<table>
<tr><td></td><td>

# I. Introduction

</td></tr>
</table>

### Summary of the Case
### Thomas Edison State College[1]
### Master of Arts in Educational Leadership
### October 27-29, 2014

*The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.*

## Authorship and approval of the *Inquiry Brief*:

The *Inquiry Brief* was written by David Weischadle and Leonard Lock, and was approved by the mentors/faculty of the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership Program on March 12, 2014. The Curriculum and TEAC Committees approved the content of the inquiry brief on June 25, 2014 and June 26, 2014, respectively.

## Introduction:

Thomas Edison State College was established in 1972 by the state of New Jersey to provide a completely online alternative for education of adult learners in the state. Its mission is to provide flexible, high-quality, collegiate learning opportunities for self-directed adults. The college provides flexible, relevant and personalized paths to college degrees. The faculty members are all adjuncts working at other institutions in the sate and country, with expertise in the fields in which they teach—they are designated as mentors—and they oversee the progress of the students in their individually assigned courses. The mentors must also have online teaching experience and experience working with adult learners. Thomas Edison State College now includes five schools: Heavin School of Arts and Sciences; School of Business and Management; W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing; School of Applied Science and Technology; and John S. Watson School of Public Service and continuing studies. A dean leads each school. Degrees are offered at the undergraduate and graduate level to a diverse population of over 20,000 students, whose average age is approximately 35.

The Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program is in the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences—has been authorized by the state of New Jersey to offer programs leading to the granting of a certificate of eligibility to work toward the final license to supervise at the building (principal-36 credit hours) and district (superintendent-an additional 6 credit hours and 150 hour practicum) level—each requiring an extensive practicum experience and license examination, as well as the New Jersey Supervisor's certificate (12 credit hours), which requires no practicum and no licensing examination (but a previous Master's Degree).

The program course content is built around the New Jersey Department of Education Standards for Professionals (based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's Standards for School Leaders [ISLLC]). Defining characteristics of the program are: Students learn through a sequential series of courses; all courses are

online; assessments are primarily carried out through the use of analytic rubrics (including a standards-based electronic portfolio); and the program promotes an understanding of educational leadership and administration drawing upon:  a) the principles of adult learning; b) the effective design and delivery of distance learning environments; c) collaboration and collegial interaction among mentors and peers; and d) effective linking of theory, research and practice.  Further, the program focuses on research-based behaviors for educational leaders, results oriented leadership, and educating reflective leaders.  Finally, there are 6 strands interwoven throughout the program:  I. Inquiry into Practice: Problem-based Inquiry, II. Developing the Community of Learners, III. Action Research, IV. Professional Portfolios, V. Attaining Professional Standards, and VI. Technology.

The Master of Arts in Educational Leadership currently consists of 10 adjunct faculty members (called mentors) all having academic expertise and practical experience in educational leadership.  The program graduated 40 students in 2012-2013 and enrolled 140 students in 2012-2013 in the following options:

**Table 1**
**Thomas Edison State College Master of Arts in Educational Leadership Options**

| Option Name | Level<br>Graduate | Number of completers in previous academic year<br>2012-2013 | Number of students enrolled in current academic year<br>2012-2013 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Building Supervisor Certificate of Eligibility | Graduate | 25 | 60 |
| District Supervisor Certificate of Eligibility | Graduate | 1 | 17 |
| Supervisor Certificate | Post Masters | 14 | 63 |
| **Total** | **All** | **40** | **140** |

**Program claims:**
The program makes 6 claims about their program, based on the 6 NJDOE Standards for Educational Leaders (ISLLC).
**Claim 1:** Our graduates are able to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
**Claim 2:**  Our graduates are able to promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
**Claim 3**: Our graduates are be able to promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
**Claim 4:** Our graduates are able to promote the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
**Claim 5:** Our graduates are able to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

