

Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY



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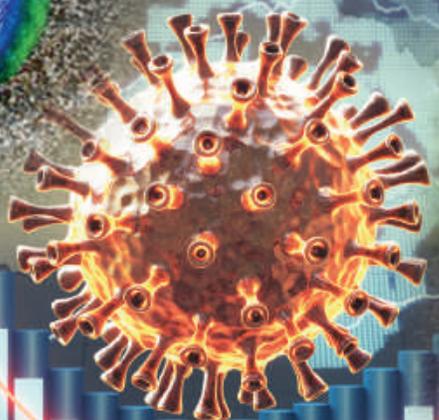
Thomas Edison State University
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TESU
 THANKS OUR
 #HEALTHCAREHEROES

Apart soon to be together AGAIN

THANK YOU
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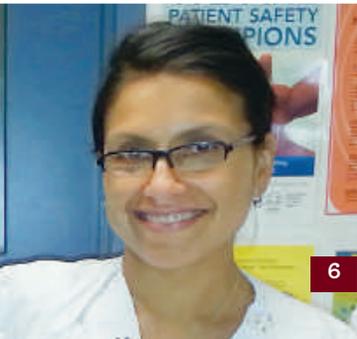




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Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,

Welcome to our fall issue of *Invention* magazine. Last year we devoted this edition entirely to our annual Commencement and celebrating our graduates. But, of course, so much is different this year. After surveying our graduates and in light of public health concerns and state restrictions, we made the difficult decision to replace our traditional in-person ceremony with a virtual Commencement later this month. While the in-person experience is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our graduates, we are confident that our virtual ceremony will also celebrate their tremendous accomplishments, albeit in a different manner. In addition to our virtual celebration, we hope you will join us at next fall's in-person Commencement when we also plan to recognize our 2020 graduates.

While the pandemic may have changed many things, including how we work, how we teach our children and how we gather with our families, for thousands of Thomas Edison State University students, it did not change their desire nor determination to achieve their academic goals. And so, in this issue, we profile a handful of this year's amazing graduates and their unique stories.

We've chosen to profile at least one graduate of each of our Academic Schools, to give you a sample of the lives we've changed and the paths our graduates have followed on their way to success.

In these unprecedented times, I am particularly taken by how we have been able to chronicle what is actually occurring in our graduates' lives against the backdrop of a persistent pandemic, whether it is triumphing over HIV, conquering infertility, serving as both parent and teacher at home, providing neonatal patient care, marshalling hospital staff, coordinating public health emergency response, advocating for victims' rights or furthering the journey toward racial equity. All the while, our students and graduates have relentlessly juggled multiple responsibilities while soldiering through rigorous academic degree programs.

For every life story told on these pages, there are hundreds more. Each of our students is unique, but at the same time, each is connected to an unwavering desire to use their education and their new sense of accomplishment to advance their careers, their personal lives and their world. I am disappointed that I do not get to look each one of them in the eye and see them shine with well-deserved pride. However, in person or virtually, I could not be more proud of the work of each and every TESU graduate.

I have always said that our Commencement each fall is the most inspiring day of the year for me and for everyone who works on behalf of our students at TESU. We have missed celebrating with you, we long to feel the joy that fills the arena and to see the smiles of your families and friends as they join you in celebration. But, even without the traditional Commencement ceremony, I know that our students have experienced a sense of accomplishment and their trust in a new and better future reinforces the value of the TESU mission and the work we all do in support of our students.

Until we can meet again, I hope you stay safe and healthy and enjoy this issue.



A. Hancock, PhD
President



❖ Tiffani Reneau, MAEdL '20

Tiffani Reneau leans on family, friends and mentors to accomplish her goal.

No one loves a challenge more than Tiffani Reneau – but, when she set a goal of earning her master’s degree in 18 months, she had no idea just how many extraordinary events would unfold during that time.

“Because of my determination to finish my master’s degree in 18 months, I found that balance, support from my loved ones, and guidance and support from my TESU mentors and staff was crucial in accomplishing this goal in challenging times,” said Reneau, who earned her Master of Arts in Educational Leadership (MAEdL) this year.

