The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on February 12, 2015 at the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), Mary Roebling Building, second floor, Trenton, N.J.

Welcome and Call to Order/Open Public Meetings Statement – Dr. Nannette Wright welcomed all of the Board members and campus program staff in attendance. She called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., noting for the record that the date, time and location were provided to the Office of the Secretary of State and the major newspapers.

Board members were reminded that if there is a need to recuse themselves on any agenda item to do so before discussion of the item began.

Board members present - The following Board members were in attendance: Dr. Nannette Wright, Ivette Santiago-Green, Saara Marte, Nacovin Norman, Lisa Pantel, and Eric Taylor (participating as the designee for the Secretary of Higher Education). The Board members participating by conference call were Anthony Falcone and Mr. Bader Qarmout. Board members absent: Ms. Susan Grierson. Also, participating by conference call were Mr. Larry Sharp, Higher Education Student Assistance Authority’s (HESAA) Director of Grants & Scholarships.

ACTION ITEMS

Minutes of October 16, 2014 EOF Board Meeting - Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2014 meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Santiago-Green and approved.

Resolution 10:15 Approval of FY 2015 EOF Academic Year Article III Graduate Grant Allocation for Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and Acknowledgement of Revised Graduate Grant Allocations –Dr. Wright reminded Board members that their responsibilities include the approval of budget allocations to the participating institutions based on the EOF fiscal year appropriations. Richard Stockton College was seeking EOF Article III graduate grant
funding for the 2014-2015 academic year. In addition, the EOF Central Office staff made revisions to the original graduate grant allocations that were approved by the Board at the May 2014 meeting. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide the Board with additional details on Resolution 10:15.

Ms. Bennerson informed the Board that Resolution 10:15 will provide Richard Stockton State College with a graduate grant allocation of $4,600 to provide funding for two graduate students. The institution was erroneously given a graduate grant allocation in May and this error was corrected by the Board in June. Stockton was informed of the error and assured that if they identified graduate students for the 2014-15 academic year that the Fund would find the resources to provide the students with grants. This resolution seeks the Board’s approval to move that forward.

The resolution also looks for the Board’s acknowledgement of adjustments made to programs’ original Article III graduate grant allocations that were approved at the May 2014 Board meeting. The FY 2015 graduate allocations were based at that time on enrollment and expenditure patterns during FY 2014. Often enrollment numbers shift and the staff reviews requests from institutions to fund additional students that exceed their original allocations. The EOF student grant application process has very strict deadline dates that do not always conform to the EOF Board’s meeting schedule. As a result, several years ago the Board delegated authority to the Statewide EOF Director to approve adjustments to institutional Article III allocations and then report any changes to the Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Seventeen institutions submitted graduate grant funding requests that exceeded their original allocations. A total of 40 additional graduate student grants were requested at a cost of $98,697. Board members were referred to review Attachment A of Resolution 10:15 which provides the names of institutions that enrolled additional graduate students in the current academic year.

Dr. Wright asked if there were any remaining FY 2015 Article III funds. Ms. Bennerson replied that the program does have an Article III balance. She also reminded the Board that student enrollment in the program fluctuates throughout the academic year. While enrollment fluctuations are minimal with the graduate grants, undergraduate EOF student enrollment normally decreases during the spring semester.

Ms. Pantel offered a motion for approval of Resolution 10:15 which was seconded by Mr. Norman and unanimously approved.

Resolution 11:15 Adoption of Amendments to EOF Board By-laws – Dr. Wright informed the Board members that New Jersey State Statute 18A:71-34 requires the members to adopt by-laws for its own operation. She recalled that the Board discussed amending the by-laws at its retreat in June and at the last meeting held in October 2014. Ms. Bennerson was asked to highlight the changes in the by-laws for Board members.

Amendments were proposed for the following sections:

**Article II- Meetings of the Board**

Section 2.1 Meetings: antiquated language and references have been updated, and
Section 2.3 Resignation of Board Members: language was added to clarify that resignation letters must be submitted to the Secretary of the Board as well as the Governor. New language also addresses the process for filling Board vacancies.

Article III- Officers of the Board

Section 3.1 Officers: language was revised to improve the sentence structure and remove terms and references that are no longer applicable.

Section 3.2 Committee Membership: language was deleted and added to improve the sentence structure and references that are no longer applicable, and

Section 3.3 Committees of the Board: proposed deletion of budget and program committees to be replaced with an executive committee. Language was also added and deleted to correct references which are no longer applicable.

