Minutes of Educational Opportunity Fund
Board of Directors Meeting
May 1, 2015

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on May 1, 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 – Ms. Audrey Bennerson, EOF Statewide Director, welcomed the Board members and campus program staff in attendance. She called the meeting to order at 10:10 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: Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks, Franklin Moore, Bader Qarmout, and Lisa Pantel. The Board members participating by conference call were Anthony Falcone and Saara Marte. Board members absent: Ms. Ivette Santiago-Green, Ms. Susan Grierson, Mr. Nacovin Norman and Dr. Nannette Wright.

Remarks/Comments from EOFPANJ President - Ms. Maretta Hodges reminded the Board that Bloomfield College will be hosting the EOF Directors and Assistant Directors Training program on June 8, 2015. The tentative agenda includes speakers who will discuss the Common Core standards and PARCC assessments. The Board members were invited to attend. She also shared that EOFPA members have been working closely with elected officials to restore the proposed decrease in the recommended EOF FY 2016 appropriation. More specifically, Ms. Hodges is working directly with Senator Loretta Weinberg who is working diligently to restore the additional funding to the EOF budget for FY 2016. Ms. Hodges also shared that this was an election year for EOFPA and it was her decision not to run for re-election because she is working on her doctorate. Effective July 1, 2015 Mr. Alexis Delgado will begin his term as the new President of EOFPANJ.

Minutes of February 12, 2015– Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bader Qarmout and approved.
Resolution 13:15 Acknowledgement of Class of 2015 EOF Academic Achievement Award Recipients - Ms. Bennerson shared that the EOF Board of Directors has been recognizing the academic and personal achievements of EOF graduating seniors for more than 20 years. On April 10, 2015, the EOF Graduate Achievement Award Ceremony was held for the 2015 Class of EOF graduates. Award certificates were presented to 961 students in four award categories:

- **Distinguished Scholars**: presented to EOF graduating seniors who have consistently maintained a cumulative grade point average of 4.00 (8 recipients). Ms. Bennerson shared an interesting point that two of the baccalaureate recipients in this group had also received this award upon earning their associate degrees.

- **Outstanding Academic Achievement**: presented to EOF graduating seniors who have consistently maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.50-3.99 (467 recipients).

- **Academic Achievement**: presented to EOF graduating seniors who have consistently maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.49-3.20 (438 recipients), and

- **Outstanding Achievement**: presented to one graduating senior nominated by each participating campus EOF program who best exemplifies the spirit and intent of the Educational Opportunity Fund program. There is no grade point average requirement for this award and students can receive this award as well as an award in one of the other three categories (48 recipients).

To date, the Class of 2015 has the largest number of EOF Academic Achievement Award recipients - 961 students – in one year. A copy of the program book which contains a spotlight bio for one award recipient from each campus program was provided to the Board members to peruse at their leisure.

Mr. Qarmout offered a motion for the adoption of Resolution 13:15, which was seconded by Mr. Moore. The motion was unanimously approved.

Resolution 14:15 Appointment of a Taskforce to Review EOF Regulations for Readoption – Ms. Bennerson informed the Board that the New Jersey State Statutes require agencies to examine their rules every seven years to determine whether they are necessary, comprehensive and responsive to the purpose for which they were originally promulgated. The EOF regulations will expire in May 2016 and this resolution seeks the Board’s authority to appoint a task force to review the EOF regulations for readoption. The task force will be comprised of a representative
from the EOF Board (Ms. Santiago-Green has volunteered to serve on the task force), the EOF community, the financial aid community and other state entities who have an interest in the program.

She added that while the EOF income eligibility criteria is changed annually, there has only been one major change to the EOF regulations since they were last readopted in May 2009. This change was to achieve consistency in the nomenclature for New Jersey’s sectors of higher education, as a result of the implementation of the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Higher Education Restructuring Act. The changes placed Rowan University in the public research university sector of higher education and eliminated the University of Medicine and Dentistry, which no longer exist. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) recently readopted their regulations and the EOF program needs to insure that its regulations governing residency and citizenship are in alignment with HESAA’s regulations.