In addition to earning her degree, Reneau had another aspiration.

adulthood,” Reneau professed. “I come from a family who have served in the military and in law enforcement for generations. My initial motivation for joining was my dad who served more than 20 years in the U.S. Army Reserves. However, once I began recruit training, I realized that this was not only a way to honor my family and country, it was an opportunity to grow and evolve through exposure to the many people and places that I otherwise would have never experienced.”

“BECAUSE OF MY DETERMINATION TO FINISH MY MASTER’S DEGREE IN 18 MONTHS DESPITE ALL OF LIFE’S OTHER CHALLENGES, I FOUND THAT BALANCE, SUPPORT FROM MY LOVED ONES, AND GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM MY TESU MENTORS AND COACHES WAS CRUCIAL IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS GOAL.”

Tiffani Reneau

the power of

When she began her first course in the MAEdL degree in School Business Administration in July 2018, Reneau, a full-time staff accountant with Linden Public Schools, was also undergoing fertility treatments in hopes of conceiving her first child.

“By the grace of God, my husband and I welcomed a baby girl, Laila Nicole Reneau, in April 2019,” she enthused. “I remember being in the delivery room and still submitting assignments. I had previously contacted the mentors in both courses that I was taking and informed them that I was being induced. Despite an emergency procedure, two blood transfusions and a five-day hospital stay, I was able to catch up on all of my assignments within one week of being discharged.

“I am proud to say that I completed my master’s degree in 18 months as planned in addition to the challenges surrounding conceiving and delivering Laila, being a first-time mom and working full time,” Reneau added. “However, I could not have accomplished this without support from my family and friends, it truly was a group effort.”

The power of teamwork is something that Reneau learned early in life. Joining the U.S. Marine Corps right out of high school, Reneau served from September 1998 to August 2003.

“I am proud of serving in the USMC with such amazing men and women who have shaped and positively influenced me. I truly believe that serving, beginning at the age of 17 until the age of 22, was a crucial time for me as I was just entering

Reneau noted that earning her MAEdL degree in School Business Administration not only deepened her knowledge of the field, it created an insight that she previously did not have.

“Whether or not I am able to serve in the capacity of a school business administrator in the near future, I am grateful for my TESU experience,” she declared. “The curriculum helped me to form working relationships with administrators to whom I would not have access to otherwise. Through the many conversations, projects, interviews, presentations and surveys that I created and completed, I was able to look at that role through a different lens. I now have a better understanding and a greater appreciation for the role that each of us plays in the success of students, staff and our entire school community.”

Reneau, who lives in Piscataway, N.J., with her husband, La Var, and their toddler daughter, noted that her spare time is spent enjoying family and friends.

“I love to entertain, so this pandemic has been challenging,” she conceded. “However, I am grateful that I have been able to bond on a deeper level with my husband and daughter as a result. In completing my degree, I had to spend much of my time outside of work on assignments for my courses. Because my daughter was only 8 months old when I completed my degree, I felt that I missed out on some precious time with her. Being quarantined gave me a chance to make up for that time and afforded me the



