

WINTER 2017

Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

Informing Patient Care



Marcie Jannetti, MSN '15
Our 50,000th Graduate

UNIVERSITY HOLDS EVENT TO PREPARE U.S. VETERANS FOR THEIR NEXT MISSION | CENTENARIAN: FLORENCE THALER, AA '92

CENTER FOR LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY BUILDING NAMED 2016 NEW GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD WINNER | 44TH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

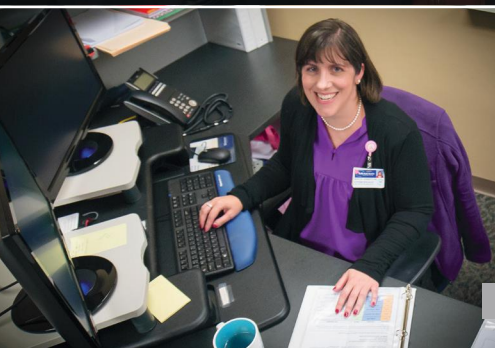
UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION RECEIVES \$10,000 GRANT FROM THE PROVIDENT BANK FOUNDATION | GRANDE BALL 2016 – 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



5



8



10



14



18

1 President's Message

University News

- 2 > University and *Statistics.com* Partner on Data Science Degree
- 2 > Operation College Promise Helps Get "VETS To WERC"
- 3 > Ana I. Berdecia Named to Princeton Area Community Foundation Board
- 3 > Vice Provost and Dean of the Watson School Named to Board of The Citizens Campaign
- 4 > University Holds Event to Prepare U.S. Veterans for Their Next Mission
- 5 > University's Center for Learning and Technology Building Named 2016 New Good Neighbor Award Winner
- 5 > Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity Degree Program Launched

Foundation News

- 6 > Dr. George A. Pruitt Endowed Presidential Scholarship Highlight: Mikael Diaz, BS '15, current MSM student
- 6 > Helene Fuld Health Trust Scholarship Highlight: Cesar Rivero, BSN '16, and Stephanie Blazin, BSN '16
- 7 > University Foundation Receives \$10,000 Grant from The Provident Bank Foundation
- 7 > Princeton Area Community Foundation Supports Watson Institute's Cultural Competency Program
- 8 > 25th Anniversary Grande Ball

Cover Story

- 10 > Informing Patient Care: Marcie Jannetti, MSN '15
- 14 > University Celebrates 44th Annual Commencement

Alumni Profile

- 18 > Centenarian: Florence Thaler, AA '92
- 20 > Class Notes

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DEAR ALUMNI, STUDENTS AND FRIENDS,

Nelson Mandela said, "Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead."

This issue of *Invention* is dedicated to the class of 2016, which included 3,059 self-directed adult learners who never gave up on their goals and juggled their careers and family commitments to earn their degree from Thomas Edison State University and reach their own milestones.

We are honored to introduce you to Marcie Jannetti, MSN '15, who is the 50,000th graduate of the University as well as a graduate of the Master of Science in Nursing degree program in Nursing Informatics. Jannetti shares her journey having worked as a nurse in both the clinical and technical sides of the profession. She continues to make great strides in one of the latest emerging specialties within the field, informatics, as she works to manage and maintain information systems within the healthcare arena.

Also in this issue, we meet Florence Thaler, AA '92, who at 100 years young, continues to personify a lifelong learner. After completing her degree at the age of 76, Thaler continues to stimulate her love of learning through weekly piano lessons and remaining involved in her community.

We are also thrilled to share stories and photos from our 44th Annual Commencement, which took place on Sept. 24 at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton. Our annual Commencement is the greatest day of the year for the institution, and this year was especially noteworthy as it was our first official graduation as a University.

At this year's ceremony, we were honored to hear inspiring speeches from graduate Ashley Pianko, BSN '13, MSN '16, as well as New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks and Professor Mandla S. Makhanya, principal and vice chancellor for the University of South Africa (UNISA), who were both awarded honorary doctorate degrees from the University.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Invention*.

Sincerely,

Dr. George A. Pruitt
President

University and *Statistics.com* Partner on Data Science Degree

The Institute of Statistics Education at *Statistics.com* and Thomas Edison State University have partnered to create a Bachelor of Science degree in Data Science and Analytics that can be completed entirely online.



Pictured (from left) Peter Bruce, founder and president of *Statistics.com*, and William Seaton, provost and vice president of Thomas Edison State University, at the Memorandum of Understanding signing that formalized the partnership between the University and *Statistics.com*.

Students enrolled in the program will earn their degree from the University and earn 33 credits from online courses in data science and analytics offered by *Statistics.com*, which have been evaluated and recommended for credit by the American Council on Education's (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT®).

"Today, businesses and nonprofits have the ability to collect more data than ever before, but organizations need to be able to understand and analyze that data for it to be truly beneficial," said Dr. John Woznicki, dean of the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences at the University. "We are excited about our partnership with *Statistics.com* and this new area of study, which is designed to prepare working adults with the skills to help organizations interpret data and make data-driven decisions."

Credits earned by successfully completing the *Statistics.com* courses identified for the degree fulfill the area of study requirements of the University's Bachelor of Science degree program.

"Our data science curriculum has been in place for a number of years and we are pleased that this partnership will allow students to apply our program to a degree at Thomas Edison, a recognized leader in flexible online education," said Peter Bruce, founder and president of *Statistics.com*.

Applications for the degree program opened in July. The program is open to the general public as well as students taking *Statistics.com* courses and those already enrolled at the University.

Operation College Promise Helps Get "VETS To WERC"

The supply chain industry will remedy a looming labor shortage as Baby Boomers in the sector retire by turning to U.S. military veterans. Industry pundits predict that at least 270,000 supply chain-related jobs will need to be filled each year as a wave of Baby Boomers hits retirement age.

To help resolve the shortfall, Thomas Edison State University's Operation College Promise (OCP) has collaborated with Legacy Supply Chain Services, multimedia publisher DC Velocity and the national Warehousing Education and Research Council (WERC) to launch a public awareness campaign, "VETS To WERC," to attract military veterans to the industry.

"The occupational demands of the supply chain field correspond well with the skillset of many of our military veterans," said Wendy Lang, director of OCP at the University. "The U.S. military wrote the book on supply chain management, so the alignment of available jobs in this industry with

the existing capabilities of many of our veteran service members will be central to this campaign."

The "VETS To WERC" campaign was showcased to 450 companies during WERC's 39th annual industry conference at the Rhode Island Convention Center in May. Lang and others addressed more than 1,000 conference attendees on the ways that hiring military veterans can be good for business. Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed remarked, "Nearly 500 companies, from Rhode Island and throughout the country, obtained the knowledge and resources to recruit, employ and retain qualified military veterans."

