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Minutes of Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors Meeting March 11, 2016

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Board of Directors meeting was convened on March 11, 2016 at the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), Mary Roebing Building, second floor, Trenton, N.J.

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

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

Board members present - The following Board members were in attendance: Dr. Nannette Wright, Ms. Elizabeth Garlatti, Ms. Ivette Santiago-Green, and Ms. Lisa Pantel. The Board members participating by conference call were Mr. Anthony Falcone, Mr. Nacovin Norman and Mr. Bader Qarmout. Board members absent: Ms. Saara Marte and Mr. Franklin Moore. Mr. Alexis Delgado (NJCU) who is the president of the Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association of New Jersey (EOFPANJ) was also in attendance. Participating by conference call was: Mr. Jason Chavez, Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), Associate Director of Grants & Scholarships. Also present in the audience were several EOF campus program directors and staff.

ACTION ITEMS

Minutes of October 16, 2015 EOF Board Meeting - Ms. Lisa Pantel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nacovin Norman and approved. Mr. Falcone abstained from voting because he was not at the October 16, 2015 meeting.

Resolution 7:16 Approval of FY 2016 EOF Academic Year Article III Graduate Grant Allocation for William Paterson University and Acknowledgement of Revised Graduate

Grant Allocations –Dr. Wright reminded Board members that their responsibilities include the approval of allocations from the annual fiscal year EOF appropriations. William Paterson University did not originally receive an EOF Article III graduate grant allocation for the 2015-2016 academic year but has since identified two eligible graduate students. In addition, the EOF Central Office staff made revisions to the original graduate grant allocations that were approved by the Board at the May 2015 meeting. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide the Board with additional details on Resolution 7:16.

Ms. Bennerson informed the Board that graduate grant allocations are made to campus EOF programs based on the number of students enrolled and paid during the previous academic year (2014/2015). William Paterson University did not have graduate students last year, and therefore did not receive a FY 2016 Article III graduate grant allocation. During the fall 2015 semester the university identified two graduate students for the 2015-2016 academic year and requested grant funding to support these students. Resolution 7:16 provides William Paterson University with a graduate grant allocation of \$4,600 to provide funding for two graduate students.

The resolution also sought the Board's acknowledgement of adjustments made to five other programs' original Article III graduate grant allocations from May 2015. The fiscal year 2016 allocations for graduate grant funding were based on enrollment and expenditure patterns in fiscal year 2015. Enrollment numbers often shift and the staff will review requests from institutions for additional students that exceed their original allocations. The EOF student grant application process has very strict deadline dates that do not always conform to the EOF Board's meeting schedule. As a result, several years ago the Board delegated the authority to the EOF Executive Director to approve adjustments to institutional Article III allocations and report the changes to the Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Five other institutions submitted graduate grant funding requests that exceeded their original allocations. Including William Paterson University, a total of 18 additional graduate student grants were requested at a total cost of \$46,781. Board members were referred to Attachment A of resolution 7:16 which provided the names of the institutions that enrolled additional graduate students.

Board members inquired about the number of graduate grants awarded annually and what are the eligibility criteria to receive an EOF graduate grant. They also asked if graduate grant enrollment had increased or decreased from last year and if programs actively recruit graduate students.

Ms. Bennerson responded that graduate enrollment for 2015-2016 currently totals 275 students and this number is comparable to previous years' graduate student enrollment levels. Campus EOF programs do not recruit graduate students. The vast majority of EOF graduate grant recipients are students who received an EOF grant as undergraduates. These students were encouraged by the EOF professional staff on their campuses to pursue an advanced degree. In order to receive EOF graduate grant funding, a student must be enrolled full-time. Students applying for EOF graduate grants who received an undergraduate EOF grant and continue to demonstrate unmet need receive priority consideration. Students who did not receive EOF as undergrads but can demonstrate that they would have met the EOF eligibility criteria will be considered, per funding availability. Dr. Wright requested that the staff collect metrics regarding the number of EOF undergraduates who went on to pursue an advanced degree and received an

EOF graduate grant. Ms. Bennerson indicated that graduate/professional school enrollment data is not currently collected in that manner, but can be provided to Board members in the future.

Mr. Qarmout offered a motion to approve Resolution 7:16 which was seconded by Ms. Santiago-Green and unanimously approved.

Resolution 8:16 Acknowledgement of the Class of 2016 EOF Academic Achievement Award Recipients

Dr. Wright stated that the recognition of EOF graduating seniors is one of the culminating events of the academic year for the members of the EOF Board and OSHE/EOF staff and requested a motion for approval of Resolution 8:16. Mr. Norman offered a motion for approval and it was seconded by Dr. Wright.

