Minutes of Educational Opportunity Fund
Board of Directors Meeting
July 31, 2015

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on July 31, 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 – Chairperson Wright welcomed all of the Board members and campus program staff in attendance. She called the meeting to order at 10:05 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: Betsy Garlatti, Ivette Santiago-Green, Franklin Moore, Nacovin Norman, Lisa Pantel and Dr. Nannette Wright. The Board members participating by conference call were Anthony Falcone and Bader Qarmout. Board members absent: Saara Marte.

Minutes of May 1, 2015 Meeting: Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the May 1, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Qarmout. The minutes were approved by Mr. Falcone, Mr. Qarmout and Ms. Pantel. The following Board members who did not attend the May 1, 2015 meeting abstained from the vote: Ms. Garlatti, Ms. Santiago-Greene, Mr. Nacovin Norman and Dr. Wright.

Minutes of May 8, 2015 Conference Call Meeting: Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2015 conference call meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Garlatti. The minutes were approved by Mr. Falcone, Ms. Garlatti, Mr. Moore, Ms. Pantel and Dr. Wright. The following Board members who did not participate in the May 8, 2015 meeting abstained from the vote: Ms. Santiago-Greene, Mr. Nacovin Norman and Mr. Qarmout.
Resolution 1:16 Acknowledgement and Endorsement of Fiscal Year 2016 EOF Resources and Revised Fiscal Year 2016 EOF Academic Year Article IV Allocations - Dr. Wright expressed her pleasure to learn that the fiscal year 2016 EOF final appropriation not only restored the $1.5 million from the previous fiscal year that had been cut in the FY 2016 original recommendation, but also increased funding by an additional $1 million. She reminded Board members that at the May 1st meeting the Board gave the Statewide EOF Director the authority to make adjustments to the preliminary allocations in the event that additional funds became available for Fiscal Year 2016 and to report those adjustments to the Board at the next meeting. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide the Board with an outline of the funding increase and further details on Resolution 1:16.

Ms. Bennerson explained that as a result of the annual budget deliberation process conducted by the legislature; Governor Christie endorsed their recommendation to restore the funds cut in the EOF FY16 preliminary recommendation, and to also increase the total fiscal year 2016 EOF appropriation by $1 million. The $1 million was distributed by adding $666,000 to the Article III appropriation for a final FY 2016 Article III appropriation of $27,576,000, and the remaining $334,000 to the Article IV appropriation for a final FY 2016 Article IV appropriation of $13,811,000.

The $334,000 increase in the Article IV appropriation was used to increase the Article IV allocation for each campus-based program (with the exception of Salem Community College) by 2.5% over their FY 2015 allocation, thus making it possible for the programs to reinstate and enhance many of the program support services they were able to offer students during fiscal year 2015. Board members were asked to pay particular attention to the FY 2016 Summary of Resources and Allocations in their materials. This document summarized how EOF resources from the appropriation, as well as prior year refunds and balances were being allocated to Article III and Article IV. The staff also recommended that $10,066 from the Article IV increase be added to the Central Initiatives budget category, which will bring the total funding allocated to central initiatives to $70,818. Additionally, the EOF Central office staff recommended that a portion of the increase in Article III funding be held in reserve to address academic year enrollment fluctuations and to provide front-funding for the FY 2017 - summer 2016 programs with the goals of providing funding for renewal students to attend classes in the summer.

Mr. Norman offered a motion to acknowledge and endorse the report of FY 2016 resources and the revised FY 2016 academic year Article IV allocations which was seconded by Ms. Pantel. The motion was unanimously approved.

Resolution 2:16 Approval of Administrative Changes to the EOF Regulations at N.J.A.C. New Jersey Register - Dr. Wright reminded Board members that student eligibility for the EOF program is based on students meeting both the academic criteria established by the institution and the income eligibility criteria which is annually updated and established by the EOF Board of Directors. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide Board members with additional details.

Ms. Bennerson informed Board members that the EOF income eligibility criteria is based on 200% of the annual Federal poverty guidelines, which are published annually in the Federal Register. To determine the income eligibility cut-offs for the 2016-2017 academic year, the
OSHE/EOF staff used the Federal poverty guidelines by household size published in the January 22, 2015 edition of the Federal Register and adjusted the figure by 200% (i.e. doubled). The increase in the Federal poverty guidelines are determined by annual inflation based adjustments. The EOF income eligibility criteria outlined in Resolution 2:16 is consistent with the Board’s directive that the regulations adequately reflect the current demographics, income and cost of living structure of the state as well as maintain the pool of potentially eligible students in line with the original spirit and intent of the legislation.