Lang was on hand to link employers and veterans with support services through the many partnerships that OCP has forged to optimize veterans' reintegration to civilian life. "The road to transition is different for every veteran and, for this reason, OCP takes a holistic approach to facilitating a smooth journey from the military to



Wendy Lang, director of Operation College Promise at Thomas Edison State University

the civilian sector," she said. "We are excited to be able to be a resource for WERC employers and employees."

For more information on the campaign and related events, visit www.werc.org/vetstowerc.

❖ Ana I. Berdecia Named to Princeton Area Community Foundation Board

Ana I. Berdecia, senior fellow/director of The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children (CPDUC) at The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy of Thomas Edison State University, has been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF).

"I am humbled to have been named to the PACF Board of Trustees," said Berdecia, who serves as program director for the Institute's New Jersey Cultural Competency and English Language Learners (ELL) Summer Institute and Mentoring Program. "The University has

As part of PACF's new strategic plan, the foundation will focus its grant making on child poverty initiatives while, at the same time, continuing to support donors, helping them to make meaningful gifts to causes that are of importance to them. As a member of PACF's board, Berdecia will



Ana I. Berdecia, senior fellow/director of The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children at The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy

"THE UNIVERSITY HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO PROVIDING THE MERCER COUNTY AREA WITH CONTINUED GROWTH JUST AS THE PACF MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR THE REGION TO PROMOTE PHILANTHROPY AND SUPPORT IN OUR LOCAL NONPROFIT SECTOR."

Ana I. Berdecia

committed itself to providing the Mercer County area with continued growth just as the PACF makes it possible for the region to promote philanthropy and support in our local nonprofit sector."

assist in helping to improve the quality of life throughout the greater Mercer County region while striving to uphold the organization's five values: generous, fair, creative, courageous and lasting.

Prior to joining the University, Berdecia served as the executive director of the Puerto Rican Community Day Care Center, Inc. in Trenton, N.J., and worked as an adjunct faculty member at Mercer County Community College where she taught Introduction to Early Childhood Education; Infant and Toddler Development; Curriculum and Methods; and educational field experience courses. Berdecia currently serves on the Board of Professional Impact New Jersey and the New Jersey Council for Young Children.

❖ Vice Provost and Dean of the Watson School Named to Board of The Citizens Campaign



Dr. Joseph Youngblood II, vice provost and dean of the John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies at the University, has been named to the Board of Trustees of The Citizens Campaign.

"I am pleased to join the Board of The Citizens Campaign to assist in working to develop a new generation of leaders within our communities," said Youngblood. "Much like the University, The Citizens Campaign helps to open the door for new opportunities and has made great strides in educating its membership and the public alike about the issues we face."

Founded in 1998, The Citizens Campaign aims to cultivate a culture of service and leadership as well as develop innovative government solutions that support good government. Comprised of a community of problem solvers,

including government law and policy experts, business people, citizen journalists, civic leaders, students and entrepreneurs, the organization works to empower citizens through civic leadership training.

As founding dean of the Watson School, Youngblood has helped to guide the University's pioneering role in creating New Jersey's first School of public service devoted to providing educational opportunities and building public sector capacity. The creation of the Watson School was inspired by the University's mission to serve higher education and the public interest as a School of innovation, information and



Dr. Joseph Youngblood II, vice provost and dean of the John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies

policy formulation. Youngblood has been able to infuse this effort throughout his work in all aspects of his role.

University Holds Event to Prepare U.S. Veterans for Their Next Mission

Thomas Edison State University did not wait until Veterans Day to show appreciation for the nation’s military veterans. To showcase its gratitude, the University held a Veteran Career and Resource Event on Oct. 27 at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton, N.J.

Service providers and organizations present helped support the transition and postsecondary advancement of our nation’s veterans.

in their reintegration to civilian life. Through the resources made available, we created a ‘one stop shop’ for these individuals to find jobs, learn how to access their VA benefits and, quite simply, plan and establish their lives upon their return home.”

organizations as well as how to qualify and apply for open positions.

“Military members, especially veterans, leave their service abundantly skilled,” said Martini. “Because they have been so rigorously trained in their job duties, veterans make for excellent employees within any organization as their military training can be easily translated into marketable job skills.”

Representatives from the University’s



Veteran attendee, left, speaks with University Academic Advising staff stationed at the event.

Attendees were connected with job opportunities, interview and resume tips as well as resources to help ease their transition to civilian life. Through access and contact with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affiliated organizations, military members and their families gained information about how to access and make use of their Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits as well as how using their VA benefits can help them earn a degree and prepare for a civilian career.

“WE ARE HONORED TO AID OUR U.S. SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN IN THEIR REINTEGRATION TO CIVILIAN LIFE. THROUGH THE RESOURCES MADE AVAILABLE, WE CREATED A ‘ONE STOP SHOP’ FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS TO FIND JOBS, LEARN HOW TO ACCESS THEIR VA BENEFITS AND, QUITE SIMPLY, PLAN AND ESTABLISH THEIR LIVES UPON THEIR RETURN HOME.”

Louis Martini



From left to right, Craig Smith, director of Veterans Affairs, Thomas Edison State University; Robin Walton, vice president for Community and Government Affairs, Thomas Edison State University; Secretary Rochelle Hendricks, N.J. Secretary of Higher Education, State of New Jersey; and Wendy Lang, director of Operation College Promise, Thomas Edison State University

Offices of Academic Advising and Admissions were also on hand to assist attendees in the process of applying and transferring credit to Thomas Edison. To date, Thomas Edison remains the institution that serves the largest number of military and veteran students in the state of New Jersey, with those currently enrolled representing all 50 states and nearly 60 countries.

“MILITARY MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY VETERANS, LEAVE THEIR SERVICE ABUNDANTLY SKILLED. BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN SO RIGOROUSLY TRAINED IN THEIR JOB DUTIES, VETERANS MAKE FOR EXCELLENT EMPLOYEES WITHIN ANY ORGANIZATION AS THEIR MILITARY TRAINING CAN BE EASILY TRANSLATED INTO MARKETABLE JOB SKILLS.”

Louis Martini



Secretary Rochelle Hendricks speaks with Maj. Benjamin Stoner, education services officer, N.J. Army National Guard, at the Veteran and Career Resource Event.

“For the University to hold this event goes well beyond our role in the higher education arena,” said Louis Martini, associate vice president for Military and Veteran Education at Thomas Edison State University. “We are honored to aid our U.S. service men and women

Employers including Comcast, NJ Transit, PSEG, NJM Insurance and UPS as well as many local and statewide resource organizations, were in attendance to speak directly with participants about employment opportunities available at their

To learn more about the work of the University’s Office of Military and Veteran Education and Operation Vet Success, visit veterans.tesu.edu.

