Minutes of the Educational Opportunity Fund
Board of Directors Meeting
October 16, 2014

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on October 16, 2014 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 – The chair of the board, 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 Secretary of State and all the major newspapers in the state. She reminded the members that if they need to recuse themselves on any agenda item to do so before discussion of the item began.

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

Information Items

EOF Statewide Director’s Report- Ms. Bennerson reported that Ms. Barb An Sanders, EOF Accountant, was officially transferred back to the EOF Central Office staff on October 6, 2014. She thanked Ms. Gabrielle Charette - Executive Director of HESAA for her willingness to agree to the transfer of Ms. Sanders from HESAA to the EOF Central Office at OSHE.

Ms. Bennerson also shared that all of the colleges and universities received official notification of the increase to their FY 15 academic year Article IV grant allocation shortly after the September 19, 2014 EOF Board meeting and were asked to submit revised FY 15 Article IV contract budgets by October 17, 2015. The OSHE/EOF staff will share with the Board at their next meeting how the institutions used their funding at the next Board meeting.

OSHE/EOF Central Office staff are working on processing EOF academic year undergraduate student grant payments. The deadline for submission of undergraduate grant requests is
November 15, 2014. The staff anticipates a significant increase in the number of requests since programs had been informed that the increase to the Article III appropriation would support enrollment growth by approximately 25%. This will enable the Fund to serve additional students, primarily transfer and returning renewal students. The staff will provide an enrollment update at the next Board meeting.

Board members were directed to the Legislative Audit Report on Page 27 of their Board materials. Ms. Bennerson explained that the audit was conducted by the Office of the State Auditor, which is a branch of the Office of Legislative Services. The audit covers the period of July 1, 2011 through April 30, 2014. The audit’s focus was grant programs administered through OSHE. Those programs were EOF and two federal grant programs - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and the College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP). The auditor’s conclusions were that the financial transactions were reasonable and recorded properly in the accounting system. The auditor also noted a need for increased monitoring of information reported by the colleges, better guidelines regarding allowable costs and ensuring applicable program advisory boards are in compliance with the New Jersey Administrative Code. Ms. Bennerson indicated that this audit began the same time the office was transitioning from being the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. While CHE/OSHE was supposed to be an office size of 22, in reality it was operating with 12 staff members when the audit began. The auditor noted several irregularities related to EOF including a lack of attention to having Board vacancies filled. However, the auditor never specifically asked staff what steps were being taken to fill vacancies on the Board. Page 36 of the report discusses EOF Board Actions and questions the use of “central initiative funds allocated to a private college acting as a conduit of the board to disseminate funding for training, conferences and the EOF student award’s reception, as a circumvention of the Dept. of Treasury’s Circular Letters”. The OSHE’s Division of Finance Research and Accountability’s communication with the Department of Treasury and Office of Management and Budget indicated that these Article IV expenditures were permissible because EOF programs serve students at public as well as private independent institutions. The auditor cited the use of Article IV funds to provide services at independent colleges and universities as inappropriate. However, the EOF legislation created the Fund to serve students at both public and independent institutions and appropriates funds for this purpose. This is a concept the State Auditors’ Office had difficulty understanding.

Ms. Bennerson pointed out that this particular audit finding (central initiative funding) was relative to one of the action items on the Board’s agenda that day - approval of FY 2015 central initiatives. After checking with the OSHE ‘s Division of Finance Research and Accountability, the EOF Central Office staff was informed that it was not necessary to change the manner in
which EOF central initiatives are funded. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education’s full response to the audit is on page 38 and outlines the staffing of our office and the office’s priorities during the audit period. When the audit began the Secretary’s office had 12 employees. At the audit’s conclusion, OSHE had 16 employees on staff but was still short of the full staffing level of 22. The response also indicates that OSHE/EOF will work with all of its higher education partners (i.e., the state’s colleges and universities, the New Jersey Presidents’ Council and all of the sector based organizations) to encourage better use and tracking of annual EOF allocations to ensure compliance with established guidelines. OSHE/EOF will provide additional training to campus program staff and their business office liaisons. Several of the audits’ findings question processes and activities they believed should have been conducted by the OSHE. However those functions were never part of the responsibilities assigned to higher education in its current form or when it was organized as the Commission of Higher Education.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Minutes of September 19, 2014 EOF Board Meeting** – Ms. Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2016 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Norman and unanimously approved.