Mr. Qarmout offered a motion to approve Resolution 11:15 Adoption of Amendments to the EOF Board By-laws. The motion was seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved.

Discussion of EOF Board Attendance Policy – Dr. Wright re-opened discussion about adding an attendance policy to the Board by-laws. The subject had been brought up at the October 2014 meeting, with the understanding that language would first need to be drafted and then shared with the Governor’s Appointments Office, since the Governor has the absolute authority to appoint or dismiss Board members. Ms. Pantel offered to prepare a draft attendance policy for the Board’s consideration and was asked to comment further about the draft before Board members considered voting on the policy.

Ms. Pantel confirmed that all of the Board members polled believe that the program needs a working Board, particularly when facing funding shortfalls. Currently there are no provision in the by-laws regarding attendance. An individual can be appointed and never show-up or only call-in to participate in a meeting and yet still continue to remain on the Board. The Board has experienced quorum issues in the past and it has been questionable whether the Board would be able to move forward because of attendance issues. The draft attendance policy before the membership now includes provisions for consecutive un-noticed and noticed absences, and how many overall meetings can be missed before it is considered an attendance problem.

Board members discussed the draft policy and suggested that the language regarding missing one-third of the total number of meetings be removed from the policy.

Dr. Wright thanked Ms. Pantel for her work and offered a motion for the Board members to vote on the amended policy. The motion was moved by Ms. Pantel seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Bennerson clarified that the attendance policy would become EOF Board Resolution 12:15 and clarified that it will include the provision regarding consecutive un-notified and consecutive notified absences. She also explained that the Secretary of Higher Education will be asked to vet the policy with the Governor’s Appointments Office.

The EOF Board’s attendance policy (Resolution 12:15) was unanimously approved.
Information Items

Report on Use of FY 2015 EOF Appropriation Increase - Dr. Wright expressed the Board’s pleasure to learn of the unanticipated increase in the 2015 fiscal year EOF appropriation back in September. Ms. Bennerson, was asked to share how the appropriation increase was used by the campus programs.

The FY 2015 Appropriations Act provided the EOF program with a $1.565 million increase in the annual appropriation. The increase included $891,000 for Article III which funds the summer program and academic year student grants, and $674,000 in Article IV which funds academic year program support services; thus restoring the program to its FY 2010 funding levels of $26,910,000 in Article III and $13,477,000 in Article IV.

The additional EOF Article III funds arrived too late to revise the Summer 2014 (FY 2015) allocations to campus programs, since the summer session for renewal students begins in May and the pre-freshman summer programs begin in June. Campus program administrators were informed that the Article III increase could be used in the 2014-2015 academic year to provide semester undergraduate grants for EOF returning, transfer and readmitted students that their current academic year Article III allocation was insufficient to support. Programs were also permitted to enroll more initial (freshmen) students. Central Office analysis demonstrated that this occurred primarily at the county colleges.

Campus programs requested funding for these students by adding them to their 2014-2015 EOF supplemental rosters. Programs that exceeded their original FY 2015 EOF academic year Article III student grant allocation had funds added to their institution’s allocation after the November 15, 2014 fall EOF payment request deadline. An additional $854,803 was awarded to campus programs to support 543 additional students in the fall 2014 semester. Essentially, the majority of increased Article III funds were allocated to support fall 2014 EOF student enrollment growth. EOF’s enrollment patterns traditionally include student attrition in the spring semester. Any additional students identified this spring (2015) semester will receive grant funding from the awards cancelled for students who did not return in the spring.

The additional Article IV appropriation represents a 5.26% increase over FY 2014 funding. The staff proposed increasing each campus program’s Article IV allocation by that amount which the Board endorsed via Resolution 3:15 at the September 2014 meeting. Article IV funds are applied to the support costs of running each program which include 12 month salaries for campus program staff, tutoring, supplemental instruction, educational materials and supplies and other activities focused on student leadership development. Overall, programs used 42% of the increase for personnel and 58% for other than personnel expenses. The majority of the funds were used for personnel who provided program tutoring and counseling. In the other budget category, one-third of the additional monies were slated to support student leadership development activities and an additional 20% was earmarked to support internships and service learning related initiatives.