Ms. Pantel offered a motion to approve Resolution 2:16 which was seconded by Ms. Garlatti and unanimously approved.

**Resolution 3:6 Adoption of EOF Grant Deadline Dates for Academic Year 2016-2017** - Dr. Wright introduced the annual adoption of EOF grant application deadline dates as one of the EOF Board’s responsibilities. The EOF program’s deadline dates conform closely with the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority deadlines because EOF’s undergraduate academic year student grants are processed through HESAA’s student grant payment system. Ms. Bennerson provided the Board with additional details regarding Resolution 3:16.

Ms. Bennerson explained that the New Jersey Administrative Code which governs the operation of the EOF program requires the EOF Board to annually establish deadline dates for submitting the necessary financial aid forms used to determine eligibility for EOF Article III student grant funds. Academic year Article III student grant payments are disbursed to institutions through the NJ Student Grant Payment System which is administered by HESAA. As in past years, the Board seeks to establish deadline dates that conform closely to those of HESAA where applicable. The practice of establishing conformity in EOF and HESAA deadline dates enables the staff of both offices to assist institutions in the planning required for the administration of grant and scholarship programs, ensure program expenditures are maintained within available appropriations and provide timely disbursement of payments to institutions.

The EOF Article III student final application deadline date for academic year 2016-2017 will be October 1, 2016 for all eligible students to receive an EOF grant award for the fall 2016 semester. Following procedures established several years ago, EOF will continue to use a different final application date for EOF renewal (continuing) students than the June 1, 2016 date used by HESAA for renewal students to receive a tuition aid grant (TAG) for the fall semester. Unlike the TAG program, EOF student grant awards are limited by the total dollar allocation approved for each campus program. Adequate controls exist within the HESAA grant payment system to limit the number of overall EOF student grants awards up to each individual program’s allocation total. The other deadline date that differs significantly from HESAA falls under the category headed “Payment requests from institutions”. The HESAA calendar lists three payment request dates for the spring term while the EOF calendar lists only the first two HESAA payment request dates. The elimination of the last HESAA date in June has made it possible for the EOF Central Office to sweep academic year Article III institutional accounts that have balances. Captured balances are used to support the EOF summer program activities that start before the close of the fiscal year.
Mr. Qarmout offered a motion to approve Resolution 3:16. The motion was seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved.

**Resolution 4:16 Revised Calendar of FY 2016 EOF Board Meeting Dates** – Dr. Wright indicated that the Board approved a calendar of meeting dates for FY 2016 at the May 1, 2015 meeting. However, the EOF Central Office staff discovered an error in the date for the April 2016 meeting.

Ms. Bennerson informed the Board that the original calendar dates for FY 2016 listed the date for the April 2016 meeting as Friday April 24, 2016. That date is actually a Sunday not a Friday. The correct date for the meeting should be Friday April 22, 2016. All of the other FY 2016 meeting dates approved by the Board at the May 1, 2015 meeting will remain the same (October 16, 2015, and February 19, 2016). The meetings are scheduled on Fridays in keeping with the Board’s preference. All of the meetings will take place at the Mary Roebling Building, 20 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey.

Ms. Pantel offered a motion for approval of Resolution 4:16, which was seconded by Ms. Garlatti and unanimously approved.

**Information Items**

**EOF Chairperson’s Report** - Dr. Wright shared that she attended the Rowan University EOF Student Leadership Conference and was very impressed with their program. The Rowan University EOF counseling staff also serves as instructors during the summer program so the freshmen are well acquainted with them when the fall semester begins. She encouraged other Board members to visit a summer program. Dr. Wright also informed the Board that she has encouraged the campus-based EOF programs to become involved in a national initiative known as “Million Women Mentors” (MWM) as a way to bring national exposure to New Jersey’s EOF program. The MWM supports the engagement of STEM mentors for young women interested in pursuing STEM careers. She sees this as an opportunity for EOF students to make a commitment to mentor matched students, as well as a means to develop mentorship opportunities for EOF students with professionals already in the field. The program also connects students to other students to share ideas and encourage persistence through graduation. She is a member of the New Jersey Chapter of MWM and the organization’s national steering committee. Lt. Governor Guadagno serves as the honorary chair of the NJ chapter. Dr. Wright added that over the past year as the chair of the EOF Board, she has seen and heard about EOF students and staff regularly engaged in mentoring activities, and would like to see all of EOF’s current STEM mentoring efforts documented in this national initiative because NJ EOF truly takes a lead in this effort and deserves that recognition.