The recommendation calls for the Board to charge the EOF Statewide Director to assemble a taskforce that will include representation from the EOF Board, the EOF community, the Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association of New Jersey, the New Jersey Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and other opportunity program stakeholders to perform this review. A target date of February 2016 is suggested for the completion of the review which will provide ample time for consideration by the EOF Board, the Governor’s Policy Office review, and the public comment period to notice the proposed regulations.

A motion for approval of Resolution 14:15 was offered by Secretary Hendricks and seconded by Mr. Qarmout. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Resolution 15:15 Approval of Preliminary Fiscal Year 2016 Article III and Article IV Summer Program, Article III Academic Year Undergraduate and Graduate Grants, and Article IV Academic Year Program Support Funds** - Ms. Bennerson informed Board members that the Governor’s FY 2016 budget recommendation of $38,322,000 for the EOF program represents a decrease of $1.565 million from the program’s FY 2015 appropriation, thus returning the program to its FY 2014 appropriation level of $26.019 million for Article III student grants and $12.803 million for Article IV program support services.

The EOF budget is distributed in two broad categories: (1) Article III (Opportunity Grants) which is used to fund the summer pre-freshman program, summer attendance for renewal students, and academic year undergraduate and graduate grants; and (2) Article IV (Supplemental Education Grants) which the participating colleges and universities
receive to fund the 12-month campus programs’ support services component and summer program support services.

Ms. Bennerson emphasized two key factors which formed the foundation of the FY 2016 EOF allocation recommendations. (1) The EOF summer program spans two fiscal years. Therefore, the resources for the upcoming summer program (Article III and Article IV) can be derived from both years – (i.e., FY 2015 and FY 2016). (2) The total operating budget that will fund the proposed EOF allocations to the campus programs includes the FY 2016 Governor’s recommended budget plus FY 2015 reserves which are comprised of end of academic year Article III balances after the close of spring semester 2015 student grant payments and any prior year Article III and Article IV refunds that the Fund is permitted to maintain and re-allocate.

Board members were provided with an overview of the staff’s recommended allocation plan:

Summer 2015 Funding: Based on a total Article III operating budget of $27,486,069 (which includes the Governor’s FY16 appropriation of $26,019,000 and FY 2015 prior year refunds and balances of $1,467,069), $8,034,844 was set aside to fund the EOF summer 2015 programs. An additional $138,922 in Article IV FY 2015 prior year refunds was available to apply toward summer funding. Due to capturing refunds and carryforward money, this resorted to a 1.75% increase over the previous year. The grand total of all summer allocations was $9,640,835.

The staff proposed funding FY 2016 (AY15-16) undergraduate grant awards based on end of fall 2014 enrollment numbers. With level funding in the past, the Article III undergraduate academic year funding recommendation was based on the number of students programs enrolled as of March 15 which is the spring semester final payment request deadline. Traditionally, the total number of students enrolled in the program during the spring semester is always less than the fall semester. The increase received in FY15 in Art. III allowed the staff with the Board’s approval to increase enrollment. The staff proposed reserving enough FY16 Art. III funds to maintain those enrollment numbers. The undergraduate academic year Article III grant recommendation therefore for Academic Year 15-16 was $16,767,043 to fund 12,086 students.

The Article III graduate grant recommendation was based on each campus program receiving a full academic year student grant award for the number of students enrolled during the 2014-2015 academic year. The staff recommended a total Article III graduate
grant allocation for the 2015-2016 academic year at $854,250. This graduate grant recommendation also groups Rutgers and Rowan Universities’ graduate grant allocations into two categories - (1) the graduate schools of arts and sciences, and (2) the bio-medical and health sciences schools. Both of these universities have several graduate schools that previously received separate graduate grant allocations for each school. The EOF Central Office staff’s Article III graduate grant allocation practice was to provide each school that received an allocation in this current year with an allocation for the next academic year. If the school over or under enrolled students and the university wanted to transfer funds among their graduate schools to address this need, it was necessary to seek approval from the EOF Central Office staff. Grouping the FY 2016 graduate grant allocations into these two broad categories for Rowan and Rutgers will permit each institution to manage and distribute its total EOF graduate grant allocations to students in a timelier manner without these additional steps.