University's Center for Learning and Technology Building Named 2016 New Good Neighbor Award Winner

Thomas Edison State University's Center for Learning and Technology building was selected for a 2016 Good Neighbor Award by the New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA).

Awards were presented in July at a reception in Edison, N.J., to local organizations that have recently built outstanding commercial, industrial or greenspace facilities that help improve the economy and landscape of New Jersey. The Center for Learning and Technology building was cited for its innovative design of interior office spaces and its place in the University's overarching commitment in transforming downtown Trenton. The judges considered nominees on the basis of economic benefit, job creation, architectural merit and community involvement.

"To be recognized with this prestigious award is a true honor," said John Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs at the University. "We consider the award an affirmation of the University's efforts to preserve yet another historic building in our state capital while transforming it into a center for technology-driven course design and media production for the benefit of our students."

Once serving as the longtime headquarters of the NJBIA, the vacated

building at 102 West State Street was viewed by the University as an ideal venue to house the institution's course



Pictured (from left to right) at the NJBIA Award Ceremony are Benjamin Waldron, Monmouth-Ocean Development Council and NJBIA Judging Committee member; Matthew L. Wright, vice chairman of the Board of Trustees, NJBIA; John Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs at Thomas Edison State University; Robin Walton, vice president for Community and Government Affairs at Thomas Edison State University; and Michele Siekerka, president and CEO, NJBIA.

development team and its work to expand course-related technology. With renovations completed in 2014, the center enables the University to better administer technology platforms and systems out of a modern, centralized location.

The approximately \$2.3 million project included extensive interior and exterior renovations as well as the development of office space for the University's instructional technology, instructional design and assessment development teams. The renovation also included the

construction of communal areas meant for brainstorming new programs and to keep the University's online experience continually advanced.

Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity Degree Program Launched

Thomas Edison State University's School of Applied Science and Technology has launched a new Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity degree program.

"During the past several years, cybersecurity threats have grown considerably across the nation," said Dr. Amjad Ali, associate dean, School of Applied Science and Technology. "Protecting the information networks that support our financial markets, critical infrastructure, military systems, and the intellectual property and private information of American citizens and businesses has become a national priority."

The program was developed in direct response to a shortage of qualified U.S. workers that has created a significant gap in the number of personnel adequately trained and qualified to protect the nation's computerized assets from attack.

The program focuses on the development of the skills and technologies needed to meet the demands of modern cybersecurity practice, which include assessing threats, agents and attack routes, to creating secure systems using security-design best practices.

To learn more about the program, contact Ali at aali@tesu.edu.



Dr. Amjad Ali, associate dean, School of Applied Science and Technology

❖ Dr. George A. Pruitt Endowed Presidential Scholarship Highlight: Mikael Diaz, BS '15, current MSM student

Mikael Diaz has his hands full. He is a husband, father of five, full-time manager with Hackensack Meridian Health's Mobile Satellite Emergency Department and a full-time graduate student.

Diaz is also a recipient of the Dr. George A. Pruitt Endowed Presidential Scholarship, which is easing some of the fiscal burden for him and his family as he earns a Master of Science in Management degree in public health/public policy.

"Raising a family and going to school full time is a chief endeavor," Diaz said. "With the majority of my schooling being funded through student loans, I am thankful to be able to have additional financial support to aid me in completing my degree in the form of this scholarship. Having gone to school for so long and having previously earned my bachelor's, the cost was adding up. I decided it was time to

apply for scholarships, and it was a true honor to be granted this opportunity to continue my education."

Diaz is working on earning his second degree from Thomas Edison State University. Upon completion of paramedic school early on in his career, he had some college credits but no degree. After finding Thomas Edison through an online search, Diaz enrolled and completed his Bachelor of Science degree in homeland security and emergency preparedness in 2015.

"Earning my bachelor's degree really helped me, in my line of work, with being promoted to the level of supervisor and coordinator within



Mikael Diaz, recipient of the Dr. George A. Pruitt Endowed Presidential Scholarship

some of the major healthcare systems for which I've worked," Diaz said. "I am looking forward to seeing what opportunities earning my master's degree will bring."

❖ Helene Fuld Health Trust Scholarship Highlight: Cesar Rivero, BSN '16, and Stephanie Blazin, BSN '16

Graduates of the 2016 Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) Program Cesar Rivero and Stephanie Blazin appreciate all the financial support they can garner. Given the demanding nature of the University's Accelerated Program, self-funding can be challenging for many students.

The Helene Fuld Health Trust has helped to lessen that difficulty for these two students and many others. The Thomas Edison State University Foundation received a three-year, \$650,000 grant in 2014 from the Helene Fuld Health Trust to provide scholarships and to create an endowed fund for students enrolled in the Accelerated Program.

As two of this year's scholarship recipients, both Rivero and Blazin have benefited from the Helene Fuld Health Trust's generosity. Their eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant and other federal

financial aid was limited because they already hold a baccalaureate degree in another discipline.

"I am very grateful for the support of the Helene Fuld Health Trust in assisting me in my journey to earn my BSN degree," said Rivero, who earned his first bachelor's degree in nutrition science at a university in Lima, Peru. "Because of the support from the Helene Fuld Health Trust, I was fortunate to be able to receive an excellent education as part of one of the best nursing programs in the nation."

Students enrolled in the program are required to avoid employment due to the rigorous nature of the 12 month curriculum. Since the program's inception in 2011, the financial need of the 2015-2016 cohort was the greatest to date.

"Having been awarded this scholarship allowed me the opportunity to fully



Helene Fuld Health Trust Scholarship recipients Cesar Rivero and Stephanie Blazin

immerse myself in my studies," said Blazin. "Going through this program with a family is difficult, and the financial obligations for a program of this nature are immense. The scholarship helped to alleviate some financial burden so that I was able to better focus on the importance of my education."

University Foundation Receives \$10,000 Grant from The Provident Bank Foundation

The Thomas Edison State University Foundation has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the The Provident Bank Foundation in support of the University's Military and Veteran Portal (MVP) Career Enhancement Initiative and overall improvements to the portal.

The Career Enhancement Initiative is intended to connect military and veteran users with career advising and specific job opportunities based on their interests and military training. The University plans to partner with 10 community colleges in New Jersey and Pennsylvania within the Provident Bank service area to successfully actualize the enhanced MVP. The initiative is expected to provide successful transitions to post-military careers for nearly 500 veterans who are projected to take part.

"The Provident Bank Foundation is proud to support the University's Military and Veteran Portal Career Enhancement Initiative," said Jane

Kurek, executive director of The Provident Bank Foundation. "The MVP Career Enhancement Initiative provides the support and resources veterans need for an enriched and successful future in their careers."