Board members inquired about the large percentage of the additional funding being dedicated to the “Other than Personnel” budget category. Ms. Bennerson explained that the “other” budget
category included student leadership development activities including workshops, seminars, speakers and student internships and service learning activities. Service learning includes students doing volunteer work in the communities such as Hurricane Sandy relief and reimbursement for travel expenses while working with elementary and high school students. Institutions are required to provide a dollar for dollar match of EOF Article IV dollars and over a number of years have exceeded that match - contributing as much as 62% of the resources as required. Student leadership activities and service learning are often the first areas of the EOF budget reduced by campus programs when resources become scarce. The use of the Article IV increase in these particular budget areas are in part a reflection of the colleges and universities shifting costs like these back to the EOF budget side since the resources were now available.

Dr. Wright asked for a more detailed explanation of student leadership development activities. Mr. Joed Lopez (EOF alumnus) indicated that students serve on the Alliance of Educational Opportunity Students of New Jersey (AESNJ) chapters on their campuses and have an opportunity to improve their “soft skills” by marrying academic and leadership abilities with communication skills, critical thinking, financial literacy, and learning how to conduct a meeting. Ms. Hodges (President of EOFPANJ) agreed to contact the directors and then put together a presentation for the next Board meeting regarding student leadership development funds. She hoped to include several students in that presentation.

Presentation from the Leadership of the EOF Statewide Student Alumni Association – Ms. Bennerson introduced Mr. Joed Lopez, EOF alumnus from Montclair State University and Mr. Randolph Portugal, EOF alumnus from The College of New Jersey to share information about the EOF Statewide Student Alumni Association (EOFSSAA). Membership in the EOFSSAA had reached a plateau and they wanted to make the EOF Board aware of their strategy to increase membership. They plan to ask the campus programs with alumni associations to provide them with alumni membership contacts, encourage those program that don’t have associations to start one, and allow them to help manage the EOF programs communication with their alumni.

Mr. Lopez and Mr. Portugal shared with the Board their strategic vision for the EOFSSAA which calls on leveraging the power of campus based EOF alumni associations and technology to join forces with a statewide alumni association intent on helping members achieve greater personal and professional success, improve networking opportunities and employ political advocacy strategies on behalf of EOF. Their plan is to reinvigorate the EOFSSAA by providing the campus programs with centralized storage and maintenance of alumni data, consistent development of alumni relations, more efficient communications, increased responses from alumni on calls to action (advocacy, local events/programs), an increased pool of talent/resources of near- by alumni, and gaining more fertile ground for financial giving (more active alumni means more opportunities for financial support).

Ms. Pantel responded that she believes their efforts to provide a centralized data base of information on EOF programs will be extremely helpful to the EOF Board that has been asked numerous questions regarding graduates from EOF programs they are currently unable to answer.
Ms. Santiago-Green added that she believes the idea is great, however, cautioned about information sharing and issues of privacy, as well as if they have by-laws or a formalized agreement to implement this strategy. Ms. Marte shared similar concerns, but supports the overall concept and suggested an “opt-in” for those alumni who may not want to share their information. The Board was assured that the association is considering two reputable services that are actually more stable and secure than some institutional database services - ZOHO and CRM.

Ms. Bennerson agreed to provide the association with a table at the EOF Graduates Achievement Awards Ceremony in April so that they can sign-up EOF graduates directly. They will also have time to make a presentation directly to EOF campus professionals at the Tri-State Consortium Conference.

Dr. Wright applauded their efforts and agrees with the other Board members that there is a desperate need for information about our alumni that can help provide great evidence to secure increased funding for the program and how the mission of EOF helps the state with the economic growth and sustainment. She offered the gentleman a few cautions. While using free and open source wear understand that there are underlying infrastructure costs related to data storage and size. The integration of the data process should be as streamlined as possible for the campus programs. She also advised them to develop metrics so they know exactly what information they want to retrieve from the system, and also be able to add items in the future.

EOF Chairperson’s Report – Dr. Wright announced that she will be participating in the Tri-State Conference and Ms. Bennerson would provide additional details in her report.

EOF Statewide Director’s Report -Ms. Bennerson shared that it was her hope that the EOF Progress Report would be presented to the Board members at this meeting. However, the report is undergoing review by the Secretary of Higher Education. She indicated that she did not have a timeline for the completion of that review, but hopes that the progress report can be presented to the EOF Board members at the next meeting.