The Board was directed to also note that the Article III academic year grant allocation distribution also recommended placing a small sum of $362,863 in reserve to respond to academic year grant appeals from institutions that have students in “hold” status (i.e., have exceeded total allocation).

The reduction in the Article IV appropriation for FY 2016 Article IV results in returning all campus programs, (with the exception of Salem Community College) to their FY 2014 funding level. Board members were reminded that they were informed at the September 2014 meeting that Salem Community College was unable to meet the required academic year Article IV funding match for FY 2015. The Board’s approval of Resolution 2:15 acknowledged decreasing the college’s FY 2015 EOF Article IV allocation to $145,904 which made it possible for the institution to meet the match. The resolution also called for the Statewide Director to provide Board members with an update on the future of Salem’s EOF program. Ms. Bennerson reported that the institution continues to experience problems with enrollment and staffing. A conference call was held with Salem’s chief financial officer in February to inform him that because the institution is still experiencing fiscal issues related to staffing and student enrollment, the EOF Central Office staff would recommend to the board an additional reduction in Article IV funding for FY 2016. The staff’s FY 2016 Article IV recommendation for Salem Community College was $96,606 which is a 60% decrease from their revised FY 2015 allocation. Ms. Bennerson further stated that she believes this allocation is more realistic and in-line with the institution’s ability to make the required dollar-for-dollar match of Article IV funds. Salem’s chief financial officer stated that they are working diligently to identify
staff for the EOF program and believes that this will be accomplished before the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2015.

The staff also recommended that the $60,752 remaining balance of FY 2016 Article IV funds be reserved for EOF Central Initiatives to support statewide student and professional staff development needs. A detailed list of central initiatives will be presented to the Board for their approval in the fall.

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

Resolution 16:15 Adoption of EOF Board Meeting Dates for FY 2016 – The staff took the Board’s directive from the last meeting that Fridays would be a better day to hold EOF Board meetings and proposed that meetings be held during the FY 2016 on July 31, 2015, October 16, 2015, February 19, 2016 and April 24, 2016. All of the meetings will take place at the Mary Roebling Building, 20 West State Street in Trenton at 10 am.

Ms. Pantel offered a motion for approval of Resolution 16:15. Mr. Moore seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Information Items

Presentation of Educational Opportunity Fund Progress Report - Ms. Bennerson shared the long awaited EOF Progress Report that had been released just the previous evening to board members for their information. The report highlights the program’s successes, identifies challenges the program needs to address and includes recommendations from the Secretary of Higher Education (page 10). She also acknowledged that none of the board members actually had an opportunity to read the report and suggested that the Board hold a conference call meeting within the next ten days to have a full discussion of the report.

The Board members concurred with the suggestion to hold a conference call for that purpose in the next ten days. Ms. Bennerson agreed to poll Board members via email to determine the date and time for the conference call.

Secretary Hendricks commented that she wanted to be assured that Board members understood while most of the data in the report is from the 2012/2013 academic year, the
report also focuses on the success of the program and provides the public with a grasp of what is currently happening. The report goes out of its way to place the EOF program in a national context so that the reader can appreciate what is happening in the State of New Jersey. One of the things that is evident in the report is that the EOF program is one of, if not the most successful state programs in the nation based on national comparative data. The State is truly committed to providing a high profile for the EOF program and the report is one way to move that forward.

Ms. Bennerson added that the report will be available on the agency’s website so that EOF professional staff will have access to it as well.

**EOF Chairperson’s Report** – Dr. Wright expressed her regret that she was not able to attend this meeting of the EOF Board. She asked Ms. Bennerson to inform the Board members that she would like them each to visit an EOF summer program, particularly if they did not get an opportunity to do so last year. Ms. Bennerson indicated that she would be sending EOF Board members summer program schedules in the next few weeks so that they could determine which EOF summer programs they would like to visit.