"We are endlessly appreciative of the support of The Provident Bank Foundation," said Louis Martini, associate vice president, Office of Military and Veteran Education at the University. "With the technical enhancement of the MVP, as well as the implementation of career service advising through our Career Enhancement Initiative, we will be able to assist those men and women who have made countless sacrifices in securing a position in a career field that best suits them."

Launched in 2014, the University's MVP enables active-duty service members and veterans to better understand how their military training can be transferred as credit toward a college degree, view



Pictured (from left to right) are Craig Smith, director of Veterans Affairs, Office of Military and Veteran Education at Thomas Edison State University; Jane Kurek, executive director, The Provident Bank Foundation; Misty Isak, associate vice president of Development, Office of Development at Thomas Edison State University; and Louis Martini, associate vice president, Office of Military and Veteran Education at the University, at the check presentation.

potential degree programs aligned with their military training and estimate their education costs all before they apply for admission to Thomas Edison.

To learn more, visit mvp.tesu.edu.

Princeton Area Community Foundation Supports Watson Institute's Cultural Competency Program

Twenty early childhood educators representing 10 schools in the Trenton School District will be trained to create more culturally responsive classrooms thanks to a program based at Thomas Edison State University and support from the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF).

The \$20,000 in funding from PACF will help The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children at The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy to expand its New Jersey Cultural Competency and English Language Learners (ELL) Summer Institute and Mentoring Program to include early childhood educators in the University's own community.

"We are honored to receive this support from the Princeton Area Community Foundation," said Barbara George



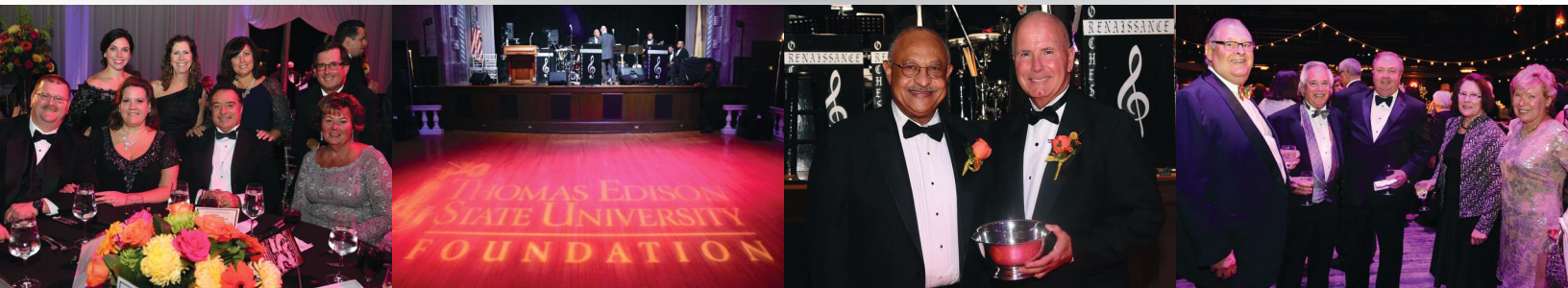
Johnson, executive director of The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy, who oversees The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children program at the University. "The support is critical in expanding our New Jersey Cultural Competency and English Language Learners Summer Institute and Mentoring Program and guiding more early

childhood educators in creating culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms. It's particularly gratifying that in our 10th year of disseminating the program to numerous classrooms throughout the state, the funding from PACF will support expansion in the Institute's own community."

Since 2007, the ELL Summer Institute's annual three-day sessions have trained 228 teachers in 97 classrooms throughout New Jersey, helping them to create environments that affirm and celebrate the diverse cultural heritage and languages of their students. In addition, each classroom receives cultural tool box kits for transforming their classrooms and teachers participate in quarterly teleconferences to further strategize and fine tune the techniques learned in the program.

25th Anniversary Grande Ball

Thomas Edison State University Foundation Honors
Investors Bank's Kevin Cummings



Thomas Edison State University Foundation held its 25th Annual Grande Ball on Oct. 8 at the Trenton War Memorial in Trenton, N.J. With 220 guests, the formal affair raised more than \$132,000 for the University, one of the most successful years in the history of the event. The Foundation also acknowledged the Spirit of Edison honoree for his accomplishments and support of the University. This year's honoree was:

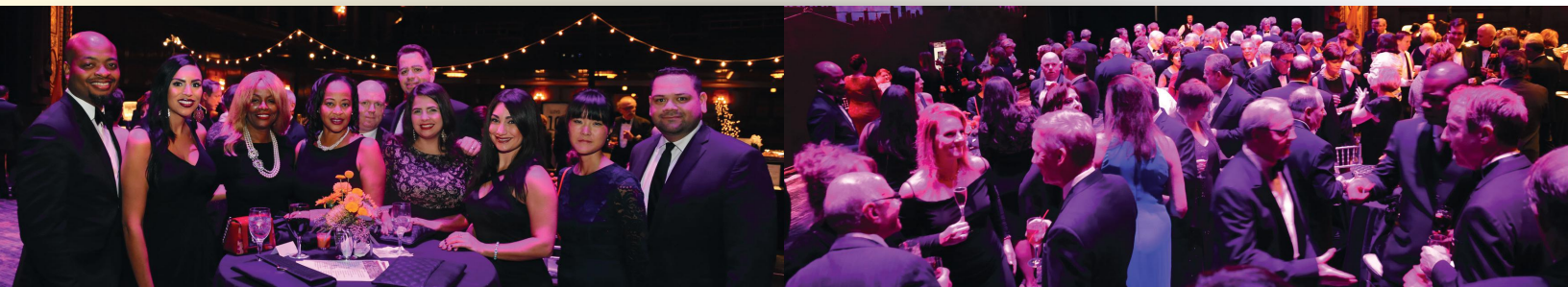
- > **Kevin Cummings**, president and chief executive officer, Investors Bank, who received the 2016 Spirit of Edison Community Leader Award

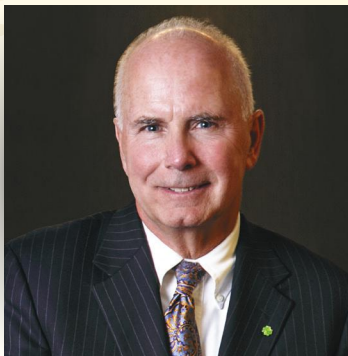
Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State University, noted that this year's honoree embodies the commitment to innovation and growth so closely associated with the mission of the University.

"The University is pleased to recognize Kevin for his exceptional accomplishments as he continues his commitment to serving others and for his unmatched leadership in serving the community in a multitude of ways," said Pruitt. "We are appreciative of his support and advocacy on behalf of the University."