Governor Christie will deliver his 2016 budget message on February 24, 2015. At that time all state agencies will learn what the Governor is recommending to the Legislature as their budget for fiscal year 2016. Ms. Bennerson provided Board members with a flow chart depicting the State of New Jersey’s budget process. Dr. Wright asked for this information so Board member could learn where EOF fits into the process and the opportunities that Board members, staff and other constituents will have to directly participate.

For the EOF program, the state budget process began in the summer when institutions where asked to complete the EOF budget survey. Staff used the information from the survey to develop budget projections. At the October 2014 meeting, the EOF Board approved a budget policy statement which was forwarded to the Secretary of Higher Education for inclusion in the agency’s budget figures sent to the NJ Office of Management and Budget (OMB). During November and December, OMB and the Governor review departmental and agency budget requests and each department/agency meets with the State Treasurer to review these materials. In February, the Governor announces his budget recommendations for the next fiscal year to a
joint session of the Legislature. In March and April the Legislature produces a calendar for public hearings and departmental-agency budget hearings. The public hearing schedule makes it possible for individuals like members of the EOF Board, EOFPA NJ, EOF students and alumni to provide testimony on the Governor’s proposed budget for the program. Each department-agency must also testify before the Assembly and Senate where they are asked to respond to a variety of questions by the legislators. The Assembly and the Senate will develop a joint appropriations bill in June that goes to the Governor for his signature. The Governor may line item veto appropriations placed in the budget by the legislature that he does not support. The appropriations bill (budget) must be signed by the Governor on or before June 30th. Board members will receive communication from Ms. Bennerson shortly after February 24, 2015 informing them of the Governor’s budget recommendation for the EOF program.

Ms. Bennerson also reported that as indicated in the OSHE’s response to the Legislative Audit Report, the EOF Central Office staff will conduct two budget workshops for EOF directors and business/accounting office personnel who work with EOF directors in developing program budgets and approve EOF expenditure reports submitted to EOF/OSHE. The workshop for institutions in the southern portion of the state will take place March 3, 2015 at Burlington County College and the workshop for the northern portion of the state will take place at New Jersey Institute of Technology on March 23, 2015. The workshops are the staff’s response to the legislative audit which called for better training of institutional EOF program staff.

The EOF Graduate Achievement Award Ceremony will be held Friday - April 10, 2015 at Georgian Court University. The ceremony will recognize EOF graduating seniors who have earned cumulative grade point averages of 3.20 or higher and one EOF seniors from each program who best exemplifies the spirit and intent of the program. Award nominations are currently being received and EOF Board members will receive an invitation to attend as the date gets closer.

The final item in Ms. Bennerson’s report was the announcement of the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs’ Conference. The Tri-State Consortium consists of opportunity programs in the states of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Biennially, the Consortium holds a Tri-State Conference that is hosted by one of the states. This year’s conference is being hosted by New York State and will be held April 12-15, 2015 at the Marriot Hotel in Tarrytown, NY. Dr. Wright has agreed to do a conference workshop presentation on “Increasing Diversity in STEM Majors” with our EOF engineering programs at New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers School of Engineering and Stevens Institute of Technology. Board members will receive information regarding the conference as soon as the full conference program book is available. Board members can decide to attend one day or the entire conference and Ms. Bennerson will provide members with the necessary ethics forms they are required to complete.