**EOF Statewide Director’s Report** – Ms. Bennerson provided the Board members with a brief overview of the calendar of activities/events she has attended since the Board’s last meeting.
She called the Board’s attention to the power point slide show that was running throughout the course of the meeting which featured EOF alumni of the Seton Hall University Law School’s Summer Institute for Pre-legal Studies. The majority of the institute’s alumni are working in the State of New Jersey in the legal profession. Seton Hall University Law School’s Summer Institute for Pre-legal Studies is our preeminent special EOF summer program that provides EOF juniors with an intensive realistic experience of the demands of law school and the legal profession. On June 2, 2015, Ms. Bennerson attended the Seton Hall Law School Pre-legal Institute’s 35th anniversary program and brought greetings on behalf of the Board and Secretary of Higher Education. Approximately 650 students have participated in the program since its inception. Of the participants who decide to apply to law school, over 80% are accepted. Eighteen students participated in the 2015 summer program.

On June 8, 2015 Ms. Bennerson attended the EOF Directors’ and EOF Assistant Directors’ training session at Bloomfield College. The focus of the session was on the NJ Common Core State Standards (CCSS) presented by Dr. Bari Erlichson of the NJ Department of Education. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (or PARCC) is a consortium of states working to design and develop K – 12 assessments in mathematics and English/language arts literacy that are aligned with the CCSS. The PARCC assessments will be aligned to the expectations of the two and four-year colleges and validated by higher education. The PARCC presentation was made by Lyn Brabender. Dr. Ray Yanuzzi, president of Camden County College, presented on the NJ Council of County College’s Center for Student Success.

On June 9, 2015 she attended the EOF Counselor Training Institute which took place at Georgian Court University and provided the EOF counselors with a number of workshops and an opportunity to earn continuing education credits.

On June 17, 2015 the EOF Regulations Taskforce which is comprised of representation from the EOF Board of Directors (Ivette Santiago Green), EOF campus staff from each sector of higher education, the New Jersey Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and a HESAA staff member. The taskforce reviewed all of the suggested recommendations for changes to the regulations made by the EOF Central Office staff and suggested others. The sticking point in the regulations review was developing language for record-keeping, specifically defining what constitutes a”student’s record”. Ms. Bennerson will look over all the suggested language changes and the taskforce will meet again during the fall semester to also discuss other issues that have come forward and need to be addressed in the regulations ( i.e. proprietary schools that wish to participate in the EOF program but do not participate in the state’s tuition aid grant program).

On July 15, 2015 Ms. Bennerson addressed the College Affordability Study Commission which was created by the legislature to examine issues and develop recommendations to increase the affordability of higher education in New Jersey. Her remarks focused on: (1) changing how institutions use EOF Article III funding in the summer program. She offered the example of rather than paying tuition in the summer pre-college freshman programs for remedial developmental courses that do not carry college credit toward graduation she suggested that programs give summer freshmen a series of workshops and spend the tuition dollars on EOF upperclassmen to take courses during the summer session to reduce their time to degree
completion; (2) providing students with an orientation or student success course during the academic year that focuses on the soft skills needed to be successful in college; and (3) permitting EOF counselors to sign-off on students’ course selections each semester before they can complete registration.

On July 28, 2015 she addressed the Governor’s Higher Education Council. The five-member Council was established by the Governor as part of his restructuring of higher education in NJ. The Council works closely with the Secretary of Higher Education and provides advice and counsel to the governor. Basic information about the EOF program was shared with them in her presentation, as well as the EOF Program Progress Report.