**Resolution 7:15 Adoption of EOF Grant Deadline Dates for Academic Year 2015-2016**- Dr. Wright explained that the EOF program works closely with the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). EOF students’ academic year fall and spring semester grants are requested online through the HESAA student grant system which also processes student’s NJ TAG grant. The HESAA system enables EOF to link to a history file that documents semesters of grant eligibility used for TAG and EOF. One of the Board’s responsibilities is to approve the EOF grant application deadline dates which must conform closely to HESAA’s deadline dates. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide the Board with more details regarding the resolution.

She explained that Resolution 7:15 requests the EOF Board’s approval of grant deadlines for the next academic year 2015-2016. The practice of establishing conformity in EOF and HESAA deadline dates enables the staff of both offices to: (1) assist institutions in the planning required for the administration of grant and scholarship programs; (2) ensure that program expenditures are maintained within available appropriations; and (3) provide timely disbursements of payments to institutions. These deadlines are established a year in advance in order to publish them in various brochures, forms, and other publications that outline application/payment procedures. There are slight differences in the HESAA and EOF program’s final application deadline dates. In order for students to receive an EOF Article III undergraduate grant for both the fall and spring term they must file their application (FAFSA) no later than October 1. The
final FAFSA application date for all continuing students (renewals) to receive a HESAA TAG grant is June 1 and HESAA’S final TAG application date for new students is October 1. The EOF program’s final application date for renewal students is October rather than June, because unlike the TAG program, EOF student grant awards are limited by the total dollar allocation approved for each campus program. Institutions cannot increase their EOF enrollment without receiving approval by the EOF central office staff. HESAA uses the June 1 deadline date for renewal students to control their overall expenditures, since TAG is an entitlement program and must provide funding for all students who meet the eligibility criteria. The other deadline date that EOF uses that differs significantly from HESAA are payment requests from institutions. During the fall term, EOF’s deadline dates are identical to HESAA’s. However, during the spring term HESAA has three payment request deadline dates but EOF does not use the HESAA final spring semester payment request deadline in June. Cutting off EOF spring semester requests in mid-April allows EOF to recapture any academic year Article III student grant funds that are not spent by that date and then re-allocate the monies to fund the upcoming EOF summer program. The EOF Article III appropriation is used to fund both EOF academic year and summer program enrollment. Since the summer program begins before the close of the fiscal year, this process was employed by the Board to ensure that EOF will not lose any Article III funds.

Board member inquired if the April 15th deadline for spring EOF grant payment requests was firm. If so, what happens if an institution misses the deadline? Ms. Bennerson explained that this process has been in effect and understood by the institutions for a long time. Therefore, institutional requests for student grant payments after April 15th are rare. Institutions may use their own financial resources to make up the difference in EOF eligible grant requests they identify after April 15th as there is no opportunity for state EOF grant funds to be applied after that date. The norm, however, has been that institutions are in fact cancelling spring student grant requests at that point in time which, in turn, provides us with additional resources to fund the summer program. The April 15th deadline therefore allows the EOF Central Office and Board to exercise greater control of Article III funds. If EOF used HESAA’s last payment request deadline in June which is close to the July 1 new fiscal year, the EOF staff would not have sufficient time to calculate all of the funds returned and redistribute them to summer program funding. Using the June payment request deadline would potentially to mean that the Fund would be returning significant amounts of EOF Article III grant funds to the State Treasury instead of reallocating them to help meet summer program expenses.

Dr. Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 7:15 which was offered by Ms. Santiago-Greene and seconded by Ms. Pantel. The motion was unanimously approved.
Resolution 8:15 Approval of FY2015 EOF Central Initiatives - Dr. Wright shared that this particular resolution seeks the Board’s approval to use fiscal year 2014 Article IV funds to support statewide campus activities that will take place during the current academic year. The pool of available funds are under expenditures that have been returned to the EOF Central Office by campus programs. She asked Ms. Bennerson to provide the Board with additional details on Resolution 8:15.

Ms. Bennerson explained that “Central Initiatives” is an Article IV budget category developed by the EOF Board of Directors during the 1990’s to support statewide student and professional development activities for campus programs. This budget category is funded from end-of-year refunds and balances. The EOF Central Office staff has identified a total of $246,588 in FY 2014 Article IV refunds. The amount represents one-time balances and refunds that have been returned to the EOF Central Office by several campus programs with the completion of their end of year expenditure report. These funds are not reallocated to institutions to increase or supplant normal Article IV programming costs because there are no guarantees that this amount of funding will be available in subsequent fiscal years. This is why the EOF Board developed the central initiatives budget category.

