



Access for All

Institutional Lunch and Learn Highlights the Inner Workings of the Office of Student Special Services

For a College so uniquely positioned to provide course delivery options to students with family, career, military and community responsibilities, it is fitting that it is also dedicated to ensuring that every adult learner has unhindered access to higher education. Adults with disabilities are enthusiastically included in

this mission, with accommodations often extending to populations who are institutionalized or incarcerated.

“The Office of Student Special Services (OSSS) serves these populations with accommodations that meet their unique needs,” said Assistant Vice Provost for Learner Services **Dave Anderson** during

his introduction at the OSSS Institutional Lunch and Learn last month “Our staff are continually faced with the intricate, sometimes delicate and always confidential nature surrounding these unique student populations.”

Anderson, **Laura Brenner-Scotti**, student special services coordinator; and **Barbara Aikins**, Adults with

Disabilities (ADA) coordinator; with support from **Denise Weber**, secretarial assistant, and **Sharon Rock**, principle clerk typist, gave College staff an opportunity to learn about the duties, responsibilities and functions of the OSSS during the Nov. 11 session in Prudence Hall.

Brenner-Scotti and Aikins described the operational structure of their respective areas and the College’s policy of making reasonable accommodations and what those accommodations entail.

Guaranteeing that students with disabilities have access – to courses, advisement, materials, testing, support services and College events such as Commencement – is a federal mandate outlined by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. Making sure that directive is carried out, falls squarely on the shoulders of staff in the OSSS; often in tandem with the Offices of the Registrar, Test Administration, Advisement, Bursar, Financial Aid, Military & Veteran Education and DIAL. Additionally, the OSSS coordinates the needs of students confined to correctional facilities who are permitted to pursue self-directed education.

“We do not change our course requirements for any reason,” noted Aikins. “We do, however, involve the deans and key staff in formatting course

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The Office of Student Special Services (OSSS) staff are (front row, left to right) **Laura Brenner-Scotti**, **Denise Weber**, **Sharon Rock**; and (back row) **Dave Anderson** and **Barbara Aikins**

content or making adjustments for those who are not able to connect to the Internet or access our course materials in the customary ways. For those with disabilities, accommodations often mean extending course deadlines, allowing more time to take proctored exams and making appropriate arrangements during College events. Luckily, many students already possess adaptive technology in their own homes so that our online, Guided Study, FlashTrack™ and TECEP® courses are very practical for them."

"Our staff are continually faced with the intricate, sometimes delicate and always confidential nature surrounding these unique student populations."

*- Dave Anderson
Assistant Vice Provost
for Learner Services*

Aikins noted that a revised staff handbook is in the works. Included in the handbook will be a guide to Datatel coding and interaction protocol. "What staff may not realize is that it is not even legal to ask a student or prospect if they are disabled," added Aikins. "We urge staff to ask the student instead if they would prefer to speak to someone in the Office of Student Special Services. We are happy to take it from there, as our staff may be best equipped to arrange accommodations, which are handled on a case-by-case basis."

The Office of Student Special Services welcomes your suggestions, questions and concerns. Staff can be reached at extension 3415 or via e-mail at ada@tesc.edu

Focus On: Joyce Archer

Flexibility and independence – cornerstones in the College's mission for its students – are often the very elements that make the work environment so pleasing to its staff.

"I like the flexibility of working on my own and I love assisting our students and mentors," noted **Joyce Archer**, secretarial assistant III in DIAL's (Directed Independent Adult Learning) Prior Learning Assessment office. "I find the College is unique in higher education and I thoroughly enjoy interacting with adult learners – especially now that I am a student myself. I also pride myself in the coordination of the National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning," she added of her involvement with the organization, considered by many to be a bellwether in the field of authenticating college-level learning.

In January, Archer will celebrate her eighth year with the College. Prior to coming to DIAL, she worked as a technical assistant in the Office of the Registrar. Before she came to the College, Archer was employed for the Department of Revenue as a technical assistant. She eventually leveraged her Civil Service status to move to academia.

"I got called for an interview after being on the Civil Service list, and after working here for just a short time realized that each day is different, and I never know what to expect in my work with students and mentors," noted Archer. "Most days now are spent processing proposals, running reports, activating courses, processing requisitions, registrations and mailings. I also help Instructional Services with prepping courses and administrative support."

A proud recipient of an associate degree during the College's Commencement Ceremonies in

October, she is already studying for exams in her bachelor's-level courses.

Archer concentrates even her leisurely pursuits in high-activity areas. "In my free time, I love football and attending NFL games whenever I can. I also like rooting for the Oakland Raiders, the Los Angeles Lakers, the New Jersey Devils, the New York Islanders and the New York Yankees." In the precious hours she has left, Archer escapes to the gym to work out.

Archer's son, Michael Opalski, works in the College's Office of Test Administration. Her other point of pride is her granddaughter, Kylie, who turned two on Nov. 15, her 21-year-old twin daughters, Jeanette and Lauren, and 15-year old Olivia. Archer resides in Roebling, N.J.

Archer's affable demeanor puts everyone she meets immediately at ease, so co-workers may be surprised at the resolve that stirs beneath. She admits possessing a solid determination to reach goals she has set for herself.

"Most of my adult life has been dedicated to raising and caring for my children. I decided to fulfill the dreams I had placed on hold by pursuing my college degree," she said. "I've found it both rewarding and enjoyable to do something this positive for myself, as well as my children and my granddaughter. I want to continue to be a role model for them so that they can witness the outcome of hard work and determination. I want them to reap the benefits of education right alongside me and the rewards that come from reaching their own goals. Being a full-time employee, mother, grandmother and college student requires commitment and sacrifice, and I am proud of what I have already accomplished – it's a dream come true."