**Claim 6:** Our graduates are able to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

**Evidence supporting the claims**
- Specific course assignments that are graded according to rubrics (Claims 1 [in courses EDL-500 & EDL-710], 2 [in courses EDL-520, EDL-660, and EDL-670], 3 [in courses EDL-540, EDL-670, & EDL-680], 4 [in courses EDL-540 & EDL-690], 5 [in courses EDL-540 & EDL-550], & 6 [in courses EDL-550 & EDL-690]). Reliability is established by using specific criteria, related to the claims (ISLLC standards) and grade with rubrics developed by mentors. Using a number of appropriate statistical tests, the TEAC committee and external reviewers established the validity, reliability, and inter-rater reliabilities for the various types of assignments included in the courses. In all cases, the reliability was at least moderately significant, and in most it was very significant or highly significant. The program used a benchmark of an A- average for the course assignments, even though a 3.0 (B) cumulative GPA to stay in the program. The program calculated the percentage of grades at the A- or above level. In interviews with the authors it was noted that if the benchmark were set at a B+, over 90% of grades would meet the benchmark criterion. For the assignments used for this evidence, the minimum % of A- and above scores was 40% and the maximum was 65%.
- Results of the School Leader Licensure Assessment Praxis 6011 and/or Praxis 6021 (Claims 1 & 2 [modules 1.1, 1.2, 2, &3], 3 [module 2], 4 [modules 1.1, 1.2, & 2], 5, & 6). Candidates are not required to take the appropriate test or tests for program graduation (the test are not required for the Supervisors Certificate at all); however, most candidates complete the test, which fills a requirement to be granted the Certificate of Eligibility for an administrative license. ETS has established the tests' validity and reliability as measures of Educational Leadership Knowledge. The pass rate for the test is over 90% for completers who have taken it over the past 3 years.
- Assessment of student grades/assignments completed during the internship in EDL-710 (Assignments for each ISLLC standard 1 through 6 correspond to Claim 1 through 6 respectively). The faculty had set an original benchmark of 80% of all grades being an A- or better. On the assignments for the various courses, the brief indicated that approximately 90% of the time, the percentage of A- grades or above was reached (80%).
- Entering student survey results—specific questions related to each claim (Claims 1-6). For each survey, items are rated on a 5-point scale. Items related to each claim (and thus ISLLC standard) were examined separately and Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to establish internal consistency (reliability). The entering student survey Alphas ranged from .745-.860—a high reliability. Each of the surveys was constructed by the creation of survey items aligned with the ISSLC standards and program claims. The surveys were field tested and only survey items with high face validity were retained and used in the actual survey. The survey was continually reviewed for both face validity

and content validity by mentors aligning the claims with the courses.  The faculty originally set a benchmark of a mean of 4.0 on a 5-point scale 80% of the time.  On the 5-point scale—highly skilled (5), skilled (4), somewhat skilled (3), marginally skilled (2) and, not skilled (1)—the minimum reported mean on any item for the 3 years reported was 3.23, just below the midpoint of somewhat skilled and skilled.   The maximum reported mean was 4.38, trending towards highly skilled.  For the entering candidates, the benchmark was reached just over one third of the time.

- Graduating student survey results—specific questions related to each claim (Claims 1-6); the graduating student survey Alphas ranged from .695-.905—a high reliability.  The minimum mean on the graduating survey was 3.90 (near the skilled level) and the maximum was 5.00.  On this survey the benchmark was reached more than 90% of the time.
- Site supervisor survey results—specific questions related to each claim (Claim 1-6).  The site supervisor survey Alphas ranged from .691-.895—a high reliability.  The minimum mean on the site supervisor survey was 4.50, with the maximum at 4.77; the benchmark was reached 100% of the time.
- Employer survey results—specific questions related to each claim (Claims 1-6).  The employer survey yielded only 2 responses and neither reliability nor validity has yet been fully established due to the low return rate.  The program is considering how to get a higher return.
- Alumni survey results—specific items related to TEAC Principles 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3; and specific items related to the TEAC cross-cutting themes 1.4.1, 1.4.2, and 1.4.3.  The Cronbach's Alpha to was .769 and .691 respectively, establishing a high degree of reliability.  The alumnis survey minimum mean was 3.50, in the center between somewhat skilled and skilled with a maximum mean at 4.70—highly skilled.  This survey was administered only every other year, so only one year of data is reported.  The benchmark was reached 2/3rds of the time.
- Products in the Electronic Portfolio graded by rubric in EDL-710—unwritten, but understood, minimum of two artifacts per claim (Claims 1-6). EDL-710, students complete their professional portfolio with examples of the work completed during their 300-hour internship and program courses. The portfolios are divided into six sections, one for each of the six standards with a rubric to evaluate each. The reliability of portfolio course grades is enhanced with the development of matrices, which align course assignments with standards and use of rubrics.  Such measures increase the specificity of evaluative criteria and reliability across courses; the more specific the criteria, the more reliable the grades.  There is a consistent pattern within each of the course grades and assignments, which reflect a consistent standard in grading.  Each assignment in the portfolio was designed to specifically address the standards and claims, and thus deemed valid.  For each assignment, mentors and staff developed rubrics for use in grading the assignments.  By using the rubrics in grading, content validity is maximized and assured by the consistency of the rubric.  Each rubric has been updated by multiple rounds of feedback, piloting, and revision.  The program used a benchmark of an A-