Dr. Carter was asked to provide the Board with additional information on the 2016 EOF Graduate Achievement Awards Ceremony.

Dr. Carter shared that the annual EOF Statewide Graduate Award Ceremony will be held on Friday, April 8th at Monmouth University, beginning at 10:30 am. This event is held annually to recognize the academic achievements of our EOF graduates throughout the state. The EOF program continues its trend of having an increase in the number of awards recipients recognized for their academic achievement. In 2014, the program celebrated and recognized 775 EOF students who were nominated to receive award certificates. In 2015 that number grew to 961 EOF students. This year, the program will administer 1,000 awards, a 29% (225) increase in the total number of awards granted in only a two-year time period - an amazing accomplishment in such a short period of time. Dr. Carter added that it serves as testimony to the power of EOF and provides further evidence that New Jersey has a national model that works.

The award categories for the graduate ceremony are as follows:

Academic Achievement (3.2 -3.49) – 450 students

Outstanding Academic Achievement (3.5-3.99) – 499 students

Distinguished Scholars (perfect 4.0) – 4 students

Outstanding Achievement (No GPA) requirement, but is given to one student that each program wants to identify as the student they believe exemplifies the ideals of the EOF Program – 47 students.

Dr. Carter expressed his hope that all of the Board members will be able to attend this year's affair.

Dr. Wright requested that the Board and members and the audience take a moment to recognize this year's award recipients, which was met with a round of applause.

Ms. Pantel stated that the graduate achievement award ceremony is a wonderful event and expressed her dismay that it is not covered by the press. She offered to reach out to press contacts and extend a formal invitation to them, and also inquired how the EOF/OSHE Central Office handles this process.

Ms. Bennerson explained that Mr. Alan Guenther, the OSHE public relations spokesperson, normally prepares a press release about the event that highlights several spotlight bios and is sent to all of the New Jersey major media outlets a week before. She added that Monmouth University offered the use of their Jumbotron and all of the campus programs were asked to put together a slide show of their program and/or award recipients that will be running throughout the time we are there.

Ms. Pantel emphasized that she would like to send a personal invitation to a few reporters and asked when she could anticipate hearing from Mr. Guenther. Ms. Bennerson assured Ms. Pantel that she would speak to Mr. Guenther and get back to her next week.

Dr. Wright called for the vote on Resolution 8:16 which was unanimously approved.

Resolution 9:16 Authorizing the Chair of the EOF Board of Directors to Provide Written Testimony to the Senate Budget and Appropriations and Assembly Budget Committees Requesting a Restoration and Increase in the FY 2017 EOF Article III and Article IV Appropriations

Dr. Wright stated that the Governor's FY 2017 budget recommendation for the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund will reduce funding by \$2.56 million. Resolution 9:16 provides an opportunity for the EOF Board to deliver written testimony to the legislative bodies currently conducting public hearings on the Governor's FY 2017 budget recommendation. She asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 9:16. Mr. Norman offered a motion to approve Resolution 9:16 and Ms. Santiago-Green seconded the motion. Ms. Bennerson was asked to provide the Board with additional details on this resolution.

Ms. Bennerson apprised the Board that the Governor's budget recommendation for EOF Article III funds which supports the pre-freshman summer program for initial students and renewal student enrollment in summer courses, as well as the academic year student grants for undergraduate and graduate students, was reduced by \$1.6 million. The FY17 Article III appropriation is recommended for funding at \$26 million which is \$891,000 less than the campus programs received in FY 2010. The Article IV funding recommendation of \$12.8 million represents a \$1 million reduction and is actually less money to provide academic support services than what the programs received in FY 2006.

Once the Governor makes his budget recommendations, they are then considered by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee. Members of the public are provided with an opportunity to testify at a public hearing and/or provide written testimony on the Governor's budget recommendations to these committees. Recognizing that all of the Board members have very busy schedules and would not be able to attend one of the scheduled public Senate and Assembly budget hearings, the staff is recommending that the EOF Board chair be authorized to present the letter attached to Resolution 9:16 as the Board's testimony.

The testimony articulates the impact of the Governor's FY 2017 funding recommendation on EOF program services. EOF annual allocations to the Fund's participating colleges and universities are not by their nature on the same timeline as the legislative budget deliberations process. Because funding for the new fiscal year is unpredictable, campus EOF programs have been reluctant to overenroll incoming freshman classes which has begun to evidence a decline in the number of students served statewide.