SPONSORS OF THE 2016 GRANDE BALL

Investors Bank and NJM Insurance Group (Leadership Sponsors); PNC Bank (Silver Sponsor); Bunker Hill Consultation Center, Capital Health, Stark & Stark and Wells Fargo (Bronze Sponsors); AT&T, Lourdes Health System and St. Francis Medical Center (Edison Sponsors); Laborers International Union of North America, New Jersey Resources and Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health (Invention Sponsors); and Sparta Systems (To-Go Station Sponsor).





2016

SPIRIT OF EDISON AWARD

Kevin Cummings

*President and Chief Executive Officer,
Investors Bank*

Kevin Cummings was appointed president and CEO of Investors Bank in January 2008. He was also appointed to the Investors Bank Board of Directors at the same time. Prior to 2008, he served as the bank's COO.

Cummings and the executive management team are guiding the bank's evolution into a full-service community and commercial bank. The bank's performance was recognized on *Forbes'* "Best Banks in America" list since 2012 and appeared on *Fortune's* listing of the "Top 100 Fastest Growing Companies" in 2012. In addition, Cummings received the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2011 New Jersey Award for transforming the bank into a growth company.

Prior to joining Investors Bank, Cummings had a 26-year career with KPMG LLP, where he became a CPA and partner.

Cummings serves on the boards of The Scholarship Fund for Inner-City Children, Liberty Science Center, Visiting Nurse Association, Independent College Fund of New Jersey, All Stars Project of New Jersey, The Federal Home Loan Bank of New York (FHLBNY), Greater Trenton and The Community Foundation of New Jersey (CFNJ). In addition, he is a member of the Development Leadership Council of Morris Habitat for Humanity and has served as the former chairman of the Board of the New Jersey Bankers Association.

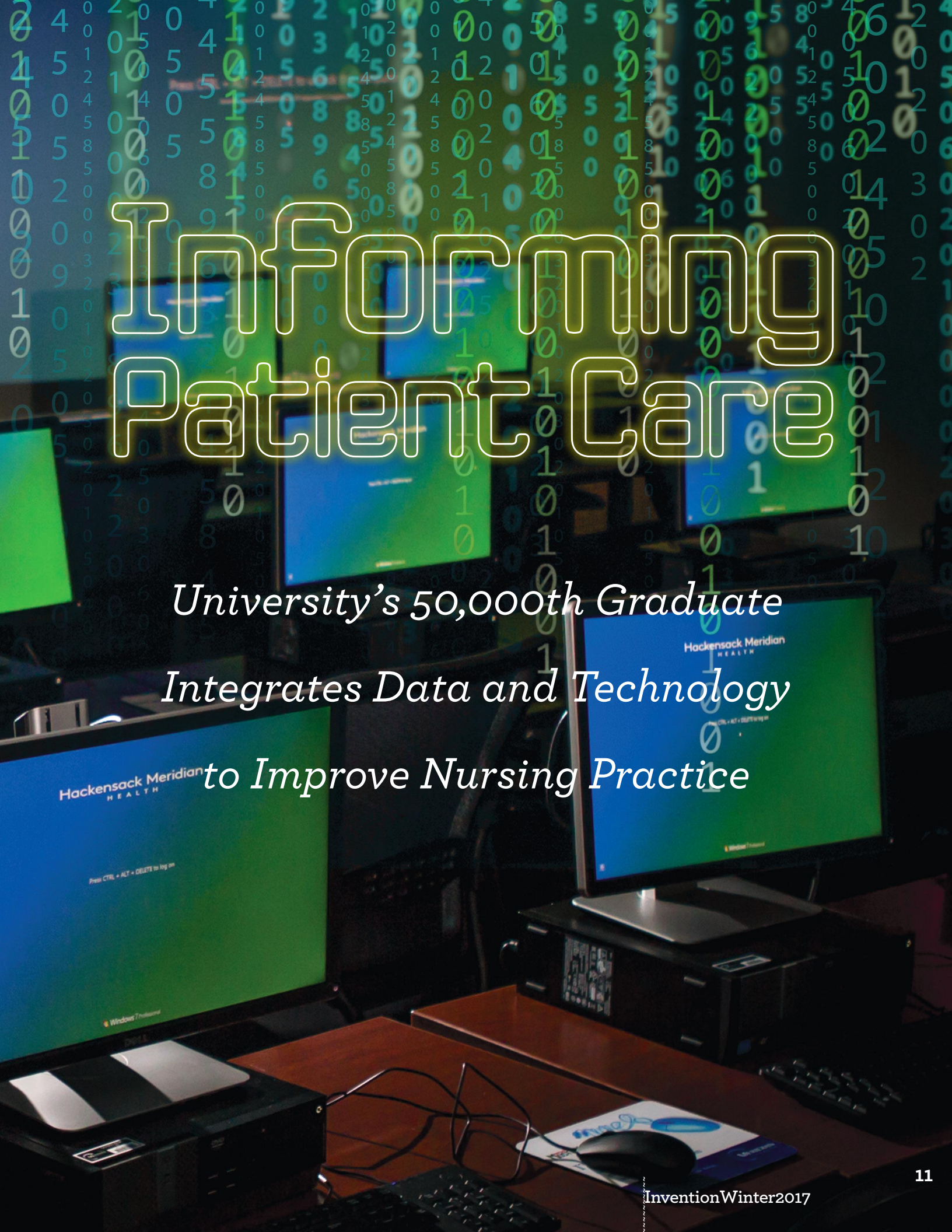
Cummings holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vt. He earned an MBA from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey's School of Business, and gave the commencement address to the 2013 MBA graduating class.

He and his wife, Patricia, have four children. In his spare time he has coached youth basketball in his local community, and has served as the athletic director of St. Teresa of Avila.





Marcie Jannetti, MSN '15



Informing Patient Care

*University's 50,000th Graduate
Integrates Data and Technology
to Improve Nursing Practice*

Informing Patient Care

Marcie Jannetti has taken a dive into the deep waters of an emerging field that is relatively new to nursing.

Having worked in clinical and acute care, compliance and management throughout her career, Jannetti is now fully immersed in nursing informatics, a specialty that integrates information, data, evidence, nursing practice and analytical sciences to help healthcare providers improve patient care and patient outcomes.

“WHEN A CO-WORKER MENTIONED THOMAS EDISON, WHERE SHE WAS PURSUING HER OWN DEGREE, SHE ALSO MADE MENTION OF THE NURSING INFORMATICS TRACK. I WENT HOME, RESEARCHED AND APPLIED SOON AFTER.”

Marcie Jannetti

“The beauty of the nursing profession is that there are so many options for the type of work you can do with a nursing license,” said Jannetti. “One of the many roles a nurse has includes teaching — patients and family members, the community, other nurses and student nurses.”

It was this educational avenue Jannetti chose to pursue when she decided to earn her Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree in Nursing Informatics from Thomas Edison State University.