average for the portfolio assignments, even though a 3.0 (B) cumulative GPA to stay in the program. The program calculated the percentage of grades at the A- or above level. This benchmark was only reached in one reported semester in the Inquiry Brief.

**Internal audit:**
The internal audit was carried out by a subcommittee of the TEAC Committee—two mentors, the TEAC Committee chair and the Assistant Dean. Using randomly selected students, the committee examined data in seven different areas—student admission & recruitment; student support; student feedback; mentors & staff; curriculum; facilities, equipment & supplies; and fiscal & administrative. Every 4$^{th}$ student of the 88 in the program were audited, all 10 mentors were audited. A list of 33 questions was provided to each committee member and using student and mentor files (hard copy where available and electronic files), the questions were answered for each student. The internal audit committee probed the 33 targets for each student and found the quality control system to be working as designed, since all questions were answered in the affirmative for each student, course and mentor examined.

**Plans for program improvement**
The internal audit revealed that work was needed in the following five areas:
1. There is an ongoing need to identify, collect, and assess additional student artifacts that directly impact the ISLLC standards, which will enable the program to make more specific assessments.
2. While the information provided by surveys has been very supportive of the program, there is a need to review surveys to determine if more precise information can be gathered relative to specific complaints or concerns for which documentation is needed.
3. The information provided by the external reviewers may have great potential. More experimentation in terms of the number of reviewers, what they are able to review, and how the information will be used needs to be reviewed, studied, and made more consistent and reliable.
4. While the college and the educational leadership program has a substantial body of student services, it is unclear how often or frequently students use them, to what level they are used, and what others are needed. A means of collecting this information and documenting it is needed.
5. While the policies and procedures are in place concerning student complaints, there are few documenting processes or mechanisms. The program needs to review the procedures not only for serious student complaints, but also for minor infractions and issues that emerge on a regular basis. Some form of log identifying the incident and resolution needs to be developed.

In addition, the program has noted a need to get more information from employers and even from site supervisors in order to determine effectiveness of graduates as

school leaders.  They plan to implement a program utilizing mentor coaches to assist in gathering data and being more proactive in getting information out to supervisors and other stakeholder and administrators in order to gather data regarding program completers.

**Statement regarding commitment and capacity:**
The faculty concluded that Thomas Edison State College is committed to Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and that there is sufficient capacity to offer a quality program.

---

[1] The Thomas Edison State College Master of Arts in Educational Leadership offers options at the graduate level in Educational Leadership.  The state of New Jersey, at its discretion, offers licensure to program completers in these option areas.

### Acceptance of the Summary of the Case
The faculty accepted the Summary of the Case as accurate on October 31, 2014.

### Audit logistics
*Auditors examined documents primarily in Room TH 123-124 of Townhouses Building.  They met with mainly in TH119 in the same building, and in the President's office in the Kelsey Building on the 3rd Floor.  They also examined the online delivery system of the college, as all courses are online.   This made it impossible to visit any classes, since they are all asynchronous.*

*The local practitioner originally scheduled, Michelle Maruca, was current candidate in the program; hence another individual, Geoff Hewitt, was brought in to fill that role—he does not appear in the audit schedule.*

*The meeting scheduled with the site supervisors On Wednesday at 4 p.m. turned out to be impractical, as the supervisors are all currently working in schools and/or school districts.  No one was able to teleconference in at the appointed hour, and no one was able to come to the campus.  Auditors felt that they had enough additional information from the supervisors in the survey information to provide a good source of triangulating evidence from them.*

### Audit opinion
Overall the *Brief* earned a clean audit opinion, and each component of the TEAC system received a clean opinion.  The auditors also concluded that the evidence supports the view that Thomas Edison State College is committed to the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership Program.