Our freshmen summer programs begin the last week in June or the first week in July, making it impossible for programs to identify additional student participants by the time a new fiscal year State budget is signed. It is also too late to make a commitment to continuing students who may need to take classes over the summer break. Summer program enrollment has experienced a 25% decline over the past 9 years. The majority of the decline is due to our inability to support EOF upperclassmen-renewal students. The testimony to the legislative budget committees seeks restoration of Art. III funding and also appeals for increased funding to support renewal student enrollment in the summer.

For academic year Art. III, the FY 2015 appropriation increase made it possible to reverse the decline in enrollment and support over 100 additional students during the 2014-2015 academic year. However, EOF fall 2015 semester enrollment when compared to fall 2014 has declined by 1.3%. While EOF programs have until March 15th to complete their requests for spring 2016 student grants, Ms. Bennerson does not anticipate that the program will match last year's overall student enrollment of 13,136 students. It should also be noted that fall 2015 New Jersey college enrollment statewide has also declined by 1.7%

EOF Article IV funds are another core component of the EOF program providing a combination of educational enrichment and support services that are required to be matched dollar-for-dollar by participating institutions. These funds are applied toward salaries for the 12-month campus program staff members who provide direct support to program students and for EOF monitored tutoring. The institutional match of EOF Article IV has exceeded the dollar-for-dollar match requirement for the last decade, and it is unlikely that campus program will be able to seek additional resources from their host institutions above and beyond what they currently contribute to maintain the critically important support services currently in place. If EOF funding is not restored and increased, EOF student support services at each campus will continue to decline.

Ms. Bennerson was asked what will happen if funding is not restored. Her reply indicated that in July 2015 when the program learned of the increase in the FY 2016 EOF appropriation, the EOF Board approved setting aside \$1.4 million to front fund the enrollment of renewal students in the 2016 EOF summer program. The allocation of those funds to campus programs would have occurred at this March 11, 2016 meeting. However, as a result of the Governor's FY 2017 Article III funding recommendation, those funds will be applied to the overall 2016 summer program, along with \$8 million dollars from the Governor's recommendation of \$26 million. For summer 2016, programs will be asked to find a way to support the enrollment of both initial and renewal students, within their level summer 2016 allocation. Essentially, this means that programs will receive an FY 2017 EOF summer 2016 program allocation that is identical to what they received to operate the 2015 summer program. If FY 2017 Article III funding is not restored programs will experience the direct impact with next year's 2017 summer program. The

remainder of the \$26 million will be used for academic year Art. III undergraduate and graduate grants. Programs will receive an Art. IV funding recommendation that approximates the funding received to operate the program during the FY 2014. Consequently, any or all of the program enhancements established over the last two years may be eliminated unless the host institutions choose to support those activities in the future.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding EOF advocacy activities in support of EOF funding restoration for FY 2017 that have already occurred and those scheduled to happen next week.

Mr. Qarmout asked if the Board has a history of providing this type of testimony and having success at the conclusion.

Ms. Bennerson responded that over the last two fiscal years, the EOF Professional Association has led a very active advocacy effort that resulted in a \$1 million increase in the FY 2015 appropriation. In FY 2016 their efforts netted restoration of the \$1 million received in FY 2015, as well as an additional \$1.5 million. She added that the leadership of EOF PANJ has begun their advocacy campaign by providing oral testimony to the Assembly Budget Committee and she asked the president of the association, Mr. Alexis Delgado, to share what has taken place.

Mr. Delgado reported that on March 9, 2016 he and an EOF student from New Jersey City University offered testimony at the public hearings held by the Assembly Budget Committee at Montclair State University. He informed Board members that his testimony included many of the points Ms. Bennerson discussed earlier and provided an explanation of the difference between Article III and Article IV. While he was rushed through his oral testimony (it was also provided to the legislators in writing), the legislators enjoyed hearing direct testimony from the EOF students and their narratives. He also mentioned that another EOF professional staff member, Mr. Clifford Woodward, EOF Director at the College of Saint Elizabeth, and Dr. Daniel Jean, EOF alumnus and EOF Director at Montclair State University, also testified that day. Other EOF alumni and professional staff members are scheduled to testify at the upcoming Senate hearings. He also touched on the fact that EOF Student Day at the Capitol would be held Monday, March 14, 2016. This is an annual event when EOF students travel to Trenton to learn about the legislative process and speak with state legislators. Approximately 200 students from across the state are scheduled to come to the capitol and currently there are 9 legislators who have agreed to speak with them. They are Senators Cunningham and Ruiz, and Assemblypersons Oliver, Sumter, Schaer, Thompson, Bucco and Spencer. He emphasized that EOF Student Day at the Capitol is an example of what EOF Article IV funds make possible for the students outside of the classroom, such as service learning and leadership development. The opportunity also provides legislators with a visual representation of who the program serves.