All of the central initiative activities are designed to provide professional development for EOF campus program staff and/or EOF students. The EOF Central office is requesting the Board’s approval to use $151,300 to fund the following central initiative activities during the 2015 fiscal year:

- **Fall 2014 - EOF Professional Association (EOFPA) and Association of EOF Students of New Jersey (AESNJ) Fall One-Day Conference** at Monmouth University. This is a one-day professional development conference for staff and students. The Association is still negotiating with Monmouth University regarding the date of the conference. The total estimated cost is $16,900. We propose covering the cost of registration for one EOF professional staff member and three (3) EOF students from each campus program, and the leadership of AESNJ. Our program also works closely with the OSHE’s GEAR-UP program which is designed to prepare low-income, first generation high school students for college and we are proposing to cover the cost of registration for one GEAR-UP professional staff member from each program.
Budget Workshop for Campus Business Managers & EOF Professional Staff. The need for this activity is two-fold. Part one is in response to the audit findings that recommended OSHE/EOF provide better training and instructions for EOF campus program administrators. Part two is in response to the EOF/OSHE staff’s recognition that there are a significant number of new EOF directors, as well as new campus business managers who would benefit from additional training. The EOF Central Office staff has also identified a need to make revisions to the EOF contract and expenditure report forms which will require training EOF directors and campus business officers. We anticipate approximately 100 individuals will receive this training and that the training event will take place during the spring semester. The location(s) will be determined at a future date and the total estimated cost is $2,500.

Spring 2015 – The Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Since 1991 New Jersey has joined together with state-supported opportunity programs in New York and Pennsylvania to plan and present what has become known as the Tri-State Conference. This conference is held biennially and rotates among the states. The 2015 conference will be hosted by the State of New York. The staff is seeking the Board’s approval to cover the full conference registration fee for two (2) EOF staff members from each program, the full conference registration fee for one GEARUP program staff member, EOF Board members interested in attending, and the EOF Central Office staff. We are projecting a total of 140 participants at a total cost $69,300. The conference will be held April 12 – 15, 2015 at the Westchester Marriott Hotel in Tarrytown, N.Y. This effort provides an excellent opportunity to professionally network and exchange ideas, successful research, and experiences related to the retention and graduation of historically disadvantaged students, low-income, first-generation college students.

Spring 2015 – The Tri-State Consortium Leadership Institute. The Tri-State Consortium holds a concurrent pre and post conference leadership institute for new or aspiring program directors. The Institute is comprised of specific assignments and group presentations linked to the conference theme. This event is usually well attended by EOF professional staff members. We have a large number of people who have worked with the program for less than five years and since the EOF central office staff has not been able to offer extensive training for staff due to our staffing limitations, we recommend...
that the Board consider covering the registration costs for 10 EOF professional staff members who have never attended the Leadership Institute previously. The Tri-State leadership consortium experience has been highly recommended by those who have participated in the past, and several former participants have gone on to become campus program directors or have developed recognizable leadership skills and moved higher within their institution’s administration. The total projected cost for 10 participants is $2,600.

- **EOF Graduates’ Award Ceremony.** The awards ceremony will take place at Georgian Court University and is the statewide program’s opportunity to recognize all of the graduating seniors who have earned cumulative grade point averages of 3.20 or higher. Based on prior years, we estimate the cost will be $15,000.

- **The Counselor Training Institute (CTI)** is an annual residential professional development conference for campus EOF counselors and advisors. Counselors from NJ’s GEAR UP programs are also invited to participate. This activity normally takes place the first week in June which is shortly before the EOF freshman summer program begins. It provides an opportunity to energize the EOF counselors and for them to discuss different strategies that they will use to prepare training and leadership activities for their freshman students. This activity is planned and organized by the EOF counselors. Georgian Court University will serve as the host of CTI 2015 and the estimated cost is $30,000.

- **EOF Director and EOF Assistant Directors Training.** The EOF Professional Association has expressed a need to provide training to EOF directors and EOF assistant directors. This is an activity periodically provided by the EOF central office staff in the past. In our conversation with the leadership of the EOF professional association central office staff indicated that if the EOF professional staff assumed responsibility for organizing a planning committee and developing all of the training activities we would seek funding for the training session, since EOF/OSHE does not currently have the staff to put this activity together. The professional association recognized that there are several EOF campus
programs with new program administrators who have been in their positions for less than five years and could benefit from the expertise of long-term EOF directors. The EOF Professional Association has formed a planning committee to develop a one-day training session. The estimated cost for this one day session is $15,000.