TEAMWORK

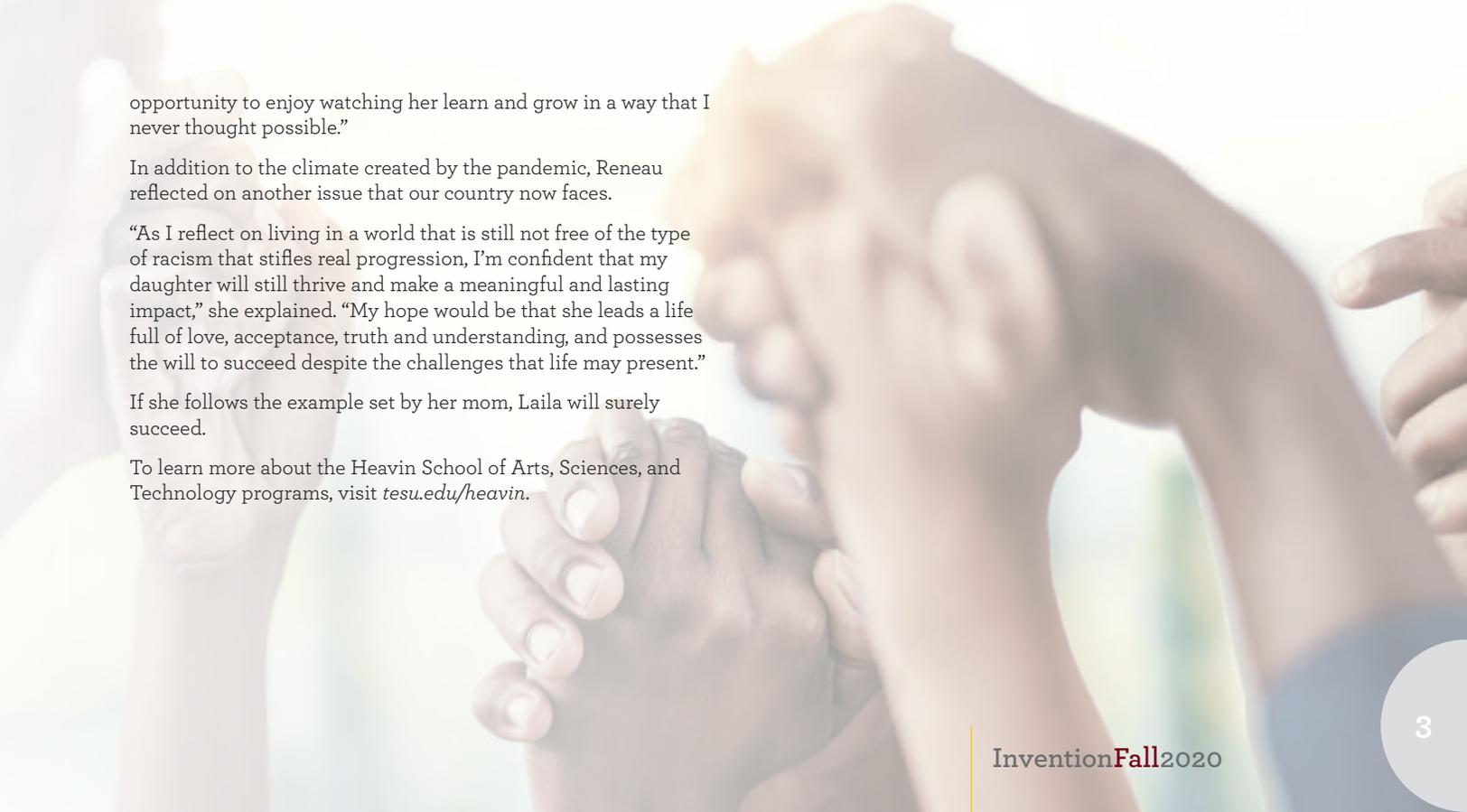
opportunity to enjoy watching her learn and grow in a way that I never thought possible.”

In addition to the climate created by the pandemic, Reneau reflected on another issue that our country now faces.

“As I reflect on living in a world that is still not free of the type of racism that stifles real progression, I’m confident that my daughter will still thrive and make a meaningful and lasting impact,” she explained. “My hope would be that she leads a life full of love, acceptance, truth and understanding, and possesses the will to succeed despite the challenges that life may present.”

If she follows the example set by her mom, Laila will surely succeed.

To learn more about the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology programs, visit tesu.edu/heavin.



TARGET

acquired

Thomas Dougherty, MSIT '20

Rocket attacks and a pandemic could not keep Tom Dougherty from his graduate degree goals.

"I was on a tight schedule in 2019 to complete a course assignment when our base in Afghanistan came under enemy rocket fire," said the U.S. Army sergeant and Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) 2020 program graduate. "I was so determined to complete my assignment that, while I was waiting for the big voice to give the 'all clear,' I continued to study in the meager light that was available."

