

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
**THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**December 8, 2023**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Gualberto Medina, Chair; Michael Toscani, Vice Chair; Merodie A. Hancock, President; Stanley J. Justice; Lydia Stockman; and Michael Rakauckas (Student Trustee)

**ABSENT:** Kemi Alli, Eric R. Lear, Brian Maloney

**ALSO PRESENT:** **Cynthia Baum**, Vice President and Provost; **Matthew Cooper**, Associate VP, Organizational Learning & Chief Technology Officer; **Dennis Devery**, Vice President for Enrollment Management; **Mary Heagley**, Vice President for Public Affairs; **Chris Stringer**, Vice President and CFO; **Marcela Maziarz**, Vice President for Community and Government Affairs; **Jennifer Hoff**, General Counsel; **Jasmeial Jackson**, Vice Provost and Chief Student Success Equity and Diversity Officer, **Jennifer Nelson**, New Jersey State Librarian; **Michael Mancini**, Chief of Staff/COO; and **Misty Isak**, Secretary to the Board.

Mr. Medina officially called the public meeting to order at 10:01 a.m., followed by a statement of public notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 to 10:4-21.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Mr. Medina presented the minutes of the September 8, 2023, board meeting for approval and adoption.

Rev. Justice made, and Dr. Toscani seconded, a motion to adopt the minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Hancock reviewed her report with the Board, attached. She mentioned several key points including the advocacy strategy around the FY25 state budget request, and an update on enrollments and prospects, noting that we are seeing positive movement in the right direction. The President also highlighted the first annual Impact Awards where the Foundation honored Ahmed Azmy, Frank Clyburn, and Jeannine LaRue, and Commencement, recognizing exceptional speakers, Senator Troy Singleton as our honorary degree recipient, and student speaker, Jon Runyan, BA '23.

There being no further discussion following the completion of the President's report, Mr. Medina invited Mr. Stringer to present the Administration, Audit and Finance Committee Report.

## **REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION, AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Stringer briefed the Board on the Administration, Audit and Finance Committee meeting held on November 16, 2023. He outlined the tuition rates for a new Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSNA) honors track program, \$58,500 and \$75,000, for in-state and out-of-state students, respectively.

Mr. Medina asked if there were any comments. There being no comment or question, he presented the following resolution for approval and adoption.

### **CONSIDERATION OF TUITION FOR NEW BSNA TRACK**

**WHEREAS:** The “Higher Education Restructuring Act of 1994,” Chapter 48 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes requires the governing boards of public institutions to conduct public hearings prior to the date of the adoption of a tuition or fee schedule; and

**WHEREAS:** The Administration, Audit and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees held a public hearing regarding tuition and fee rates for Fiscal Year 2024 at Thomas Edison State University on November 16, 2023, and considered testimony presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The Administration, Audit and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees has recommended that tuition be set at \$58,500 and \$75,000, for in-state and out-of-state students, respectively, for the first cohort of the new BSNA honors track; and

**WHEREAS:** The action herein taken is pursuant to the recommendation of the President; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees does hereby approve the proposed tuition as recommended.

Dr. Toscani made, and Lydia Stockman seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

### **FIRST QUARTER FINANCIAL RESULTS**

Mr. Medina invited Mr. Stringer to present the first quarter financial results. Mr. Stringer provided a summary of the attached report.

Total revenue was up \$329,508 or 3%, due primarily to increased state appropriations of \$750,000, which was partially offset by lower student tuition and fees. Chapter 33 (veterans), accelerated nursing, master’s and doctorate were up above prior year levels. The per credit tuition plan, corporate choice, and military were below prior year levels.

Expenses were \$99,093 or 1% below the prior year. Salary was \$46,732 or 1% below the prior year. Salary expenses will be higher during the remainder of the fiscal year. Management received a 1% or 2%, depending on salary level, as of October 1, 2023. The collective bargaining units agreed to a 3.5% increase that will be retroactive to July 1, 2023. In addition, the collective

bargaining units will continue to receive increment increases.

The University ended the first quarter with a deficit of \$3.1 million compared to a deficit of \$3.5 million in the first quarter of the prior year. The University forecast for the fiscal year based on the first quarter was to finish the year relatively flat. However, after a strong October, the forecast has improved to a projected surplus.

### **CONSIDERATION OF BID WAIVERS**

Mr. Stringer provided a summary of the proposed bid waivers indicating they were all routine. He offered additional clarification that a project that receives a bid waiver is not an allowance to waive price competition.

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution.