Dr. Wright inquired about the selection process for the Tri-State Leadership Institute and what would happen if there were applicants from more than ten people. Ms. Bennerson responded that individuals who wish to participate in the Leadership Institute must complete an application form that is reviewed by the leadership of the Consortium and one of their criteria is that the activity is intended for individuals who are relatively new to opportunity program administration. Priority will be given to applicants who have worked with an EOF program for less than five years. If there are more than ten New Jersey applicants and the institute can accommodate additional people we will attempt to address that with any resources that may become available from the general conference registration costs.

Mr. Falcone asked if the Director’s training could also involve appropriate cost controls that were addressed in the audit. The EOF Board of Directors need to insure that program cost are contained and expenditure reports are completed properly. Ms. Bennerson stated that this type of training will be provided at the budget workshops for campus business managers & EOF professional staff. She assured Mr. Falcone that the issues he addressed will definitely be part of the training activities at this workshop.

Dr. Wright also asked if the training materials for the EOF Directors and EOF Assistant Directors training will be developed by the EOF Central Office staff and delivered by members of the EOF professional association members. Ms. Bennerson indicated that the EOF professional association will identify the areas where they believe additional training is necessary and identify individuals to develop the training modules and provide the actual training. An EOF central office staff member will participate in the planning session, but our office staff is currently over extended and cannot identify the need, trainers, etc. All of those functions will be delegated to the EOF professional association members. EOF/OSHE will review how they plan to use the funds. The Association will be required to provide a budget that delineates how the $15,000 allocation will be utilized and we will come to a consensus before finalizing the contract. Dr. Wright also inquired if the EOF Central Office will be able to utilize the training materials developed outside of the professional association, such as providing them to future EOF campus personnel. Ms. Bennerson responded in the affirmative.
Ms. Bennerson called the Board members’ attention to the fact that all of the payments for these professional development activities are allocated to and handled through a private/independent institution of higher education. When our office works with the professional association to sponsor these activities we work with whoever the association’s treasurer and financial secretary are, as well as the institution hosting the event on-site. Currently all of the FY 2015 activities are at independent colleges. Payment is made in advance along with specific instructions outlined in a letter of agreement to the president of the institution.

Ms. Santiago-Greene expressed the fact that she thought it was a good idea that the professional association is planning the Director’s training because they are in the best position to identify their needs.

Dr. Wright called for a motion to accept Resolution 8:15. Ms. Santiago-Green offered the motion which was seconded by Mr. Norman and unanimously approved.

Resolution 9:15 Adoption of Fiscal Year 2016 EOF Budget Policy Statement for Article III Student Grants and Article IV Academic year Student Support - Dr. Wright shared that the EOF Board is responsible for informing the Secretary of Higher Education about the programs’ resource needs so that this information can be included in the Higher Education budget request for fiscal year 2016. Resolution 9:15 seeks the Board’s approval for this action. She asked Ms. Bennerson to provide the Board with further details on this resolution.

Ms. Bennerson explained that Resolution 9:15 is a budget policy statement for fiscal year 2016. The statement outlines the needs of the program rather than requesting a specific dollar amount. The State of New Jersey’s budget process for 2016 has begun and the initial instructions received by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education were that there would be no increase in funding for fiscal year 2016. When the office receives that kind of budget instruction, the Secretary of Higher Education’s budget strategy is to have staff articulate the critical program resource needs required to provide sound services and support to EOF students. This budget policy statement provides that information and also includes the results of the 2016 EOF funding questionnaire conducted by the EOF Central Office this past summer. The questionnaire asked EOF campus program directors to identify their critical Article III and Article IV funding requirements.