**EOF Statewide Director’ Report** – Ms. Bennerson reminded Board members that one of the items discussed during this current academic year was the Legislative Audit Report of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. One of the recommendations in the report called for better training of EOF program administrators and campus business officers. In March of 2015, the EOF Central Office staff held two training sessions for EOF directors and their business managers focusing on the FY 2016 EOF budget process. At the first training session the staff received excellent feedback and suggestions to improve the budget forms. A number of changes were made to the budget forms that include a spend down calculator and another section to the budget which will require programs to provide a fuller explanation of the items listed in their budgets. Questions generated during the sessions helped to provide programs with an overview of the budget expenditure report and program contract requirements, deadline dates for the submission of the reports and an explanation of why the deadline dates for the reports cannot be extended. Overall, Ms. Bennerson indicated that the staff felt that budget training was very productive.

The Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs of NJ. NY and PA held their conference in April and EOF Board Chairperson Dr. Wright presented a workshop titled “Increasing Diversity in STEM Majors” accompanied by the EOF engineering program
directors from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers School of Engineering, and Stevens Institute of Technology. The workshop was well attended.

In addition, several campus EOF professional staff members presented workshops. Ms. Bennerson indicated that she attempted to attend all of those workshops but it was challenging as some of them were offered at the same time. Board members learned that New Jersey was well represented. The workshops presenters and the title of their workshops are listed as follows:

Dr. Hasani Carter, Seton Hall University. *Harnessing the Power of Analytics to Improve Student Success.*

Dr. Joy Smith - Hudson County Community College, Dr. Jenice Sabb - Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological, Alex Delgado - New Jersey City University, Michael Whiting - Rowan University, and Viviana Zambrano - Montclair State University. *The Role of Greek Letter Organizations in Fostering Social Integration and the Development of Student Leadership.*

Billie Bailey, Kean University. *Building on What Works in Retention Intervention for High Risk Students Utilizing A Cost Effective Model.*


Passaic County Community College EOF staff. *Enhancing Your Pre-Freshman Summer Program with a Creative Project.*

Beth Diggs & Maria Torres, Montclair State University. *Student Leadership Defined by a Financial Literacy Leadership Model*

Dr. Daniel Jean, Montclair State University. *Discovering Your Doctoral Swagger.. Getting PH(inishe)D and Beyond.*

The representatives of the EOF Statewide Student Alumni Association Mr. Lopez and Mr. Portugal were provided with a table at the EOF Graduate Achievement Award Ceremony on April 10, 2015 to sign up EOF seniors about to become EOF alumni in a few weeks for the EOFSSA organization. Over 300 seniors signed up to become part of the organization. They were also provided with an opportunity to speak directly to the
EOF campus professional staff members about starting an alumni association on their campuses at the Tri-State conference.

EOF Student Day at the Capitol was held March 26, 2015. Ms. Bennerson asked Ms. Hodges, EOFPA president to provide Board members with an overview of this event as well as the Association’s representation at the legislative public hearings for the FY 2016 budget which were held March 18, 2015 at Passaic County Community College and March 24, 2015 at the Statehouse.

Ms. Hodges shared that EOF Student Day at the Capitol provides EOF students from across the state with a chance to hear from their legislative representatives. The Executive Board of EOFPANJ reached out to all of New Jersey’s elected officials and received a positive response, with 22 New Jersey legislators primarily Assembly representatives coming out to speak with the students. Since that event the overwhelming message received from elected officials has been one of support for the EOF program and indications that they are working to make sure that the funds proposed for reduction are restored to the budget. Ms. Hodges also shared that she has been working closely with Senator Weinberg from Bergen County a staunch advocate of EOF, who is working among her democratic colleagues to not only restore funding, but also provide the program with an increase in funding. They are also working to schedule appointments with a few Republican legislators next week.