Joyce Archer
secretarial assistant in the
Prior Learning Assessment Office

Congratulations

Thomas Edison State College congratulated its staff graduates during a breakfast hosted by **Vice President and Provost William Seaton** on Oct. 28.



Celebrating Thomas Edison State College graduates is twice as nice when it is staff. Recent degree recipients pictured above are (foreground, from left to right) **Jared Carter, Jamie Priester, Linda Soltis, Joyce Archer and Estelle Wells**; and (back row) **Charlene Martucci and Tonia Porter**. Celebrating with the grads were **Dean Susan Davenport, Dean Joseph Santora and Vice President and Provost William Seaton**.

Gregg Dye, former assistant director of Academic Advising, exhibited his photography at the Lawrence Headquarters Branch Library in Lawrenceville, N.J., which hosted an artist's reception on Aug. 8. Dye is a Lawrenceville-based amateur photographer whose majestic, naturalistic exhibition, "National Parks of the American West," was on display in the library's East Lobby throughout the month of August. Dye retired from Thomas Edison State College on Sept. 18.

Andrea Porter, program assistant, Office of the Registrar, and long term companion Arthur Parler were recently married in a private ceremony in West Windsor. The couple has a daughter Sierra Alexis.

Jennifer Stark, acting academic records and registration coordinator, and her husband, John, welcomed their son, Grayson David Stark, on Aug. 19. Grayson David weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces.

Staff Activities

Barbara Aikins, ADA coordinator, and director in the Office of Student Special Services, hosted the monthly meeting of New Jersey Association on Higher Education and Disability (NJ AHEAD) on Nov. 6 in Prudence Hall. More than 50 people representing educational institutions and service agencies around the state attended. William Seaton, vice president and provost, presented opening remarks. Aikins is also program coordinator on the NJ AHEAD Executive Board.

Susan C. Cobb, PhD, RN, nursing program advisor in the Office of Nursing, has been appointed by the National League for Nursing to serve as an NLN Ambassador. As a participant in this elite corps, Cobb will help keep faculty and administration informed about the NLN's initiatives, grant opportunities, conferences, publications, workshops and other benefits available to NLN members.



Dr. Susan Cobb



Children's Futures Board members from left to right are, **Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer; Ana Berdecia**, outgoing CF Board vice president and senior fellow/director of the Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children at the John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy and Continuing Studies; **Caroline Purnell Tompkins** admissions counselor, Learner Services, and **Eleanor Horne** vice president of ETS Social Investment Fund at Educational Testing Service

vice president of the CF board. "Children's Futures was spearheaded at the Watson Institute and representatives from Thomas Edison State College staff have traditionally served on the board," noted Berdecia.

Tompkins also serves as an adjunct professor of French at Mercer County Community College, serves part-time in the Development/Audience Services department at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, is a member of Leadership Trenton Alumni Association, serves on the boards of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Mercer and the National Society of Colonial Dames of America. Most recently, Tompkins became a Peace Corps nominee and anticipates a June 2010 deployment to China. During her scheduled 27 months of service, Tompkins will be training educators to teach English. "I'm thrilled and am currently taking Mandarin classes – it is not an easy language to learn!" she noted. To find out more about Children's Futures visit www.childrensfutures.org.

The Division of Planning and Research hosted a seminar for the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce Young Business Leaders Council (YBLC) entitled "Customer Service Communication Skills" on Sept. 25. This interactive seminar addressed essential skills for delivering excellent customer service.

Welcome New Staff



Allison Chambers has been appointed regional military base manager, south central region, and NCPACE coordinator in the Office of Military & Veteran Education. Chambers is located in Dallas, Texas, and may be reached at (214) 240-3171.



Patti Hunt has been appointed regional military base manager, north central region, in the Office of Military & Veteran Education. Hunt is located in Owosso, Mich., and may be reached at (989) 723-1237.



Happy Birthday Marines!

A cake cutting ceremony in honor of the 234th birthday of the United State Marine Corps and Veteran's Day holiday took place on Nov. 10 in the Canal Building. Staff guests of honor were **Randy Schwartz**, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve (Ret.) and **Dr. Ray Young**, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps. (Ret.)

Education Partnerships Support Service Members

The Office of Military & Veteran Education has partnered with three new programs to support military members and their spouses. These partnerships allow Thomas Edison State College to enable the men and women of the armed forces and their families to reach their educational goals.

General Education Mobile (GEM) is a partnership with The Community College of the Air Force (CCOYA) wherein the College offers general education curricula in a clustered, online component which enables CCOYA students to complete this portion of their course work in a more efficient manner. **AU-ABC Program** - Air University Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative Program participants can earn bachelor's degrees through Air University's Air Force Portal, allowing students to fulfill course requirements online. Participants can then apply their Community College of the Air Force credits toward a bachelor's degree at Thomas Edison State College. The **Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts** program now offers up to \$6,000 to military spouses who are interested in pursuing degree programs, licenses and credentials.

Staff Dress Up and Party

Those who attended the **Halloween Party** in the Great Hall on Oct. 23 will be haunted with the memory for months to come (but in a good way). Pictured with our egg-ceptional President **Dr. George A. Pruitt**, are the winners of the costume contest: (left to right) **Tom Phillips** as Heather Brooks (first place); **Estelle Wells** as 'Boo' Peep (second place); and **Tracy Tosti** as the farmer and **Olga Napoleon, Mary Hack** and **Jennifer Montone** as three blind mice (third place). To view all the photos of the Halloween Party, please visit myEdison®, click on the Community tab, the TESC Employee link and the Photos tab in the left column.



Capital Campus is produced by the Office of Communications at Thomas Edison State College. To submit a story idea for the newsletter or for more information, please contact Linda Soltis at extension 2065.