Dougherty, who is now pursuing his MBA degree and working in a civilian position as a sales strategic analyst while serving with the New Jersey Army National Guard (NJARNG), readily admits that he may have bitten off more than he could chew at the time. But with his weapon and adequate cover, he had the fortitude to complete and submit his TESU assignment before the deadline.

Thomas Dougherty, MSIT '20, made it a dual mission to serve his country and continue his education.

"Despite working 12-hour days and completing course assignments at home and abroad, there was no way I was backing down," he noted. "I've even called one of my professors at 0100 Afghanistan time just to clarify the instructions on one of our projects."

Dougherty originally enlisted in the Army in 2015 and graduated from basic training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, S.C., before departing for Advanced Individual Training as a UH-60 Black Hawk mechanic in Fort Eustis, Va. After completing his training as the Distinguished Honor Graduate in 2016, he enrolled in the Army's Basic Leadership Course in 2017 and made the coveted Commandant's List. He enrolled at TESU just as he was promoted to the rank of sergeant and deployed with New Jersey's MEDEVAC unit to Afghanistan in 2019.

"When I attended college earlier in my life, I did not have adequate career guidance. I ended up switching universities after my freshman year and didn't receive any help during the transition," he said. "I didn't know what to major in so settled into something I was familiar with - music. I earned a BA degree in music with a minor in cultural geography from Rutgers University. Despite landing an internship at SiriusXM Radio the same year, I was ill prepared for the lack of entry-level job opportunities."

He eventually found a part-time position at Apple Inc. and discovered that its market-driven technology environment opened up a world of possibilities. Taking advantage of NJARNG's tuition benefits, he refocused his pursuits on his growing interest in information technology and looked to TESU as the institution that would provide the access, curriculum and course formats he needed.

"The military understands the value of smart soldiers and is willing to work with the state to financially support continuing education for its members," he noted. "You do not see that level of investment outside of the defense industry." With his new MSIT degree in Cybersecurity - Critical Infrastructure in hand, and his skills in sales,

analytics and marketing on his resume, Dougherty is optimistic that he will be well-positioned for the recovering economy. He is now enrolled in the University's MBA degree in Marketing program and is eager to advance to TESU's online Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program.

"You can't ask for a better learning environment while you are deployed."

"YOU CAN'T ASK FOR A BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHILE YOU ARE DEPLOYED... HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR TESU'S ONLINE PROGRAMS, THERE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANY WAY I COULD HAVE EARNED MY MASTER'S DEGREE."

Thomas Dougherty

Granted, the workspace may become a little hostile, but had it not been for TESU's online programs, there would not have been any way I could have earned my master's degree. My mentors were the best part of the experience. I was steadily communicating with them while deployed, and they were an invaluable part of my education."

In his civilian position as a sales strategic analyst with a wireless accessories distributor, Dougherty monitors his company's sales trends, goals and profits. He and fellow employees have had to work harder recently and intensify their efforts in order to maintain their employer's position in the market. It's a common scenario as the COVID-19 pandemic has left small and large business owners, healthcare providers, retailers and educators scrambling to adapt.

Outside of working and military duties, Dougherty volunteers as a senior webmaster for the Coast Guard Enlisted Memorial Foundation. He has also volunteered with the United Service Organizations (USO) where his moral code and compassion for fellow service members earned him the Volunteer of Quarter award in 2019 for the Southwest Asia region during his deployment. Also a former USO Presidential Volunteer Service Award recipient, he has been a member of the American Legion since 2016 as well as a member and supporter of Drum Corps International and Drum Corps Association. As hobbies go, he considers traveling and learning about other cultures at the very top of the list.

