of people.

KK: In supporting TESU, I continue the commitment to higher education, a legacy in my family. Education is a key pathway for a rich and fulfilling life. I have been so privileged to have pursued several educational opportunities, and I am very committed to supporting ways that open the privilege I had to a wide range of people.

What excites you most about TESU's future?

NG: I think TESU is positioned to be a national leader in the field of adult education.

KK: The opportunities, coming out of the pandemic, to continue to lead the way in higher education for the populations we currently serve and hope to serve. I think that we have an

opportunity to imagine delivery systems that do not exist today, to imagine ways to broaden our reach across diverse populations and into an even wider range of academic areas of interest.

Q What is your professional background?

NG: I have had a fairly diverse professional experience. I retired from Goldman, Sachs, and Co. after a nearly 30-year career in technology. I was a managing director and held several senior management roles over the years including EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) head of Fixed Income Technology, Controllers, Compliance and Operations, Global head of Sales and Investment Banking Technology, and was an architect of the firm's core data infrastructure. At Barclay's Capital in the U.S., I was the chief information officer (CIO) and Global head of Fixed Income Trading Technology. Before changing careers and moving to the banking technology field, I worked at Brookdale Community College as a co-op coordinator and adjunct instructor in psychology.

KK: I have spent my career in healthcare, beginning as a music therapist. After receiving my MBA, I worked in a large hospital in human resources and change management. I spent the majority of my career at Johnson

& Johnson (J&J) in a variety of roles. My professional expertise is in organization development, change management and leadership development. My nonprofit board work is focused on areas of education and supporting women and girls. I believe that education is the pathway to a rich and fulfilling life and am particularly passionate about supporting first-generation college students.

Q What are your hobbies and interests?

NG: I discovered gardening a few years ago and have been actively working on my flower and vegetable beds. My husband and I love to travel and hope to be able to do that again soon. I am a big fan of many types of music. We have a subscription to the Metropolitan Opera, but in true 'Jersey Girl' fashion, I am star-struck whenever I see Bruce Springsteen!

KK: My avocation is music, and I am a flutist and singer. My husband and I are passionate about travel and value being in different cultures, experiencing as much as possible during our travels. I am only one continent shy of being on all seven continents, missing Australia! We love the outdoors and enjoy bicycling and hiking particularly. I also love to cook, read and cross-stitch.



Welcome to our Newest TESU Foundation Board Member, Willard Alonzo Stanback, Esq.

The TESU Foundation Board of Directors is pleased to welcome new Board member Willard Alonzo Stanback, Esq., who joined the Board in September 2021.

Stanback is the principal of Willard Alonzo Stanback P.C., where he assists high-tech, low-tech and "no-tech" clients in the creation, protection and commercialization of their business and individual objectives. Previously, he worked in the legal affairs department of The E.W. Scripps Company, Sega Channel, Reed Smith and Morgan & Finnegan.

Stanback is an active community leader serving on the boards of various organizations including the Trenton Downtown Association; Capital City Redevelopment Corporation; Isles, Inc.; and Trenton Music Makers, and as the president of the Black Alumni/ae of MIT. He holds a BS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Master of Engineering and JD from the University of Virginia.

Ripple Effect



Tyshawn Jenkins, MBA '15, current DBA student

“The struggles I have faced were instrumental in helping to guide my path. My TESU experience has helped me to reach my full potential while I continue to serve my community and country.”

Jenkins is a decorated U.S. Air Force lieutenant, New Jersey Air National Guard member, public affairs officer and entrepreneur. He established a scholarship program for a deserving Asbury Park High School student in memory of his grandmother and a sibling who was a victim of domestic abuse. He also serves as a member of the National Campaign Team for the Wounded Warrior Project® and volunteers for various N.J.-based food banks, elementary school programs and veteran homes.

Let us know how earning your degree opened doors for you to help, inspire, advance, encourage and ultimately change the world around you for the better. Visit [here](#) to share your story

The Thomas Edison State University Foundation Board of Directors is comprised of extraordinary leaders who believe in the power of education and are committed to TESU’s mission.

The following members of the Board contribute to the success of the University through their professional expertise and insights, advocacy and philanthropy in support of institutional priorities:

Nancy Gloor
Chair of the Board
Managing Director
Technology
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Chief Nursing Officer
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Willard Alonzo
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Lucia Stegaru
Vice President and
Business Banking
Relationship Manager
PNC

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PharmD**
Research Professor
and Fellowship
Director
Rutgers University

Joseph P. Tredinnick
Executive Vice
President and Chief
Lending Officer
Cornerstone Bank

ACE Names Giovanna Grantham ‘Student of the Year’

Giovanna Grantham, an IT consultant and student at Thomas Edison State University (TESU), was one of two adult learners selected as the American Council on Education’s (ACE) 2021 Students of the Year.

Born in Guatemala, Grantham and her family moved to the United States when she was 7. Financially, college was out of reach for her, but she worked as a digital media producer with Prison Fellowship, bringing hope and restoration to prisoners, families and communities impacted by crime and incarceration, all while serving as a pro bono Spanish language translator in her community. Despite her career growth, pursuing a postsecondary education remained a priority.

Grantham expects to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies and an Associate in Science in Natural Science and Mathematics degree in Computer Science.

“We are honored that ACE chose a Thomas Edison student and so very proud of Giovanna and

her accomplishments,” said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president. “At TESU, recognizing learning that occurs outside the classroom is the cornerstone of our mission to help adult learners. We strive to assist students like Giovanna to apply their past experiences to accelerate their path to a degree.”

The ACE Student of the Year Award is presented annually by ACE to two individuals who have benefitted from the use of ACE credit recommendations for their workforce or military training. Recipients must demonstrate achievements in their community or workplace while successfully balancing the demands of family, career and education.