**WHEREAS:** The “State College Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 18A:64-52 et seq. requires that contracts be made and awarded by the University, after public advertising, for bids for contracts in excess of the established bid threshold; and

**WHEREAS:** The State College Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56, permits, in certain specified instances, that contracts may be made, negotiated, or awarded by the University by resolution of its Board of Trustees without public advertising for bids; and

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees approved the “Thomas Edison State University Purchasing and Contracting Policy,” which governs purchases and contracts for the University and Library, on December 17, 2021; and

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees finds that the following purchases and contracts have met the criteria for award without public bidding, under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56; now therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees hereby approves waivers of advertisement for the following purchases and contracts for the purposes designated:

### **BID WAIVER REQUESTS**

The State College Contracts Law requires that contracts be made and awarded by the University only after they are publicly advertised for bids. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56, a provision of that law, allows the Board of Trustees to waive advertising for bids in certain instances. The Board authorized the Thomas Edison State University Purchasing and Contracting Policy, by resolution dated December 17, 2021. The Policy requires that items exceeding \$10,000 be obtained through some price competition. The following proposed contracts will be processed in accordance with that Policy.

1. Cloud Migration - \$145,000

The University requests approval for a bid waiver to cover expenses for software providing OCR (optical character recognition) for transcripts, recognizing courses that are taken elsewhere, providing an initial transcript evaluation, and importing the information into Ellucian Colleague automatically. This software will provide potential students with the ability to immediately determine how many credits TESU will offer for courses already completed, encouraging them to apply to the University faster as a result of the knowledge they possess regarding their academic journey. The University intends to purchase Freedom software (formerly Raptor) from Shamrock Solutions LLC. The cost will not exceed \$145,000 for the term of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2026. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a) (19) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution for information technology.

### 2. Enterprise Content Management System - \$875,000

The University received approval for a \$200,000 bid waiver on June 9, 2023 to cover annual support for the University's ECM (enterprise content management) system (Hyland). This system allows for scanning, storage and retrieval of documents, along with advanced workflow processing. The request also accommodates additional consulting and implementation engagements. The University is seeking approval to increase the bid waiver amount to \$875,000. The increased amount will cover costs for an additional 3-year term through June 30, 2027. The cost will not exceed \$875,000. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a) (1) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution, for professional service. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a) (15) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution, for professional consulting services. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a) (19) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution, for information technology. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a) (25) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution, for consulting services involving information technology.

### 3. Student Assistance - \$150,000

The University received approval for a \$100,000 bid waiver on June 9, 2023 to allow for online student assistance services. The services provide student assistance on emotional support, school-life balance, stress management, tools for daily living, time management etc. The "Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act", P.L.2016, c.18 (C.18A:3B-72 et seq.), requires that each institution of higher education have individuals with training and experience in mental health issues who focus on reducing student suicides and attempted suicides available on campus or remotely for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The University is seeking approval to increase the bid waiver amount to \$150,000. The increased amount will cover costs for the term through August 31, 2026. The cost will not exceed \$150,000. N.J.S.A. 18A: 64-56 (a) (1) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution for professional services.

### 4. Information Literacy Initiative - \$750,000

The NJSL seeks approval for a bid waiver in the amount of \$750,000 to support a three-year implementation grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to address New Jersey's new legislation to implement Information Literacy Standards for K-12 students. The grant will develop replicable models and tools that support the teaching and learning of information literacy & build the library workforce to serve the information and education needs of the public, including school, public and academic librarians as well as K-12 students. The State Library will enter into contracts that include but are not limited to the development of the statewide curriculum, the convening of an advisory panel,

trainers to develop and deliver information literacy training, a national forum at the end of the three-year period, and an overall evaluation of the project. The cost of this initiative will not exceed \$750,000. N.J.S.A. 18A:64-56(a)(1) permits the University to make, negotiate, or award a contract by Board resolution for professional services, and N.J.S.A. 18A:73-43.4(d) extends this exception to the State Library

Ms. Stockman made, and Dr. Toscani seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

### **FY 2025 BUDGET REQUEST**

Mr. Stringer addressed the FY2025 Budget Request as outlined in the materials. Mr. Stringer noted that the University requested an increase of \$5.5 million above the preliminary appropriation. The preliminary appropriation was increased by \$3 million in fiscal year 2024. Therefore, the request is \$2.5 million above the fiscal year 2024 appropriation. The request included \$2.504 million for the restoration of outcomes-based allocation funded that was transferred to HESAA to administer the Garden State Guarantee scholarship program, \$2 million for targeted recruitment and \$996,000 for collective bargaining increases.

### **FY 2023 AUDIT PLAN**

Mr. Stringer provided a brief overview of the Audit Plan. The University expects to have a completed audit by March 2024 after the State of New Jersey releases required information related to Other Post Employment Benefit information. It was noted that in addition to the financial statement audit, the auditors have selected the following major programs for single audit testing: student financial aid, per capita library aid, and state appropriations.

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution for consideration.