Additional Article III funding, particularly for the summer program, is a highly critical need. Ms. Bennerson called the Board members’ attention to figure 1 on page 19 of the budget policy statement which depicts the EOF appropriations and student enrollment history from fiscal years 2003 through 2015. While the fiscal year 2015 appropriation
restored funding for both EOF Article III and Article IV to the fiscal year 2010 appropriation levels, overall funding for the program over the past thirteen years has included small increases followed by multiple years of level funding, followed by a small increase, and fallen behind general cost increases at institutions. The result is that EOF undergraduate student enrollment has declined during this period. She reminded Board members that new EOF students are required to participate in a pre-freshman summer program prior to the beginning of their freshman year. The summer program is one of the statewide program’s most important functions, used to prepare the freshman EOF students for college. The pre-freshman summer program provides students with an orientation to college and assessments of their developmental needs so that the colleges can develop a plan to work with the students throughout the academic year. In addition to maintaining student enrollment numbers from year to year, flat funding has also impacted the length of EOF summer programs shrinking their duration from six- eight weeks to four-six weeks at many institutions. This funding challenge has also led institutions to alter the type of courses students enrolled in the summer program are offered. Years ago students were able to earn college credits toward their degree. Currently, many summer programs only have sufficient funding to support summer sessions for four weeks. This has led to not being able to provide a sufficient number of course contact hours that would permit the students to earn college level credit. Instead, many programs have opted to run students through introductions to a course or provide other structured opportunities to brush up on their reading, writing and math skills rather than earn college credits. Level funding also creates a situation that obstructs assisting upperclassmen progress through their college curriculum, because funding no longer exists to support the enrollment of EOF summer renewal (continuing) students in the same proportions as earlier years. Renewal student enrollment in the summer program provides students with the courses to remain in academic sequence and to accelerate in preparation for STEM majors. Figure two on page 20 of the materials reflects the decline in EOF summer program enrollment from summer 2007 through this past summer 2014. The result of limited Article III funding is that the institutions have chosen to dedicate the largest portion of their summer resources to freshmen students. EOF renewal students who need to take summer courses may turn to taking out loans to finance summer school or, in most cases, forego summer attendance and add another semester of enrollment before they can complete their degree. (EOF students can receive funding for six years). EOF program administrators do everything possible to assist students with completing their degree in no more than five years, but if there is a need to make up credits, the regulations allow the additional two semesters of EOF funding.
The FY 2016 funding questionnaire provided the staff with a better sense of the statewide program’s actual needs. The results of the funding questionnaire are being provided to the Secretary of Higher Education so she will have accurate information to define EOF’s budgetary needs. The funding questionnaire was brief. The questions focused on the number of students that actually participated in the 2014 initial and renewal summer program, the number of students that were not able to participate, and what it would cost on a per student basis to enroll the students who were not able to participate. The second question focused on academic year Article III student grants and academic year student enrollment projections for the 2014/2015 and 2015/16 academic year. The final question focused on Article IV program support needs and asked programs to identify the number of additional staff member required and what it would cost to meet the academic year Article III student enrollment projections they provided.

Resolution 9:15 outlines the programs’ resource needs for FY 2016 and provides the Secretary of Higher Education with the survey results/tabulations that specifically spell out where funding falls short to maintain our program mission. Based on the responses to the survey, the total EOF program funding resources for FY 2016 represent an 18% increase over the current FY 2015 appropriation. The staff recognizes that an 18% increase in funding is unlikely, but hopes that we can realize additional funding for the program in FY 2016.

Dr. Wright called for a motion to approve Resolution 9:15. Ms. Pantel offered a motion for approval that was seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved.

Old Business

EOF Information Master Update – In an effort to respond to some of the questions raised by Board members at the last meeting, Ms. Bennerson provided nine charts that depict information that will appear in the comprehensive 2012-2013 EOF Annual Report being prepared by Dr. Lang. The first chart looks at the program’s Article III and Article IV appropriation from FY 2006 through the current FY 2015 fiscal year and the number of students served. Chart I reflects that the annual appropriation for the program was reduced in FY 2010, returned to the FY 2010 level for this current FY 2015 and that the overall number of students served has declined. The number of students served in the summer program has also declined since FY 2005 (chart II) and the number of EOF first time full-time freshmen (ftftff) as a percentage of total ftftff at participating institution has also declined (chart III).

The EOF program’s third and fifth semester retention rates continue to show improvement as reflected in charts IV and V. Board members were reminded that the program looks at student retention and graduation rates by the fall semester cohort. A cohort is comprised of students
enrolled in the fall semester as fffftf (no previous college experience). The third semester retention rate is based on the number of fall ffft freshman who returned to the institution to start their third semester of attendance at the institution or sophomore year. The program also looks at the number of fall semester ffft freshman who return to the institution for their fifth semester of attendance at the institution or their junior year. Third and fifth semester retention rates are provided by higher education sector as two-year moving averages for the fall86/87, fall 2006/07 and fall 2010/11 cohorts. The program also looks at graduation rates for EOF students based on a six-year graduation rate for the senior institutions based on a two-year moving average, because EOF students can receive Article III student grant funding for six years. Cohort graduation rates are provided in chart VI. Additionally, the EOF program seeks to close the achievement or outcomes gap between EOF students and the overall student population at our institutions with respect to third semester retention rates. Charts VII and VIII, respectively compare the EOF third semester retention rates by sector to the overall institutional rates for both the fall 2010 and fall 2011 cohorts. The EOF programs third semester retention rates compare favorably with the overall institutional rates. The program also looks at what we call the EOF equity index. One of our long term goals is to close the graduation gap between EOF students and the students who entered the institutions through regular admission. The EOF equity index compares the EOF program’s graduation rate to the institution’s graduation rate, where a 1.0 would equal the institution’s graduation rate. The EOF programs in the public research and independent sectors continue to hold their own and are performing comparably to the institutions.

