The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on October 16, 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 Ms. Christy Van Horn (who filled in for Mr. Anthony Falcone) and Bader Qarmout. Board members absent: Saara Marte.

Minutes of July 31, 2015 Meeting: Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the July 31, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Garlatti. The minutes were approved by Ms. Garlatti, Mr. Moore, Mr. Norman Mr. Qarmout Ms. Pantel and. Dr. Wright. The following Board members who did not attend the July 31, 2016 meeting abstained from the vote: Ms. Van Horne.

Resolution 5:16 Adoption of Fiscal Year 2017 EOF Board of Directors’ 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 2017. Resolution 5:16 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 5:16 is a budget policy statement for the EOF Article III summer program, academic year undergraduate and graduate student grants, and Article IV academic year program support services for fiscal year 2017. Despite the State of New Jersey’s continuing budget constraints, the EOF Board’s role is to articulate the critical program components required to provide sound services and support to EOF students. The budget policy statement before the Board outlines those EOF program components for inclusion in the Secretary of Higher Education’s related funding request to the Governor and Legislature. The fiscal year 2016 appropriation brought a second consecutive year of increased funding for both EOF Article III and Article IV after more than a decade of minimal funding increases, followed by multiple years of level funding. EOF campus programs were asked to complete a FY2016 EOF Funding Survey (Attachment A) last year which identified several critical Article III and Article IV funding shortfalls that campus program administrators emphasized needed to be addressed concurrently before the programs can experience optimum success at improving students graduation outcomes. The tandem increase in the EOF appropriation made it possible to begin to reverse the decline in EOF student enrollment in the summer program, as well as during the academic year, and to enhance necessary program support services provided by Article IV funds. However, the program continues to be significantly behind in meeting the funding challenges identified in the survey.

Ms. Bennerson also pointed out that while the OSHE/EOF staff and campus programs have appreciated the funding increases EOF has received, the annual state budget process does not let us know when increased funding will be available until late June or early July. This late notice places a significant burden on campus programs’ efforts to identify new (freshman and transfer) students for the upcoming academic year. All first-time, full-time freshmen must participate in a 4-6 week summer program. The summer programs normally begin the last week in June. While programs may have a waiting list of eligible students, it would be unconscionable to have students begin the summer program 2 or 3 weeks late. For planning purposes, it is absolutely essential that institutions know if they are going to receive increased funding early in the budget process so that necessary arrangements can be made to provide the pre-freshman summer program services to a larger number of students.

The enhancement in fiscal year 2015 funding made it possible to increase the number of students served during the 2014-2015 academic year (primarily returning and transfer students). An additional 1,053 students were enrolled in campus EOF programs resulting in an annualized total enrollment of 13,136 students. Despite this enrollment gain, the total EOF enrollment remains significantly below the 14,359 students the campus programs projected they could serve in the “FY 2016 Funding Survey”. While program enrollment for this fall 2015 semester will not be finalized until the end of December, the OSHE/EOF Central Office staff anticipates annualized FY 2016 enrollment growth by 750 students. The Survey indicated that an additional $2,379,823 in Article III funds would be required to serve an additional 474 initial (freshmen) students and 1,121 renewal students for summer 2015. However, even with the late notice, the Article IV appropriation increase made it possible for the programs to allocate 42% of the additional funds to counseling and tutoring both of which are primary areas of direct service to students. The remaining 58% of the increase was budgeted to assist students with improving their “soft skills”,

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with one-third slated to support student leadership development activities (including workshops, speakers and seminars) and the remaining two-thirds to support student internships and service-learning related initiatives. Institutions are required to match EOF Article IV funds dollar-for-dollar. Even with increasing their Article IV allocations, the institutions’ financial support of their EOF programs remained strong. The percentage of funds contributed by the host colleges and universities to support EOF academic year program student support services averages across the programs at 61% of the total academic year budgets compared to the state’s contribution or allocation of 39%.