Old Business

**EOF Staffing & Succession** - Dr. Wright, Ms. Pantel and Ms. Santiago-Green reported that they had met with former Governor Thomas Kean and State Senator Thomas Kean, Jr. in November to discuss the EOF Program. Both gentlemen requested information about the current status of the Fund. They suggested that Board members send Senator Kean a proposal outlining priority
areas for EOF funding and the cost. Ms. Pantel stated that this proposal was sent to Senator Kean, and the questions regarding staffing and succession continue to be in process. She also expressed her pleasure with seeing EOF alumni in the audience at this meeting. One of the questions the Kean’s asked (which the Board members were unable to answer) was how many graduates remain in the State of New Jersey after degree completion to pursue careers. She added that the budget process presents several opportunities for the Board to address the programs’ funding needs. Ms. Santiago-Green mentioned that the EOF Statewide Student Alumni Association goal will be a tremendous advocacy tool and provides an excellent opportunity for the program to identify alumni and their contributions to the program.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding what type of program outcomes information is available, the staffing required to produce that information, and whether or not the questions were fair since the legislators are the people who allocate the resources for the program to run efficiently and effectively. Ms. Bennerson replied that the EOF program and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education do not currently have the ability to match student graduation data to labor and taxation data to answer the legislators’ questions regarding whether EOF graduates are employed in the state or how they are contributing to the State of NJ. The legislation that created EOF does not permit the use of Article III student grant or Article IV program support funds to be used for the state level administration of the program. Efforts are being made by the Secretary of Higher Education to fill position vacancies, but the process requires gaining approval from the Governor’s policy council which is slow as a result of retirements and reorganizations at that level. Ms. Hodges added that in her conversation with legislators, they have indicated that if the information on post-graduation employment of EOF students is not available that they need to hear anecdotally from alumni about the benefits of the program. Dr. Wright added that anytime money is being allocated for a program like EOF you have to presume that Board members will be expected to produce metrics to demonstrate how the funds were used.

Ms. Pantel said that ideally EOF alumni information should be available for the public hearings on the Governor’s FY 2016 budget recommendations. Dr. Wright inquired if it would be possible for Ms. Hodges to poll the membership of EOFPA NJ to get the names of four or five alumni who graduated within the last five years and continue to work and/or reside in New Jersey. Ms. Hodges indicated that she would poll the EOF directors for that information. Ms. Santiago-Green refined the request by stating that if the alumni continue to reside in New Jersey, then they are making an economic contribution by virtue of their residency. March 6, 2015 was established as the date the Board would like the alumni information from the campus programs. Ms. Hodges and Ms. Bennerson both indicated that it is important to get a commitment from EOF alumni who are not currently employed by a campus EOF program to testify at the hearings.

Board members inquired about the ability to gain access to campus programs’ list of EOF alumni from their institutional alumni offices. Several directors indicated that while they work with their institutions’ alumni offices to obtain the names of EOF alumni to return to campus for special EOF events i.e. to speak about their careers to current EOF students, alumni information is not generally accessible to them, since advocating directly for the EOF program rather than the institution at large would be inconsistent with the overall mission of the institution. Dr. Michelle Shostack, EOF Director at Rutgers University School of Arts & Sciences (SAS), shared that she
is in direct communication with several of her alumni and will reach out to them regarding testifying at a budget hearing. She also mentioned that she periodically produces a “Good News” e-letter that contains information supplied directly by Rutgers SAS alumni and that with the permission of the Board members she will add them to her mailing list.

**New Business** – Dr. Wright mentioned that several members are having a problem with the board meetings scheduled on Thursday and wondered whether Friday would be better. Many of the Board members indicated Friday would be a better day. Ms. Bennerson agreed to check room availability for Friday, May 1, 2015. Additionally, she indicated that she would attempt to schedule all future Board meetings on Friday.

**Remarks from President of EOFPANJ**- Ms. Hodges reported that the Association is working closely with Essex County Senator Ronald Rice to hold EOF Student Day at the state capitol in March and expects to have a firm date for the event next week. The Association normally sponsors EOF Student Day at the Capitol which provides EOF students from all of the campuses an opportunity to hear from and speak to their state legislators. Confirmed legislators at this time include Senators Ronald Rice and Loretta Weinberg, as well as Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver and Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly. The EOF Directors’ Training will take place June 8, 2015 at Bloomfield College. Some of the specific topics that will be addressed at the training are the Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). This is the examination that replaces the High School Proficiency Exam that students must take to graduate from high school. Directors have expressed concerns about how PARCC will impact their freshmen. In addition, representatives from Taskstream have been invited to address program evaluation and assessment, and a representative from Apple will speak about the use of technology. The Counselor Training Institute (CTI) is another upcoming event on June 9 – 11th at Georgian Court University. CTI is inviting seasoned counselors, in addition to people who have been in their positions for five years or less to participate and will be offering continuing education credit to participants. Ms. Hodges concluded her remarks by informing the Board that the Association will be holding their biennial elections March 16-30, 2015 where they will be selecting new leadership for the organization.

**Next Meeting**- Dr. Wright announced that the next meeting of the Board is currently scheduled for Thursday April 30, 2015; however Ms. Bennerson is working on changing the date to Friday, May 1, 2015 and will inform the Board next week via email of the exact date of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 12 noon.