The state colleges and universities have experienced a decline and Ms. Santiago-Green asked what factors contributed to the decrease. Ms. Bennerson responded that the state colleges and universities have the most diversity in their student enrollment when compared to the public research universities. The sector is comprised of institutions that serve a significant number of low-income students as well as schools with very selective admissions criteria. The state college and university sector faces some significant challenges and has switched their admissions profiles and are looking for better academically prepared students than in the past. This sector has also cut-back on developmental courses and the EOF programs have had to provide a different level of services for students than some of the other senior institutions.

Ms. Santiago-Green inquired if the colleges are changing their admissions profile does this mean that our programs are also changing their admissions profiles. Ms. Bennerson replied in the affirmative and added that more EOF students are considering enrollment at county colleges as a result. If the profiles have changed then one would expect our results to improve, Dr. Wright stated. Ms. Santiago-Green inquired about how much does this data reflects that EOF programs are reaching out to more at-risk students and how much of it is a reflection of the EOF programs’
need to improve student services. Ms. Bennerson response was that it is a combination of both
and reminded Board members that this data is from the 2012-2013 academic year and is the best
data that the program currently has available. When the EOF Central Office staff is able to
process more data, we may see some improvement in graduation outcomes.

Ms. Pantel asked if the programs have been asked to provide more recent program data? Ms.
Bennerson explained that the data collected on the EOF program comes from the participating
college programs as well as the State of New Jersey’s data systems. The colleges provide student
academic progress data and we obtain student retention and graduation data from the State of
New Jersey’s data systems. At the current time, the OSHE office does not have a programmer to
extrapolate the most recent student cohort retention and graduation rate data from the system.
Ms. Pantel also asked if there has been any attempt to explain the data or are we just at the point
of tabulating the data? Ms. Bennerson replied that the staff is working on a comprehensive
annual report that will provide explanations of the data shared with Board members today as well
as other program information. The data shared with the Board today was in response to
questions several Board members asked at the September Board meeting and is only meant to
provide members with a snapshot of the status of the program in key areas. She added that it is
her expectation that the comprehensive annual report for 2012-2013 will be available in early
January. Ms. Pantel followed-up by asking if we have any sense from the campus programs’ if
the data our office has not been able to tabulate from the last two years is fairly consistent with
earlier years. Ms. Bennerson responded that the campus programs have not received any data
from our office in the last two years because we do not have a programmer. Our office normally
provides institution specific data to our campus programs, but we have not been able to do this
for the past two years. One of the things Dr. Lang, our consultant is working to produce is the
campus specific data which we refer to as the program performance criteria (PPC) report for all
of our programs. This report provides the institutions with cohort retention and graduation rate
data, as well as the percentage of students who earned cumulative grade point averages of “C” or
better, are in good academic standing and the ratio of credits completed to credits earned,
enrollment information etc.

Ms. Santiago-Green inquired if the programs can collect that data themselves. Ms. Bennerson
replied yes and many of the programs do, but when it comes from our office in the PPC report
the institutions consider the information validated. She also shared that we expect to be able to
provide the campus programs with the 2012-13 PPC report in early December.

Dr. Lang, OSHE/EOF program consultant remarked on several points raised by the EOF Board.
He indicated that many years ago the programs did collect and tabulate their own program data,
but that the EOF Board requested that the EOF central office staff develop a common
standardized format that we call the program performance criteria because each campus
programs used a different method to collect and tabulate their outcomes data. The PPC provides
a common refereed data set so that programs can be compared equally. He also indicated that
the data provided in the comprehensive annual report is referred to as lag data which looks
backward, so if there is any improvement in graduation rates, it is a result of strategic initiatives
and changes in programming, and you will not see an immediately apparent improvement
because the improvement occurs over time. For the state colleges, if you go back to the original
graduation rate data they are the sector that made the greatest absolute improvement. The
program began collecting this data with the 1986/87 cohort and overtime the state colleges and
universities’ sector average graduation rates doubled. Among the senior institutions, the state
colleges and universities have the most diverse admissions profile. There are one or two schools
in the state college sector whose admission entrance requirements are higher than Rutgers
University and there are other institutions in the sector that are much more open access. There
are a wide range of diverse schools in the state college and university sector that are not evident
in the public research sector, and this is what contributes to the wide fluctuations in graduation
outcomes. If we are able to obtain the FY 2014 data we may or may not see improvements in
graduation outcomes. When you look at who the EOF students are in terms of class rank, they
do not differ from regularly admitted students, both groups are coming from the top two tenths of
the class. The difference is in the SAT profile. EOF students’ general SAT profile is 85% of the
regularly admitted students. New York and Pennsylvania define underprepared students as 65%
of the SAT profile. New Jersey’s students are closer within a standard deviation of the
institutional profile. Each institution recruits students relative to their own freshmen class. If
one school has a high profile the students admitted as EOF at that institution might be regularly
admitted students at another institution. There is a wide range of diversity and the figures that
you see in the state college and university sector are a reflection of a diverse and much larger
program. Most of the requests for additional staff came from the state colleges as a way to
improve their programs with a lot of tutoring and EOF advising. The population of who the EOF
programs serve is changing. In the northern part of the state you get more first generation-
Americans and the nature of who is low-income has changed because of the great recession and
it is not just urban anymore.