Ms. Santiago-Green stated that it was good that the association was able to get students to testify because it makes a huge impact for legislators to hear directly from the beneficiaries of the program.

Dr. Wright agreed that it is a good experience for the students beyond the classroom because they are working to improve public speaking skills while also learning more about 1) the legislative process, and 2) developing skills that will make them more successful in life. She

also indicated that she was thinking about what is really needed for next year when the EOF community has to go through this process again. She suggested that the students could put together a short video with testimony from students that could be placed on the internet and people could be urged to visit.

Mr. Delgado replied that the legislators prefer email and the Association developed an advocacy toolkit that provided campus program directors with the names and contact information for members from both houses of the legislature who also serve on the budget and appropriations committees. The tool kit also provides samples of letters and instructions for students to make one minute videos to share their stories of the EOF program and its impact on their lives which can be attached to an email. The Association is also discussing the production of a montage video of the statewide EOF program that will be available for elected officials and the public. Ms. Santiago-Green also asked the Association to consider including parents in the video.

Dr. Wright indicated that the testimony letter requires a few revisions, but wanted the Board's endorsement of the overall concept. Ms. Bennerson indicated that it was best for the Board to approve a new motion requesting Board approval of Resolution 9:16 with minor revision. She said the final letter will be shared with the members for their feedback prior to it being sent. Ms. Santiago-Green moved the revision to Resolution 9:16 and it was seconded by Ms. Pantel. The motion was approved by Ms. Santiago-Green, Mr. Norman, Ms. Pantel, Mr. Qarmout and Dr. Wright. The Board members who abstained from the vote were Mr. Falcone and Ms. Garlatti.

EOF Chairpersons Report- Dr. Wright informed the Board that she believes the most important item - restoration and an increase in FY 2017 EOF funding - have already been thoroughly discussed. She acknowledged the hard work of the EOF campus professional staff and thanked them for their willingness to continue to work through budget constraints to serve the students. She also assured the community that the EOF Board will continue to work for restoration and increased funding for FY 2017.

EOF Executive Director's Report - Ms. Bennerson informed the Board members that she was very pleased that the EOF Central Office has additional staff. She introduced Mr. Kelechi Unegbu who joined the office in late January as the EOF Accountant, Dr. Hasani Carter who came on board two weeks later as the EOF Statewide Director, and that she has received a promotion to EOF Executive Director. She shared her pleasure with the additions to the EOF Central Office staff and informed Board members that it has made a significant difference in speeding up the production of several projects. She also encouraged Board members to participate in the EOF Professional Association's Biennial 2016 Spring conference which will be held March 29 - April 1, 2016 at the Sheraton Hotel in Atlantic City, even if only for one day and to also attend the April 8th EOF Graduates' Achievement Ceremony on April 8, 2016 at Monmouth University.

Remarks Comments from EOFPANJ President – Mr. Delgado also encouraged the Board members to attend their 2016 Spring conference. He shared that the Association's Vice President, Mr. Brett Pulliam, along with the conference co-chairpersons Dr. Jenice Sabb and Ms. Joy Smith have planned a dynamic program. Secretary Hendricks is expected to offer remarks. Additionally, Dr. Steven Perry, a nationally known speaker on education, social justice, and about

the process of transforming students from low-income communities into successful college graduates and beyond is the keynote luncheon speaker. The theme of the conference is “Re-designing our Narrative: Action & Impact” which was selected realizing that the higher education climate is changing and finding new ways to address those changes should be the Association’s professional development goal. Mr. Delgado expressed his hope that all of the Board members would be able to make room in their schedules to attend the conference.

Ms. Pantel asked if the conference agenda sent to the Board members a few weeks ago had changed. Mr. Delgado indicated that the conference committee was meeting at the conclusion of the Board meeting to finalize the agenda and that Board members would receive an updated copy.

Date of Next Meeting- Dr. Wright announced that the next EOF Board meeting is scheduled for Friday April 22, 2016 in Trenton.

Adjournment- A motion for adjournment was offered by Ms. Pantel and unanimously seconded by the other Board members. The meeting concluded at 11:20 a.m.