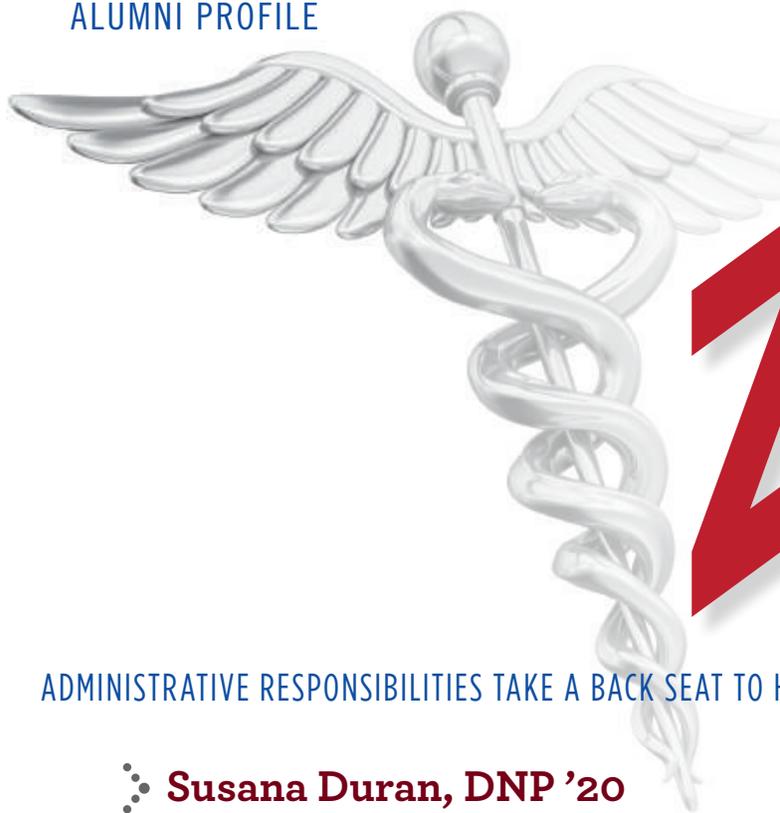
"My wife, Julianna, is my biggest supporter. And she has been there for me in my career, military enlistment and deployment as well as my return to higher education." In a surprise trip to Tokyo in 2017, Dougherty took her to a small town north of Mt. Fuji and proposed marriage. He also describes his parents as having an enduring influence. "My father was deployed to the Persian Gulf War and retired after 30 years of service with the U.S. Coast Guard while my mother



Thomas Dougherty uses Mt. Fuji as a backdrop to propose to wife Julianna during the couple's trip to Japan in 2017.

continuously worked toward completing her teaching degree. All the while, we moved from one location to another. Each time, she hoped that the college in our new town would accept her previous school's credits. They tirelessly represented both worlds that I now embrace: military service and higher education."

If you would like to learn more about the programs offered in the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, visit tesu.edu/heavin. To learn more about the programs offered in the School of Business and Management, visit tesu.edu/business.



Healthcare's GROUND

ZERO

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES TAKE A BACK SEAT TO HANDS-ON NURSING CARE AT THE HEIGHT OF THE PANDEMIC

❖ Susana Duran, DNP '20

The lives of Thomas Edison State University alum Susana Duran and her co-workers changed forever when Wyckoff Heights Medical Center became the first facility in New York City to treat COVID-19 positive patients in March 2020.

Before the pandemic made its way to the United States, Duran's days as the director of Nursing Education at the Brooklyn, N.Y., facility consisted of overseeing the development of educational activities for nursing and ancillary staff, ensuring staff are up to date on annual competencies and certifications and assisting in the coordination of learning activities for cohorts of new graduate nurses.

At the same time, she was earning her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree from Thomas Edison State University.

"The DNP program was rigorous, demanding and life changing. When I enrolled in the full-time track to be completed in 18 months, I knew that it would be challenging but ultimately rewarding," Duran said. "TESU provided

continuous support throughout the DNP journey and beyond. I appreciate the guidance received from all the mentors and Associate Dean Ana Maria Catanzaro."