“For several years, I had considered returning to school for my graduate degree, but I couldn’t find a program that interested me,” she said. “When a co-worker mentioned Thomas Edison, where she was pursuing her own degree, she also made mention of the Nursing Informatics track. I went home, researched and applied soon after.”

For Jannetti, education had always been a priority. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Trenton State College (now The College of New Jersey) directly after graduating high school. As a registered nurse, Jannetti resolved to learn more and broaden her skills.

“The MSN seemed like the most logical way for me to continue learning and to advance my

career,” she said. “I had always wanted to be a teacher until one day I decided to be a nurse, and I went with it.”

Jannetti began her nursing career at a long-term care facility and eventually moved to acute care at a community-based hospital, where she worked in the “float pool” caring for a wide variety of patients, moving from one unit to another based on the facility’s needs.

“In 1999, I applied for a position in the operating room (OR) where the facility actually invested 10 months of training to teach me the art and science of perioperative nursing. I had found the job of my dreams,” she recalled.

It was a subsequent position in the OR at the Jersey Shore University Medical Center (now Hackensack Meridian Health) in Neptune, N.J., that proved pivotal in her decision to advance her education.

“Jersey Shore is a teaching hospital and a trauma center,” said Jannetti. “I wound up taking the night shift charge nurse position so that I could have time to concentrate on graduate school. Soon after I began the job, I enrolled at Thomas Edison and began plugging away at courses.”

From the OR, Jannetti transitioned to work on corporate physician integration at Hackensack Meridian Health, developing and monitoring quality improvement initiatives across multiple physician practices and urgent care centers. Upon completing her MSN in fall 2015, she transferred to the corporate information technology unit at Hackensack Meridian Health, where she currently serves as an information technology (IT) systems specialist.

“It is a unique role to be an RN in the IT world, but Hackensack Meridian Health recognizes the need for clinical experts in the IT arena,” Jannetti said. “I am on the team responsible for the perioperative electronic records, so my OR experience is valued, as is my MSN/Informatics background. Informatics is one of the newer specialties within nursing, and the course work at Thomas Edison challenged me and set a solid foundation for my career. I

“ONLINE LEARNING REQUIRES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISCIPLINE. I QUICKLY DEVELOPED A ROUTINE FOR COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME. IT TOOK ME ABOUT FOUR YEARS TO COMPLETE THE DEGREE, AND I JUST KEPT TELLING MYSELF THE TIME IS GOING TO PASS REGARDLESS OF WHAT I DO OR HOW SLOWLY I PROGRESS.”

Marcie Jannetti

learned about knowledge management, database structure, project management and the life cycle of information systems. These are things many nurses never receive formal education on, but in my role, this knowledge is vital and the program at Thomas Edison prepared me well.”

Not only is Jannetti unique in her field, she is also unique to the University.

She is the 50,000th graduate of Thomas Edison State University in the institution’s 44-year history. Jannetti admitted it was hard to describe knowing she was a milestone graduate.

“I actually didn’t know until several months later that I had been identified as the 50,000th graduate,” she said. “I was going through treatment for early stage breast cancer at the time and on one of my many sleepless nights, I Googled my name and found a tweet from the University congratulating the most recent graduates, including the 50,000th – who happened to be me. It made me smile to see it and helped me decide that I needed to take part in the Commencement ceremony.”

Attending Commencement was a defining moment in her educational journey, and Jannetti explained that getting there required a large amount of will power and focus.

“Online learning requires a certain amount of discipline,” she said. “I quickly developed a routine for completing assignments on time. It took me about four years to complete the degree, and I just kept telling myself the time is going to pass regardless of what I do or how slowly I progress.”

In her off hours, Jannetti spends time with friends and family, including her niece and nephew.

“My parents were my biggest cheerleaders throughout my graduate studies and continue to be my biggest supporters in life,” she said.

Jannetti also remains active by running, cycling and swimming regularly, most of which is in preparation for sprint triathlons and various races in which she takes part. In tandem with her favored charities, she has run the Marine



Marcie Jannetti was recognized for being the 50,000th graduate of the University at the 44th Commencement ceremony on Sept. 24th.

Corps Marathon as well as the Marine Corps 10K. Jannetti also plans to participate in The Young Survival Coalition’s 200-mile bike ride that spans three days, raising money in support of young women, like herself, who have battled or been diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I like to balance my participation in these events with volunteering at similar events,” she explained. “I’ve been a volunteer at several Ironman races as well as many local community runs.”

Jannetti lives in southern New Jersey close to friends and family.

2016 Commencement

Thomas Edison State University Celebrates 44th Annual Commencement

Thomas Edison State University celebrated its 44th Annual Commencement – and its first as a University on Saturday, Sept. 24, at the Sun National Bank Center where more than 550 graduates from 33 states as well as Canada and Puerto Rico traveled to Trenton, N.J., to participate in the ceremony.



Ashley Pianko, MSN '16, of Kenilworth, N.J., gave the response for graduates.

Ashley Pianko, MSN '16, of Kenilworth, N.J., gave the response for graduates and acknowledged the commonality of 'barriers' between members of the Class of 2016 and their goals.

"The beauty of this day is that we all come from different backgrounds as adult learners. For some, this may have been a requirement for a current position or a prerequisite for a future position. For others, this is completely voluntary. This could be someone's first bachelor's, or someone's second master's, or vice versa. Despite those differences, we all still have something in common, and that is barriers," said Pianko, who earned a Master of Science in Nursing degree with a 3.97 grade point average. "No matter our background, we all had barriers to achieving our degrees. Whether it was: time, money, tangible or intangible. We fought many fears, whether it is our children not getting enough attention, not being able pay off our debt, not getting enough sleep or just not having enough time in the day to work, parent and get homework done."





Pianko, who earned her BSN in 2013, and is currently enrolled in the School's Doctor of Nursing Practice program, extended her pride in her peers, wishing them well on their continued journeys, and concluded her remarks with an inspirational quote from the CEO of Yahoo!, to reinforce the importance of taking risks.

"Marissa Mayer, Yahoo!'s CEO, said, 'If you can push through that feeling of being scared, that feeling of taking a risk, really amazing things can happen,' and I wholeheartedly believe that especially after today. Here's to the first Thomas Edison State University graduating class."





Rochelle R. Hendricks, New Jersey's secretary of Higher Education, received an honorary degree from Thomas Edison State University.