Additionally, Ms. Hodges shared that several groups (the EOF alumni association, current EOF students and staff, and New Jersey United Students) worked to insure that there was EOF representation at the Legislative public budget hearings. Some campuses (Bloomfield, Fairleigh Dickinson, New Jersey City University) brought busloads of students to Trenton. And, since one of the hearings was at Passaic County Community College, a significant number of their students and alumni were also present. All of the groups emphasized in their remarks that EOF is not just a financial aid grant, but a program that provides academic and personal development support services and holds students accountable for full participation in all program activities and benefits provided.

Ms. Pantel asked Ms. Hodges to provide Ms. Bennerson with a list of the legislators the EOFPANJ has met with and to consider if it would be helpful to have a Board member participate in future discussions with legislators.

**Old Business**
EOF Board Attendance Policy - EOF Board members approved an attendance policy at their February 2015 meeting which Secretary Hendricks shared with the Governor’s appointment council.

Secretary Hendricks informed the Board members that it may not be necessary for them to add an attendance policy to their by-laws. In her discussions with the Governor’s appointment officer and Ms. Bennerson the purpose of the attendance policy was to permit the Board to safeguard their options should a member be an inactive participant. Incorporating an attendance policy into the by-laws would lock the Board members into taking the action outlined in the policy. Secretary Hendricks offered an example of why Board members might want to reconsider an official policy as opposed to an opportunity to address individual Board members about their status in terms of the Board’s functionality and their contributions to the work of the Board. It is possible that the Board may have a member who is unable to be physically present for meetings but he/she does other things to support the work of the Board such as fundraising and advocating with legislators – thus making a valuable contribution to the efforts of the Board. On the other hand, you may have a member who consistently attends every meeting but is disruptive. She further suggested that the Board have an opportunity to address the individual Board member’s contributions and if dissatisfied, then enjoin the role of the Statewide Director and the Secretary of Higher Education to inform the Governor’s office to take action. It is ultimately the Governor’s Office that makes the decision to have a member removed from the Board. The Governor’s appointment council believes that it is important that the Board have maximum flexibility after years of struggling to make sure that the program has a strong and effective Board.

Mr. Quarmout indicated that he felt it made perfect sense to leave the Board’s options on the table and not limit the Board’s ability to act.

Secretary Hendricks indicated that she and Ms. Bennerson would follow-up with the Governor’s appointment council regarding filling the position of the Board member who has been disengaged.

New Business

Ms. Pantel asked if program directors could also provide information about the career paths of their current EOF graduates when they send the office the information regarding their 2015 summer program schedules. She noted that the EOF Program Progress report that was released today does not contain current data about student outcomes and
believes it would be helpful for the Board members to be aware of the types of careers our current graduates are pursuing.

Secretary Hendricks shared that our office has been working on student success initiatives. After hearing about all of the EOF professional staff members who presented workshops at the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs’ conference, she asked that we tell those individuals to keep their presentations on file. The OSHE would like to do a major roll out of student success initiatives in the State of New Jersey and EOF will be the centerpiece in that effort. The plan is to work with many of the EOF professional staff members on this effort. The Secretary indicated that they have identified a major partner in the State of New Jersey who will help fund some of the work we want to do and also put us in a position to draw national and international attention. She also reminded the EOF Board members and professional staff in attendance of her promise to move EOF from the margins to the center. Secretary Hendricks stated “I have been working very closely with several key people to make sure that happens. Funding is not the signal of the value of this program and I want to be very clear on that. I appreciate everything that you are doing to make sure that the funding is sustained. We have to represent what we know is committed and you are clear in your understanding that this is a program deeply valued throughout the State of New Jersey. What I want to make sure I communicate to you is I am convinced that this is not only a national model but an international model. So I am as much affirming, as I am giving you a warning, that I am coming for you to play a critical role as we do a major statewide roll out of student success in the State of New Jersey”.

Date of Next Meeting - Ms. Bennerson stated that she would be contacting Board members via email later today to determine best time to hold an EOF conference call board meeting to discuss the EOF Program Progress Report.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 11:57 a.m.