The last chart X depicted the number of EOF academic achievement awards presented to EOF
graduates. These are the students who earned cumulative grade point averages of 3.20 or better.
The Board began recognizing the EOF graduates in 1987 and as the chart displays the number of
students recognized continues to increase. During the 2012/13 academic year 34% of the EOF
graduates earned cumulative grade point averages of 3.20 (on a 4.0 scale) or better.

Dr. Wright thanked the staff for the great first look at the 2012/2013 comprehensive EOF annual
report and commented that the Board looks forward to receiving the final report.
NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Wright reported that she was recently appointed to the State of New Jersey’s STEM Council. The Council is comprised of a cross representation of non-profit organizations, business and industry, and higher education institutions. The first meeting was held the previous week and, as the Council started to discuss their charter and what they would like to accomplish, they quickly learned that there are many activities in the State that are related to STEM, but no comprehensive list of state supported STEM programs, what their charters are and who they serve. Consequently, the Council decided to collate this information so that one list will exist that provides that information. This will put the Council in a better position to develop their charter and determine who they would like to partner with.

OLD BUSINESS

EOF Staffing & Succession Issue - Dr. Wright reminded members that at the September meeting of the Board there was a discussion regarding EOF staffing and succession planning. She asked Ms. Pantel to share any information she was able to discover.

Ms. Pantel indicated that she did not have new information to report. All of the Board members are aware that Central Office is understaffed and there is a State hiring freeze. The only update since the last meeting is that the issue is in progress. Dr. Wright, Ms. Santiago-Greene and Ms. Pantel hope to meet with Secretary Hendricks prior to this Board meeting, but that was not possible. A conference call meeting will try to be arranged with Sec. Hendricks soon. Additionally, Ms. Pantel said that she was able to schedule a meeting with Senator Kean and Tom Kean Sr.’s for the following week to solicit their suggestions about the EOF staff succession and hiring freeze issue. She will report when the Board next meets regarding the suggestions she receives. Dr. Wright assured the Board members that EOF staffing and succession will be a permanent item on the agenda so that Board members can stay abreast of this issue.

Amendments to the EOF Board By-Laws – Dr. Wright indicated that the amendments to the EOF Board’s by-laws were a topic of discussion at the retreat in June. Ms. Bennerson emailed suggested amendments to the Board in August. Dr. Wright polled the Board members to determine if they were comfortable adopting the amended by-laws at this meeting or if they preferred more time to review the materials and share comments and concerns with each other via email in preparation for adoption at the next Board meeting on February 12, 2015. Members inquired about whether it was crucial that the amendments be adopted now. Ms. Bennerson indicated that discussion of the changes could wait until February for adoption but the vote
would need to occur at that time particularly because the legislative audit findings cited that the Board must operate within its own by-laws. She asked if the Board members had an opportunity to review the suggested amendments or saw a need for additional amendments. Ms. Santiago-Green expressed that the suggested amendments appear to be for clarification purposes, but inquired if any of them were addressing a specific problem that has been identified. Ms. Bennerson pointed to the amendments in Section - 2.3 Resignation of Board members which addresses an issue identified in the audit report that indicated the Board was not following their own processes with regard to the resignation and appointment of Board members. Board members have the responsibility of notifying the Governor’s office when a vacancy exists and recommending a candidate to fill the vacancy. While the Board did notify the Governor’s Office anytime a vacancy occurred on the Board, the process of obtaining new Board members did not move until the higher education office was restructured and the Secretary of Higher Education stepped-in and began working with the Governor’s appointment secretary. Ms. Pantel suggested that she would like to see the Board recommend people to fill vacancies when they know someone who they believe would be good for the mission of the program. Ms. Wright asked Ms. Bennerson if that needed to be in the by-laws or was it something that the Board could do on its own. Ms. Bennerson did not think that this needed to be specifically stated in the by-laws. Board members could provide the staff with the resumes of potential candidates for appointment that would then be given to the Secretary of Higher Education to pass along to the Governor’s Appointments Office.