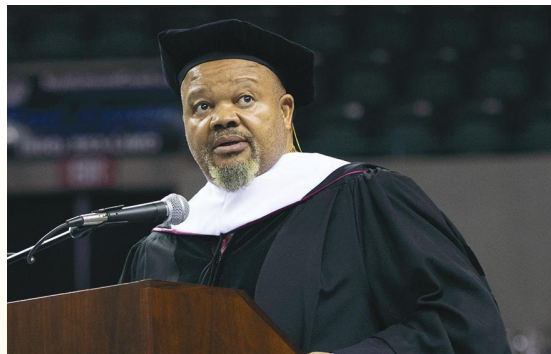
The University also awarded two honorary degrees at the event, including one to Rochelle R. Hendricks, New Jersey's secretary of Higher Education, and the other to Professor Mandla S. Makhanya, principal and vice chancellor for the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Hendricks, who was named New Jersey's first secretary of Higher Education in 2011, is responsible for policy and program development to enhance the capacity and competitiveness of the state's higher educational institutions. Hendricks has more than 20 years of experience working on complex education issues in the Garden State and has engaged the U.S. Department of Education in the national higher

education reform agenda while advancing the blueprint for higher education reform as recommended by the Governor's Higher Education Task Force.

"Here at Thomas Edison, individuals with the desire to learn and grow, to enhance their careers or start new careers, have the opportunity to pursue their dreams. Congratulations for working hard and taking advantage of this educational opportunity. It is your persistence, effort and resilience; these are qualities that have helped you succeed, qualities that will help you to continue to realize your dreams. We represent the University, a pioneer in higher education. A lot of what people are celebrating now started right here with TESU, offering education that's not limited by time or place. It's about possibility over limitation," said Hendricks.

Professor Mandla S. Makhanya, principal and vice chancellor for the University of South Africa (UNISA), received an honorary degree from Thomas Edison State University.





The University also awarded an honorary degree to Makhanya, who leads one of the largest universities in the world and continues to make significant contributions to serving the educational needs of adult learners.

"I am very humbled by the huge honor you've given me. I know how carefully we consider honorary doctorates at my own university and therefore feel privileged to be among the distinguished community of this University across the Atlantic. I share your advocacy of distance education and self-directed learning for mature students in the interest of lifelong learning and salute your success in showing the way," he said.

The Class of 2016 included more than 3,059 graduates. The University has awarded approximately 56,460 degrees to more than 50,000 graduates since it began providing flexible, high-quality, collegiate learning opportunities for self-directed adults in 1972.

To watch a video of the 44th Annual Commencement, visit www.tesu.edu/commencement.



Centenarian

❖ Florence Thaler, AA '92

Florence Thaler is the embodiment of a lifelong learner.

Having lived through some of history's most powerful events, including stock market crashes, the Great Depression, six recessions and a whopping 17 presidencies, Thaler has seen history happen right before her eyes.

Now having reached centenarian designation, according to the 2010 U.S. Census*, she is one in 53,364 people in the United States to live to be at least 100 years old.

And even after 100 years, Thaler has not lost her thirst for knowledge.

Thaler began her undergraduate education in 1934 at Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, N.Y., amassing 31 credits in one year alone. With her family's relocation to North Carolina looming, she was forced to put her degree pursuit on hold.

"I had to give up the idea of finishing my education until much later in my life," she said. "After I had gotten married and my children had all grown up, I decided it was time to go back to school. I made some inquiries and called Thomas Edison telling them that



Florence Thaler at commencement in 1992.

"I HAD TO GIVE UP THE IDEA OF FINISHING MY EDUCATION UNTIL MUCH LATER IN MY LIFE," SHE SAID. "AFTER I HAD GOTTEN MARRIED AND MY CHILDREN HAD ALL GROWN UP, I DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL."

Florence Thaler

"I liked going to school, even when I was small," Thaler said. "I was always one to ask questions. I think I was a bit of a pest sometimes, but my father always told me that if I didn't ask questions, I would never know the answer."

To help reinforce Thaler's curiosity, her mother had her own ideas. When Thaler was five, she and her mother went to the local library and signed up for her very own library card.

"My parents were always encouraging me; they embraced the idea of learning," she said. "From the time I was in the first grade I wanted to be a teacher. I never lost that desire but I never quite made it to that goal."

I had credits I'd amassed over the years. They were from all over the place, really: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; Ramapo College of New Jersey; and Brooklyn College. I was told to collect my credits and have my transcripts sent directly to Thomas Edison."

That was only the beginning.

With her credits accounted for, Thaler needed only five courses to finish her degree, which she completed through classes at William Paterson University of New Jersey and Thomas Edison between 1990 and 1992.

"I remember one course in particular that has stuck with me to this day,

psychohistory," she noted. "It made the biggest impression on me because I was learning about concepts that I was so unfamiliar with. I had never taken any courses in psychology before, so it was certainly an eye opener."

In 1992, at the age of 76, Thaler was officially a college graduate, having earned an Associate in Arts degree in liberal studies/general studies. After nearly 60 years from the time she completed her first college course, Thaler had finally reached her lifelong goal of earning her degree. Ever grateful to Thomas Edison for this opportunity, she has been a generous and loyal donor for nearly 25 years.

Since then, she has continued to keep herself active, having moved to an adult community where she lives independently and belongs to a number of groups. She not only assists as part of the welcoming committee for new residents, aiding them in their transition to independent living, but she also takes part in activities to stimulate her own learning.



“About nine years ago, at 91, I began to take piano lessons from one of the other residents who teaches in her spare time,” she explained. “I never knew how to read music or play, but over time I’d say I’ve come a long way.”

However, her piano lessons serve more than just an educational purpose. Thaler explained that the musical influence is a constant that also helps contribute to her longevity.

“I heard someone talk about this some time ago on television,” she began. “They said to keep your brain stimulated you should teach yourself a new word every day in a foreign language. Not only that, but music should always be part of your daily life.”

Another large part of Thaler’s life, and perhaps one of her most cherished, was seeing the world.

“In the international travel agency business I was in with my husband years ago, we were involved with every trip we took,” she explained. “Even on our trips, I would always make time for my studies. While my husband led the group touring these magnificent locations, from Machu Picchu, Peru, to Spain, Australia and everywhere in between, I would intermittently find

“I HEARD SOMEONE TALK ABOUT THIS SOME TIME AGO ON TELEVISION. THEY SAID TO KEEP YOUR BRAIN STIMULATED YOU SHOULD TEACH YOURSELF A NEW WORD EVERY DAY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. NOT ONLY THAT, BUT MUSIC SHOULD ALWAYS BE PART OF YOUR DAILY LIFE.”

Florence Thaler

myself staying behind to study. That’s how important my education has always been to me.”

Thaler lives in northern New Jersey and has an ever-growing family that spans five generations; comprised of four children, 12 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

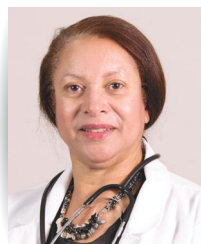
*<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/reports/c2010sr-03.pdf>

class notes

❖ Ida Biddle-Mayer

BA '11, BSN '14, MSN '16

Ida Biddle-Mayer has been named school nurse at Wilbur Elementary School in Bear, Del. She has also launched a school nurse website to keep parents, teachers and children informed about healthcare.



ethnobotany being a unique discipline in the northeast, one of de la Parra's goals is to find plants for new medicines from indigenous cultural practices and bring in the practice of modern biotechnology to create a platform in which to develop medicines desperately needed for disease.