Duran's culminating DNP project was aimed at improving triage practices by providing nurses with evidence-based practice knowledge of the Emergency Severity Index (ESI) guidelines. The mentored Practicum aimed to reduce the number of errors in triage and to improve triage decision making. Her project findings led to a systems-level change at the medical center in triage training procedures available to staff and audit processes. The staff has been empowered to use critical-thinking skills to improve triage of the patient populations through prevention of delays in care due to incorrect ESI-level assignment, resulting in more positive patient outcomes.

Duran said that working full time while participating in the DNP program was demanding, but manageable. Then, everything changed in the second week of March. COVID-19 made its way to the northeastern U.S. inundating the New

York City area with an initial spike in cases.

Citizens in neighboring states soon entered their most rigid phases of lockdown and social distancing protocols. Meanwhile, Duran was getting in her car every morning alongside her 22-year-old son, Anthony, and heading straight into the storm.

"My son also works in my facility in the operating room as a materials management technician," Duran explains. "Every day we drove into work together with no idea of what we were about to encounter."

From there, Duran's job escalated from hectic to organized chaos as her facility was on the forefront of combating the virus that would quickly grip area healthcare facilities.

"In the second week of March, we treated the first COVID-19 positive patient in New York City. After that, our lives were never the same," Duran says. "Staff quickly received training on new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations regarding



the use of personal protective equipment and the management of COVID-19 patients. A medical-surgical unit that had been closed for several years was reopened to accommodate incoming patients. The emergency department was restructured to handle critically ill patients and triage areas were designated to identify and isolate possible COVID-19 patients.”

The onslaught brought more than just departmental changes to the everyday lives of Duran and her co-workers.

“I remember running from code to code, doing CPR on the floor, assisting with numerous intubations, transferring patients to different units and providing postmortem care. I was doing all of it, every day, day after day,” Duran recalls. “I would work 10-hour days and would go home feeling defeated and helpless because so many lives were lost. Patients who I spoke with one day would die overnight. I cried, prayed and begged for it to stop and for God to protect my family and me.”

“PATIENTS WHO I SPOKE WITH ONE DAY WOULD DIE OVERNIGHT. I CRIED, PRAYED AND BEGGED FOR IT TO STOP AND FOR GOD TO PROTECT MY FAMILY AND ME.”

Susana Duran

Then, the virus hit home. Duran’s husband Jose became ill on March 27, showing signs of fever and malaise before being diagnosed with coronavirus later that week. With isolation and care, Jose recovered with mild symptoms.

“I saw several fellow staff members get sick and become hospitalized. We lost staff members and their loved ones to the virus. These moments were heartbreaking, frustrating and hopeless,” Duran recalled. “There were critically ill patients on every floor, and donated tablet devices were used to connect them with their loved ones. There are so many stories of so many patients that I helped or held their hand before they got intubated or before they passed. I will never forget them.”

Duran was able to push through with the motivation of her family behind her, and her gratitude that she remained healthy and strong enough throughout the chaos to continue working to aid in the recovery of her patients. She said she was immediately able to utilize skills picked up through the DNP program, which she felt she completed in the middle of the whirlwind.

“During the middle of this pandemic, I could not rejoice nor comprehend that I had completed my DNP studies,” Duran explained, “but I knew the DNP course work prepared me to deal with the drastic changes brought on by the pandemic.”

As New York slowly approaches the light at the end of the tunnel, Duran can look back on her achievements from before and throughout the pandemic and use them to plan for her future.



Susana Duran (left) and her Wyckoff Heights Medical Center colleague Cheryl Stoutenburg enjoy the company of therapy animals brought in by Fairview Rehab and Nursing Home. The animals were brought to Wyckoff in June to raise the spirits of the healthcare workers battling the pandemic on the front lines.

“I am a Latino woman who has overcome adversity, racism and cultural indifference. As a DNP-prepared leader, I would like to advocate for better educational opportunities for minority women. I want to inspire and motivate anyone to follow their dreams and pursue higher levels of education,” Duran explains.