Ms. Bennerson also reported that as of July 29, 2015 the FY 2015 EOF Article III and Article IV accounts were closed and the program utilized every penny of the appropriation to serve EOF students. She stated this was a testament to the hard work and dedication of the EOF Central Office accountant, Ms. Barb An Reed Sanders. Ms. Bennerson then informed the Board with mixed emotions about Ms. Sander’s impending retirement and that this EOF Board meeting would be her last. Ms. Bennerson further stated that the members of the EOF Central Office staff and all of the EOF campus program professionals will miss Barb An’s dedication and commitment to ensuring that EOF Article III student grant payments and Article IV program support funds were efficiently transmitted to their institutions. Barb An’s 37 years of dedicated service made it possible for the EOF Central Office to consistently recoup unexpended EOF funds and redistribute them for the benefit of the entire statewide program. During those years of level or reduced funding, that skill managed to keep EOF afloat. Ms. Bennerson added “We will all miss her quick wit, sage counsel, no nonsense attitude and incredible EOF institutional memory. The time has come for her to enjoy the next chapter of her life. I know that the EOF Board members join the EOF Central Office staff in wishing her good health and a fun-filled retirement that matches her 37 years of service with EOF.”

Ms. Sanders received a round of applause from the EOF board members and professional staff in attendance.

Future Plans of the Class of 2015 EOF Graduates – The report on the future plans of the Class of 2015 EOF graduates was prepared in response to frequent inquiries from legislators regarding where our EOF graduates are now and what career fields they have pursued. The EOF Central Office staff agreed to informally poll campus program directors about the post-graduation plans of their 2015 EOF graduates. Board members were cautioned, however, that it was perhaps too soon for the majority of recent graduates to have concrete employment plans and that it was possible that a poll would likely yield very limited information at this time.

The 53 academic year EOF programs were asked to provide their total number of 2015 EOF graduates and indicate the following information:

- If employed the name of their employer and if the employer is located in the State of NJ?
- If pursuing an additional degree what is the advanced degree title and the name of the school? Is the school in the State of NJ?
Responses were received from 25 of the programs. Many of the programs that did not provide information replied only that it was too early to do so. The results found that most of the students at the senior institutions are seeking employment or the program staffs indicated were in an unknown/undecided status. Among the senior institutions, 101 recent graduates indicated they planned to attend graduate school. For the community colleges, 135 students were identified as transferring to a four year institution. The majority of transfers were planning to attend a senior institution in the State of New Jersey. Ms. Bennerson indicated that the EOF campus programs are required to complete an annual report which requests very general information regarding the post-graduation activities of their students. The OSHE/EOF staff will add additional questions to next year’s annual report regarding whether students found employment in the State of New Jersey or are pursuing an advanced degree at an institution in the state.

Dr. Wright also suggested that the Board members review the questions on the survey to determine if additional information might be helpful in responding to legislative inquires. She also indicated that we need the metrics to compare the EOF outcomes data to the outcomes data for the non-EOF student population.

Ms. Pantel emphasized that the EOF alumni association must be engaged in this process.

Ms. Garlatti informed the Board that the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education has partnered with the Department of Labor and the Department of Education in a statewide longitudinal study through a federal grant that will make it possible to provide some of this information in the next two years.

Old Business – Ms. Santiago-Green reported that she visited The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and the Mercer County Community College (MCCC) EOF summer programs and will be attending Rider University’s EOP summer program closing ceremony on August 6, 2015. She noted the difference in summer programming between both TCNJ and MCCC. TCNJ has a promise grant award for EOF students who successfully complete the summer program. The award basically takes care of the students’ tuition, fees and book for their first two years if they remain in good academic standing. At MCCC she had an opportunity to have lunch with and speak to several students. She noted that the community college program emphasized life skills with the students.

New Business - Ms. Edith Corbin, EOF Director at Rowan College at Burlington County, invited the EOF Board members to attend the EOF freshman orientation which is scheduled for August 17 thru August 19, 2015 at the Mount Laurel campus. She also mentioned that the president of the college, Dr. Drayton, will be unveiling the new logo to reflect the change in the institution’s name from Burlington County College to Rowan College @ Burlington County.

Remarks/Comments from EOFPANJ President – Ms. Bennerson introduced Mr. Alexis Delgado, the new president of the Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board that in addition to being the new president of the EOFPANJ, he is also the Assistant Director of the New Jersey City University Opportunity Scholarship
Program (NJCU”s name for their EOF program). He also introduced Mr. Brett Pulliam the Vice President of EOFPANJ and Assistant Director of the Seton Hall University Pre-Medical/Pre-Dental PLUS EOF program. Mr. Delgado informed the Board that the association is committed to addressing the issue of where and what EOF alumni are and will continue to focus on “best practices” that will help to strengthen the skills of the professional staff and the services delivered to the students. He also asked Board members to save the November 13, 2015 date on their calendars to attend the EOF student and professional staff conference at William Paterson University.

Next Meeting – October 16, 2015 in Trenton.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.