❖ Michael Brewster

BSBA '93

Michael Brewster has been named to *Irish America Magazine's* 'Wall Street 50.' The magazine recognizes the best and brightest Irish-American and Irish-born leaders in the financial space. Brewster heads the Brewster Financial Strategies Group of Wells Fargo Advisors.



❖ Eric Delgado AA '13, BSAST '15

Eric Delgado became Machinery Division leading chief petty officer (MLCPO) in the U.S. Navy onboard the USS Tennessee (SSBN-734) in Kings Bay, Ga.

❖ Roy Dockery

BSAST '09, BSBA '09

Roy Dockery was promoted to Swisslog Healthcare's vice president of Field Operations in April 2015. Dockery has recently been appointed to the International Healthcare and Healthcare IT Advisory Board for the Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA), a leading professional association of the technology services industry. TSIA advisory boards work to strengthen disciplines within the technology service industry and define important industry issues, trends and opportunities.



❖ Tony Ciaravino BA '07

Tony Ciaravino has been appointed vice president of Marketing and Client Services with Journey Aviation in Boca Raton, Fla. Ciaravino joined the company to further develop its growing portfolio of worldwide accounts. He is an FAA licensed commercial multiengine pilot with more than 20 years of experience in business aviation.



❖ Steven King

BSBA '93, MBA '15

Steven King has been appointed to Nuxeo's Board of Directors. King works as an enterprise software executive and visionary in the electronic document and digital content market. He has most recently served as CEO of Recomind, and prior to that worked as CEO of DocuSign. King also serves the University on the Foundation Board of Directors.



❖ Margaret Correale BSN '09

Margaret Correale was the recipient of the 2015 Lester Z. Lieberman Humanism in Healthcare Award, sponsored by the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey. The award was the result of a review of letters from grateful patients naming Correale as an individual who made a difference during their hospitalizations.

❖ Sarah Dautel BA '08

Sarah Dautel has authored a children's picture book that salutes wounded warriors and their families. *Ajax Bound for Glory* explores a child's reaction to tragedy through the eyes of Ajax, a "Rabbit Ranger" on his way to military glory. When a training accident shatters his world, Ajax resolves to turn tragedy into triumph.

❖ Alejandro J. Licea BA '13

Master Sgt. Alejandro J. Licea earned his master's degree in public relations and corporate communications from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He has since joined the Army Public Affairs Center, based at Fort Meade, Md., and serves as a senior manager.



❖ John de la Parra BA '09

John de la Parra, Northeastern University (Boston, Mass.) PhD candidate and ethnobotanist, was featured on Northeastern's website for his recent research and reception of the President's Award from the Society of Economic Botany. De la Parra is also a winner of the Excellence in Innovation Award for his poster on "Controlled Biosynthesis and Diversification of Plant-Derived Pharmaceuticals." With

❖ Byron Love BA '91

Byron Love has released a new book, *IT Project Management: A Geek's Guide to Leadership*. The book addresses leadership issues in the IT industry to help IT practitioners lead from the lowest level.

❖ Annie Mewborn

BSBA '08

Annie Mewborn has been named Teacher of the Year 2016-2017 for Talbot County Public Schools in Maryland. Mewborn is an eighth grade English teacher who has a career-long passion for reading and technology. She earned an MEd in learning and technology from Western Governors University in Salt Lake City, Utah, and is actively involved in her school, district and community. Mewborn will go on to participate with fellow teachers from 23 other counties for the prestigious selection of being named Maryland's Teacher of the Year.



❖ Stephen L. Petrillo

BA '95

Stephen Petrillo, a graduate of the Rutgers-Newark (N.J.) School of Law, has been appointed as a judge of the Superior Court of New Jersey by Gov. Chris Christie. Petrillo was nominated by Christie in May and approved by the state Senate in June. Petrillo, a lifelong resident of Essex County, has been assigned to the Essex County Vicinage. For nearly four years, Petrillo had been vice president and general counsel at Spiniello Companies, an industry leader in water and sewer infrastructure construction and rehabilitation with operations throughout the United States. Prior to joining Spiniello, Petrillo was a partner in the regional law firm of Marshall Dennehey Warner Coleman and Goggin, resident in the firm's Roseland, N.J., office where his practice focused on a wide range of construction related litigation matters.

❖ Mitchell M. Samuelian

BSAST '02

Mitchell M. Samuelian has been named vice president of Operations and Maintenance for NRG Energy, Inc.'s Renewable Fleet consisting of a large portfolio of wind and solar projects. Samuelian is tasked with overseeing operations, maintenance and safety for a fleet of solar, wind and distributed generation.



❖ James Sullivan

BA '09

James Sullivan has earned his securities license as well as his state life and health licenses. He has joined the firm of Abrahamsen Financial Group in Manasquan, N.J.



❖ Renzo Accursio Trapani

BSHS '04

Renzo Accursio Trapani earned his Master of Arts degree in human resources training and development from Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J., in 2014. He has since completed his Education Specialist (EdS) degree in education leadership, management and policy also from Seton Hall in 2016 and has recently been accepted into the education leadership and management doctoral program at Seton Hall, where he began classes in September 2016. Trapani has been employed as a police officer with the New Milford Police Department (Bergen County, N.J.) since 2001 after transferring from the New Jersey Transit Police Department, where he started his career in 2000.

❖ Dr. Meridee Trimble

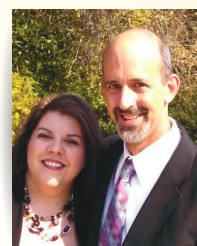
BA '96

Dr. Meridee Trimble has earned a PhD in educational management with a higher education specialization from Hampton University, in Hampton, Va. A major in the United States Air Force, Trimble is a Southeast Asia Foreign Area Officer.

❖ Christopher Wheeler

BSAST '13

Christopher Wheeler has begun a new position as a senior engineer with GE Power, working on power plant reliability and equipment life cycle solutions for fossil fueled power plants.



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Updates can also be sent to:

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Why Are Scholarships Important?



“It is important to fund scholarships to give students a chance to apply for and receive assistance in financing their education.”

*Mikael Diaz, BS '15,
current MSN student*



“Scholarships lighten burdens for students so they can finish degree programs with a focused mind in order to succeed.”

Stephanie Blazin, BSN '16



“Due to increasing college costs and decreasing state support, funding scholarships became essential for students like me to achieve our dreams.”

Cesar Rivero, BSN '16