In all, Grantham was awarded 95 ACE-recommended credits, all of which were accepted and applied toward her degrees at TESU.

Casey Dunn, an enrolled student at Colorado State University, shared the distinction this year with Grantham. Both recipients received a \$1,000 scholarship to help fund their education.

“I look forward to sharing my



experience with others who may not have the resources to spend years working toward a degree because they have families and jobs,” Grantham noted.

A member of the Chickasaw Nation in Arizona, Grantham plans to use her platform as a Student of the Year to go out into the Native American and Latino communities and bring more attention to the alternative educational pathways available to them.

“The ACE credits helped make my path effective. I’d love to raise more awareness around alternate or nontraditional paths, especially for adult learners who may not have as many advantages or may not have financial resources,” she noted.

comings & goings

Mary F. Heagley has been appointed as the vice president for Advancement and executive vice president of the TESU Foundation. She assumed the position on April 25.

Previously, Heagley served as senior director of Principal and Planned Giving at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J., where she was responsible for developing and soliciting global high net-worth individuals, trustees, corporations and foundations in support of the institute’s mission.

“Thomas Edison plays a critical role in adult learner education,” noted Heagley. “TESU is a place where philanthropy can change the world, and I look forward to working with President Hancock and her cabinet, the distinguished TESU Foundation Board members and the outstanding Division of Advancement team.”



Stephanie Jean, BSN '21

ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

A stressful period in Stephanie Jean's life led her to her true calling as a nurse.

Once Jean was introduced to the nursing profession, she realized she was in the right place, at the right time, for all the right reasons.

As a daughter of a Haitian immigrant, Jean realized early on that education was the key to possibilities. Jean and her siblings did not have the material possessions that other children had, but what she received from her mother was far more valuable.

"My mother imparted in me a solid work ethic, resilience and a determination to succeed," said Jean, a 2021 graduate of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing and Health Professions Accelerated BSN Program. "I watched as my mother took on multiple responsibilities so that she could provide for our family. In response, I was always motivated to work hard."

After earning her bachelor's degree in social work, Jean spent the next 10 years in retail management.

"I went into retail to pay off student loans, but I realized I had a passion for helping others. I always knew in my heart I wanted to have a more direct impact."

Jean soon started a family of her own and nothing was as important as providing for her daughters. However, emerging circumstances would force Jean to refocus.

"My youngest daughter was born with a rare chromosome

condition that required 24-hour surveillance, and it was through this stressful period that I found my true calling. Because of my daughter's condition, I had ongoing contact with medical professionals and the professionals that made the most significant impact on me were my daughter's nurses," noted Jean. "I became inspired to give others what those nurses had given me: peace of mind that we were in good hands and that everything was going to be OK."

In 2020, Jean enrolled in the Accelerated BSN Program. However, the idea of going back to school during that stage of her life was daunting. Despite her apprehensions, Jean found that she was in good company.

"I was surprised to find fellow students from all walks of life, backgrounds and ages enrolled in the program," she said. "The staff and educators were an incredible help. That was when I realized I was in the right place for all the right reasons."

Jean's experiences as a nursing student offered her compelling insights into a career that was about to unfold. Along the way, her tenacity was recognized with the highly competitive Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Nurse Corps Scholarship. Thanks to the scholarship, she was able to concentrate solely on her nursing courses.

Since graduating from TESU, Jean has been working as a critical care nurse for ChristianaCare in Delaware.

"The skills I obtained during my time at TESU have introduced me to numerous opportunities and challenges in the healthcare sector. My TESU education has completely changed my life and prepared me to transition into a post-graduate nursing program. I can also more effectively care for my daughter and better serve my patients."

Jean is grateful to the students and staff at TESU for believing in her and helping her achieve her dreams.

"Without that unconditional support, I would not be a nurse today. I am living proof that education has no limits and is the key to success," said Jean.

To learn more about the Accelerated BSN Program, visit [here](#).



2021 TESU Alumni Volunteers



featured in stories
and promotional
campaigns



student referrals

Thomas Edison State University alumni provide a powerful and compelling voice in support of the educational experience at TESU. By referring friends and family, participating in social media platforms and sharing unique stories, alumni volunteers devoted more than 1200 hours of their time to help advance the mission and vision of the University in 2021.

Be a TESU Genius!

Alumni and friends of TESU are invited to join the new Genius program. Simply complete five steps to be eligible for the prize! See complete details at tesu.edu/genius.

Keep Us Posted!

To connect with the Office of Alumni Engagement and fellow TESU alumni, join the conversation on social media:

Alumni Facebook Group: tesu.edu/FacebookGroup

Student and Alumni LinkedIn Group: tesu.edu/LinkedInGroup

Alumnifire: tesu.edu/Alumnifire



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You've Crossed the Finish Line.

Giving Back Helps Future Alumni Do the Same!

Introducing TESU Philanthropy Cords.

TESU alumni have a long history of giving back and helping fellow alumni achieve their own dreams of continuing their education. The TESU Philanthropy Cord recognizes the generosity and spirit of giving in graduates as they join together to support future generations.

Graduates will receive a green Philanthropy Cord to wear during Commencement with their cap and gown by making a gift of \$22 or more to the TESU Foundation. To celebrate the University's 50th Anniversary, a special commemorative cord is also available for anyone who makes a \$50 gift.

All Philanthropy Cord donations will support the TESU Scholarship Fund to help current students cross the finish line.

tesu.edu/alumni/support/cord

philanthropy (noun)

Definition of philanthropy

1. goodwill to fellow members of the human race especially active effort to promote human welfare.
2. a : an act or gift done or made for humanitarian purposes.
b : an organization distributing or supporting funds set aside for humanitarian purposes.

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