“I never had anyone push me, but I saw my mother’s struggles as an immigrant factory worker from Ecuador, who always provided me with everything that I needed. I dedicate my success to my mother for her perseverance and will to live, and I want to become a role model in my son’s journey to success and happiness. He has also enrolled in TESU and will soon complete a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration.”

Duran lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., with her son, husband, mother and their seven pets, and dreams of opening a small school to provide nurses with certification training, reviews and other skill-enhancement activities.

To learn more about the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing programs, visit tesu.edu/nursing.



PAUSE



The DeJesus family, pictured from the left, Emanuel, Hector, Olivia, Stephanie and Jonathan, enjoying some together time.

❖ Hector DeJesus, BSAST '16, MBA '20

Hector DeJesus puts his career on hold to focus on his family during COVID.

Hector DeJesus has built a successful career path in the field of nuclear engineering and data analytics, but his most recent accomplishment has been as a stay-at-home dad.

As with most of the world, the DeJesus family has had to adapt to the Coronavirus pandemic. DeJesus and his wife, Stephanie, a healthcare worker who was putting in seven nights in a row in the ICU for the first two months of the COVID-19 quarantine, were struggling to balance their time between work, the kids, the house and everything else.

“We tried helping the kids with their online schooling while both working full-time jobs for a few months, but

it wasn't going too well for the kids,” said DeJesus, who earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Data Analytics this year and a Bachelor of Science in Applied Science and Technology (BSAST) degree in Nuclear Energy Engineering in 2016 from TESU. He was also honored with the Arnold Fletcher Award for maintaining a GPA above 3.5 while earning his BSAST.

“We decided it would be best for the family if one of us put our career on hold to focus on our family. Stephanie saves lives every night she works, so it wasn't a difficult decision for me to do it,” DeJesus explained. “The stories she told me about what she was going through keeping patients alive was enough to know that this was the right decision. After about three weeks, I could already see the difference. Plus, since I earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree

from TESU, it wouldn't be difficult to start my career back up once the kids go back to school.”

DeJesus' professional track record confirms that assertion.

When DeJesus began pursuing his master's degree at the University, he was an operations supervisor with Veolia North America, a remote operations support for industrial water and wastewater. Before taking time to focus on his family, DeJesus had garnered a management position with Vicinity Energy, a Veolia spinoff that is comprised of central energy plants and associated distribution networks that supply steam or hot water, chilled water and electricity, across 13 networks in 10 major cities, and is the largest district energy provider in North America.

“My role was to expand on the research from my MBA and find more efficiency opportunities across the fleet,” he explained. “My final Capstone project

BUTTON

used actual data obtained from the plant to analyze the plant's performance and customer metrics. The goal was to locate opportunities to increase revenue and lower cost. The project helped identify more than a million dollars of potential opportunity, which was one of the main reasons I was promoted to director of Technical Performance."

His career trajectory began when his brother Benjamin joined the Marines in 2000, which motivated DeJesus to join the U.S. Navy in 2001.

"My ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) score allowed me to become a Navy nuclear reactor operator, which was instrumental in my career path," DeJesus recalled. "I have had so many duties in the U.S. Navy that helped influence

"TAKING ONE OR TWO CLASSES A SEMESTER FOR EACH DEGREE ALLOWED ME TO FINISH MY NUCLEAR ENGINEERING DEGREE IN SIX YEARS AND MY MBA IN TWO."

Hector DeJesus

my career. The 18 months of training helped teach me about nuclear power and, at 20 years old, it allowed me to start an S8G nuclear reactor in a training facility in New York.

"On the USS Nimitz CVN 68, I qualified as reactor technician, which allowed me to travel to Electronics Technician Maintenance School in Hawaii, where we were taught how to troubleshoot down to the component level. I still use that trouble-shooting method today in every problem I approach. As reactor technicians, we supervised most of the surveillances, reactor startups, shutdowns and drills. These supervisory skills allowed me to advance in my career while working for Exelon in the Dresden and Oyster Creek Nuclear power plants."