In summary, while the survey identified that the programs could realistically use an additional $4.7 million dollars in Article III (with $2.35 million going toward both the summer program and academic year Article III student grants) and an additional $2.5 million in Article IV, no one is realistically anticipating an appropriation increase of that magnitude. Instead, the Fund seeks continuous, incremental, and concurrent increases in both Article III student grants and Article IV program support funds to reverse the 10 year decline in EOF student enrollment.

Dr. Wright called for a motion to approve Resolution 5:16. Mr. Qarmout offered a motion for approval that was seconded by Mr. Norman and unanimously approved.

Resolution 6:16 Approval of FY2016 EOF Central Initiatives - Dr. Wright introduced the resolution by explaining that it seeks the Board’ approval to use fiscal year 2015 Article IV funds to support statewide campus activities that will take place during the current academic year. The pool of available funds is made up of 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 6:16.

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 $156,275 in FY 2015 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. That is why the EOF Board developed the Central Initiatives budget category.

All of the activities proposed are intended to provide professional development for EOF campus program staff and/or EOF students. At this time, the EOF Central office requests the Board’s approval to use $120,050 to fund the following central initiative activities during the 2016 fiscal year:

- **Fall 2015 - EOF Professional Association (EOFPA) and Association of EOF Students of New Jersey (AESNJ) Fall Conference** at William Paterson University. This is a one-day professional development conference for staff and students. Advocacy strategies are emphasized, especially at this time of year. The resolution proposes
covering the cost of registration for one EOF professional staff member and three (3) EOF students from each campus program, each AESNJ elected officer, one GEAR-Up professional staff member from each participating campus program, EOF Central Office staff, and each EOF Board members who is able to attend. Total estimated cost = $17,350

- **Spring 2016 – EOF Professional Association of New Jersey Conference** in Atlantic City, NJ. The annual Spring Conference provides an excellent opportunity to professionally network and exchange ideas, successful research, and programming practices related to the retention and graduation of historically disadvantaged, low-income, first-generation college students. The resolution requests approval to cover the full conference registration fee for two (2) EOF staff members from each program, one GEARUP program staff member, all EOF Board members interested in attending and for the EOF Central Office staff. Total cost projected are calculated for 124 participants @ $425 each = $52,700.

- **EOF Graduates’ Award Ceremony**. – Since 1982, the EOF Board annually recognizes high achievers among each academic year’s graduating class. The staff is working to identify an official site and date for this event. Based on prior year’s expenses and the increase in the number of award recipients, estimated event cost for this spring is $20,000.

- **The Counselor Training Institute (CTI)** is an annual multi-day residential professional development conference for campus program EOF counselors and advisors. Counselors from NJ’s GEAR UP programs are also invited to participate. Monmouth University will serve as the host site for CTI 2016. The estimated cost is $30,000.

Ms. Bennerson informed the Board that the staff is currently trying to locate a venue for the EOF Graduates Award Ceremony in the spring 2016 semester. Georgian Court University has been the host site for the past several years, but will not be able to for this year. The challenge of finding the ideal venue is that the location should be reasonably travel accessible for all of the programs throughout the state to reach by 10:00 am and have the ability to accommodate buses, and extra cars with parking. The accommodations must be possible to serve approximately 900 students, staff and guests. Every NJ college campus is currently undergoing construction projects with the influx of the capital improvement higher education grant funds and experiencing parking problems for their own community, much less being able to accommodate visitors. The Board was assured that even if we are not able to host a formal ceremony, the students will receive their award certificates. Ms. Colleen Johnson, EOF Director at Monmouth University, indicated that she would check to see if her institution would be able to host this event.

**EOF Chairperson’s Report** - Dr. Wright reported that she attended a meeting of the “Million Women Mentors” (MWM) in Washington D.C. MWM is a national initiative designed to support the engagement of STEM mentors for young people interested in STEM careers. She is a member of the organization’s national steering committee and the New Jersey Chapter of
MWM. Once again, she encouraged EOF professional staff members to become involved with MWM’s national initiative by volunteering as mentors, asking their students to volunteer as mentors for younger students and using the opportunity to also connect their EOF students into a network of highly skilled mentors. Dr. Wright added that because the NJ EOF programs truly lead in their mentoring efforts, she would like to see them documented on a national level.