Dr. Wright stated that when the Board initially discussed the by-laws in June the audit report was not available. Now that the report is available she asked if there were other issues or concerns that need to be addressed in the by-laws, (i.e. electronic files, etc.). Ms. Bennerson replied that there are other items identified in the audit and they will be addressed with changes to the program’s administrative code regulations. These regulations expire in 2016 and in the spring one or two Board members will be asked to serve on a committee to review the current regulations and make recommendations for changes.

Ms. Pantel asked if there should be a provision in the by-laws with respect to an appointed Board member who does not attend meetings or participate. Other boards she sits on have a process to follow-up when someone is a member in name only. All Board members make a commitment to become a part of a working Board. It is recognized that sometime a board member may be unable to fulfill their appointed duty because of a work or personal situation that arose after the individual was appointed. Should there be a process in the by-laws that addresses this situation?
Ms. Bennerson stated that she sensed the Board’s desire to wait until February 2015 to approve the by-laws. She asked if Ms. Pantel would draft some language regarding this issue that could be shared with everyone for incorporation into the by-laws.

Ms. Santiago-Green indicated that she was not sure that this is the role of the Board. Because the Board members are appointed by the Governor, is it the Governor’s responsibility to say what percentage of meetings in the course of one year you must attend and when it is time to excuse you from your appointment? Ms. Bennerson indicated that the statutory duties of the Board permit the members to adopt bylaws and enforce, alter or repeal rules for its own operation. Dr. Wright added that to be an effective Board there must be active membership. Ms. Bennerson added that if we have draft language it can be sent to the Governor’s appointment office for their input. Ms. Santiago–Green supported this suggestion.

Dr. Wright and Mr. Moore suggested that all of the Board members be sent a copy of the by-laws again for a review of the language regarding what constitutes full participation. All of the members present concurred with this suggestion.

Ms. Pantel shared that at the conclusion of the October 27, 2014 of the Presidents’ Council meeting at Rutgers University, New Brunswick she will attend a reception where Congressional Representative Rush Holt will speak about federal funding initiatives for higher education at Rutgers University. She looks forward to hearing him and the college presidents speak and she will report back to the Board.

Remarks/Comments from EOFPANJ President - Ms. Hodges reported that the members of the EOF Professional Association are pleased that EOF now has an active Board of Directors. She publically thanked Ms. Lisa Pantel for coming to the Bloomfield College, Caldwell University and Montclair State University Leadership ceremony held during the summer program. She extended an invitation to the other Board members to attend more events and to consider conducting a workshop for students who need to know that the Board is invested in them and that they should in turn be invested in the work of the Board. The list of upcoming events included the Fall 2014 EOF Student Leadership Conference on December 5, 2014 at Monmouth University, the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs Conference, April 12-15, 2015, the Counselor Training Institute, and the EOF Directors Leadership Institute that is being planned in conjunction with the staff of the EOF Central Office and the President of the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs, Dr. Henry Durand.

She also mentioned that the Association’s Board of Directors discussed the fact that all of the following organizations will be conducting advocacy efforts on behalf of the program and the
State of New Jersey

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desire that they all join forces to use a consistent message: EOF Board of Directors, EOFPA NJ, EOF alumni association, the Alliance of EOF students of NJ and the EOF campus program staff members across the State. The Association membership expressed concern about the introduction of the common core standards in kindergarten through 12th grade and how they may affect the EOF program. The Association would like to be at the table when decisions are being made to insure that the best interest of the program is served.

Ms. Pantel inquired if the Association maintained an email distribution list for all of the organizations that are affiliated with the EOF program. Ms. Hodges indicated that she maintains a distribution lists that are differentiated for specific populations (counselors, directors, alumni, etc.) and that Board member simply need to send her an e-mail with the information they would like to share.

Dr. Wright thanked the Association’s for their suggestion of combining forces and the use of consistent messaging. She inquired whether the Association had developed a message and indicated it would be interesting to see what that messaging looks like and how that is shared with rest of the community. Perhaps a communication package emphasizing key bullet points can be shared because the Board is interested. Ms. Hodges said the Association advocacy efforts are being chaired by Dr. Hasani Carter and it is important that people understand the EOF program works and is effective.

Next Board Meeting – February 12, 2015 in the same location.

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