**WHEREAS:** It is the policy of the Board of Trustees to subject the University's finances and relevant administrative practices, and the finances and relevant administrative practices of its affiliate, the New Jersey State Library, to an independent audit; and

**WHEREAS:** It is the practice of the Board of Trustees to have said audit reviewed by the Administration, Audit, and Finance Committee of the Board, acting as an audit committee and reporting its findings and conclusions to the Board; and

**WHEREAS:** The President has certified to the Board of Trustees that said audit contains no significant adverse findings; now, therefore be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby receive and accept the final audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, as presented and incorporated herein by reference, and to have said audit reviewed by the Administration, Audit, and Finance Committee of the Board, acting as an audit committee, reporting its findings and conclusions to the Board.

Rev. Justice made, and Ms. Stockman seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

## **REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Mr. Medina asked Ms. Stockman to provide a brief report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on November 16, 2023, before inviting Dr. Baum to provide further details on the proposed policy changes. A formal report is attached.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY CHANGE**

Dr. Baum discussed the proposed policy change and rationale. The University worked on a three-digit course numbering system for many years, but the numbers were exhausted so there was a need to move to a four-digit course code, and as such a policy change is needed.

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution.

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for oversight of academic governance; and;

**WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council of Thomas Edison State University (TESU) has the authority and the responsibility to recommend through the Provost and President to the Board of Trustees the University educational curriculum and academic policies; and

**WHEREAS:** TESU has the responsibility to ensure its policies are clear and consistent to the extent appropriate across the student populations; and

**WHEREAS:** TESU Course Level Policy assigns course subject areas with codes using numerical values ranging from 0001 through 9999, but the course levels need to be delineated more clearly; and

**WHEREAS:** TESU has expanded its doctoral programs and is building a portfolio of courses at this level. The Course Level policy does not have a category that clearly supports the postgraduate/doctoral level courses; and

**WHEREAS:** The Provost's Cabinet reviewed the revision of the Course Level policy to accept the clarification of the course levels and recommends presentation to the University Academic Council; and

**WHEREAS:** The Provost and Senior Vice President of the University reviewed and approved the recommendation from the Provost's Cabinet to present the updated Course Level policy to the University Academic Council; and

**WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council of Thomas Edison State University supports presenting the Course Level Policy to the Board of Trustees; now, therefore, be it;

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby adopt and affirm the Course Level Policy as presented and incorporated herein by reference.

Dr. Toscani moved, and Rev. Justice seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously.

### **CURRICULUM UPDATES**

Ms. Stockman provided a brief overview of the presentation provided to the Academic Affairs Committee, noting the Criminal Justice and Human Services Academic Program Reviews, which are further detailed in the attached materials.

### **CONSIDERATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREE**

Mr. Medina invited the President to present the candidates for review. Dr. Hancock thanked the chair and acknowledged a student on the call who had joined to hear their degree being conferred before inviting the Provost to present the candidates for degree. Dr. Baum shared that there is one student that was approved outside the traditional graduation cycle in response to request for professional advancement.

The President awarded this degree on a date other than a scheduled graduation date due to exceptional circumstances, as authorized by Board of Trustees' Resolution on June 7, 2019.

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution:

**The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the awarding of the appropriate degrees to those September 8, 2023, candidates cited on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference.**

**The action herein taken is pursuant to a certification by the President that the aforementioned candidates have satisfied all relevant degree requirements as recommended by the Academic Council and as established by the Board of Trustees.**

Ms. Stockman made, and Dr. Toscani seconded, the motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously by all those qualified to vote.

### **CONSIDERATION OF PERSONNEL ACTIONS**

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution to approve the personnel actions:

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University is authorized to approve and act on employee-appointment recommendations for employees of the University, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 64-6(h) and (i), as well as for the State Library, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 73-34; and

**WHEREAS:** The President has made the employee-appointment recommendation as indicated on the lists attached and incorporated herein by reference; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby accept the President's recommendations and approves the appointment of employees as indicated on the lists attached and incorporated herein by reference.

Rev. Justice made, and Ms. Stockman seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution authorizing the personnel actions. Motion carried unanimously by all those qualified to vote.

### **CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACT RENEWALS**

Mr. Medina presented the following resolution to approve the contract renewals:

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University is authorized to approve and act on contract renewal recommendations for employees of the University, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 64-6(h) and (i), as well as for State Library employees, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 73-34; and

**WHEREAS:** The President has made the contract recommendations as indicated on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference; and

**WHEREAS:** The action taken herein is pursuant to an evaluation of each employee's work performance; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the contract recommendations as indicated on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference.

Dr. Toscani made, and Ms. Stockman seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution authorizing the contract renewals. Motion carried unanimously by all those qualified to vote.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Submitted by,



3/11/2024

Merodie A. Hancock, PhD      Date  
Secretary of the Board

Approved by,



3/12/2024

Gualberto Medina      Date  
Chair