Ms. Santiago-Greene once again emphasized the value of visiting the programs to her fellow Board members. She remarked how her summer program visits at Mercer County College and the College of New Jersey revealed a difference in EOF students’ college readiness but strong similarities in students’ enthusiasm to tackle time management and focus on degree attainment.

**EOF Director’s Report** – Ms. Bennerson provided the Board members with a brief overview of events since the Board’s last meeting.

**Staffing** - The EOF Central Office remains short staffed. Interviews for the EOF accounting vacancy originally began in July. One candidate emerged who the position was offered to. Unfortunately this person had accepted another offer. The Accounting 2 position was downgraded to the title of Auditor/Accountant Trainee and re-advertised in an attempt to attract a larger pool of candidates who were not currently part of the New Jersey civil service system. The interviews for the position were concluded last month and a candidate was recommended. OSHE is now waiting to receive the necessary approvals from the Governor’s office (due to the state’s hiring freeze) and civil service before a start date can be identified for the candidate.

In the interim, all of the current EOF staff members have picked up several of the EOF accounting responsibilities and we are also fortunate to have other colleagues from OSHE assisting with processing grant payments to the colleges and refunds that are received.

**Enrollment** - The deadline for receipt of EOF graduate grant applications for the 2015-2016 academic year was October 2nd. We received 244 applications. Ms. Williams is currently reviewing the applications to determine student eligibility and it is anticipated that payments will be made to the colleges in late November.

The deadline for campus programs to request EOF undergraduate student grants for the fall 2015 semester is November 15. Records indicate that enrollment is currently at 10,409 students which is comparable to where it was last year at this time. Campus programs have 3 more opportunities to request EOF undergraduate student grants for the fall semester. Ms. Bennerson anticipates that EOF fall enrollment will once again reach 12,000 plus students.

**Kean University** - Ms. Bennerson commented that Board members may be aware of an article that appeared in NJ.com on October 6, 2015 announcing Kean University’s plans to lay-off members of its EOF program staff to “increase operational efficiency and improve student services”. She assured the Board members that the EOF Central Office staff and the Secretary of Higher Education are working to address the situation at Kean. Since it involves personnel, she was not able to go into specific details, but ask Board members who may be approached by the public or the media to direct those inquiries to her attention.
**Bergen Community College’s “EOF Spotlight” publication** Each of the Board members present also received a copy of Bergen Community College’s EOF program “Spotlight 2015” publication to read at their leisure. The magazine was created over 20 years ago to showcase the artistic and creative talents of Bergen’s EOF students. The magazine includes essays and artwork from pre-freshman summer students, current students and recent graduates.

**Remarks/Comments from EOFPANJ President**- Mr. Delgado thanked the Board members for their approval of the FY 2016 EOF Central Initiative funding which will provide opportunities for the EOF professional staff and students to receive professional development training activities. He also shared that the Executive Board of the Association selected four students to receive the Arrigo Rogers Scholarship, which provides a $1,000 book scholarship to EOF undergraduate students. The students will be presented with the scholarship at the Fall EOFPANJ/AESNJ conference on November 13, 2015 at William Paterson University. The Association is working with the EOF Statewide Student Alumni Association (EOFSSAA) to help them increase their membership and build momentum for EOF alumni to affiliate with a statewide organization, in addition to their alma mater’s EOF alumni network. The EOFSSAA held several mixers over the summer to engage EOF alumni living in the northern part of the State that garnered good interest. The EOFPANJ’s current goal is to involve these individuals in the Association’s annual advocacy campaign.

Ms. Pantel inquired if the alumni were willing to serve as mentors to current EOF students. Mr. Delgado indicated that is one of the long-term goals of the Association’s affiliation with the EOFSSAA.

**Date of Next Meeting** – Friday, February 19, 2016

**Adjournment**- The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m