DeJesus, who served six years in the Navy and ranked as an E5 before he was honorably discharged in 2007, started working on his nuclear engineering degree in 2010 after it was announced that the Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Plant would close in 2019.

"This was the start of my motivation to continue my education in preparation for the closure," he explained. "At the Oyster Creek plant, I was working on a rotating shift schedule, so using TESU's online method worked best with that schedule. Taking one or two classes a semester for each degree allowed me to finish my nuclear engineering degree in six years and my MBA in two."

Besides being a "supplemental teacher" at home, DeJesus is using his time away from work constructively. He recently



finished an Executive Leadership Certificate at Cornell University, is currently learning about SQL (Structured Query Language) on *Udemy.com* and plans to take Microsoft Power BI and other courses that support his data analytics degree. He's currently planning on starting another Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Information Technology with TESU, which has the database management courses he's looking for to become a stronger candidate for future opportunities.

"Most of my spare time will be focused on my family and personal development while we wait the COVID pandemic out. If I could wish for anything that would come true, it would be for this pandemic to be behind us. The physical and mental stress it is causing families across the globe will have a lasting impact for years to come," he predicted.

The DeJesus family lives in South Jersey and includes children Olivia, Jonathan and Emanuel, who, DeJesus says, "are the true inspiration for wanting to continue excelling in what I do. We have about six more years until college starts, and I want to be able to help support that time when it comes."

DeJesus is quick to assert that all his accomplishments were attainable because of the support of his wife, who, he said, "motivated me to continue going for my MBA and who earned a doctorate as a nurse practitioner as well. We have always been motivated and supportive of each other's success. She has been a source of strength throughout my entire career."

To learn more about the School of Business and Management programs, visit tesu.edu/business.

families

❖ Diashana M. Coleman, BA '17, MSM '20

Diashana M. Coleman can tell you that the most fruitful academic journeys rarely follow a direct path.

Immediately following high school, Diashana M. Coleman had the opportunity to attend a state university in New Jersey, but the experience was short-lived. Though her aspirations at the time included finishing college, life provided a different path for her – parenthood.

Coleman was 20 years old when her first son, TyQuan, was born. At age 25, she had her second son, Traevon.

“I had to make sure that my children, who are now adult men, were properly taken care of in every aspect – physically, academically, mentally, financially,” she explained. “My life’s journey has been that of putting family first, and I’ve worked hard to guarantee their overall stability in life. That journey, however, has not been easy and could not have been fruitful without the support and love of my family and friends who were always there and willing to ‘fill in the blanks’ and pick up the pieces as needed.”

With that support, Coleman was able to raise her children while working full time as a public servant, a field in which she now has 28 years of experience. During that time, she was introduced to Thomas Edison State University, decades before Coleman would attend as a student.

“My supervisor back in 1993 suggested to me, on numerous occasions, to look into completing my degree at Thomas Edison,” she recalled. “Unfortunately, at that time, it was impossible for me to pursue an education. For years, he continued to press me on my goal of returning to school and insisted that

TESU would be ideal for me based on the affordable tuition rates and the flexibility of online learning, but still I did not take heed right away.”

After years of attending open houses, webinars and information sessions that the University hosted, Coleman decided it was time to take her shot, finally enrolling as time and opportunity seemed to be in perfect alignment alongside the affordability of the tuition plans offered by the University.

“I didn’t commit to actually attending TESU until May 2015,” Coleman said. “That was when it finally became time to enroll and accomplish the mission I had set for myself almost 30 years prior.”

In 2017, that mission was accomplished as Coleman earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and qualified for the Arnold Fletcher Award for exceptional achievement in online learning by earning an overall grade point average of 3.5 or higher at the University. During her undergraduate study, she also became a recipient of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation Scholarship.

“I chose to study criminal justice after one of my positions as a public servant involved reviewing and reporting crime statistics for the local housing authority,” Coleman explained. “There are so many interesting variables that unexpectedly come into play when looking at criminal acts occurring, such as climate trends, population, economy and more. I decided to pursue the formal education to support my interest, and it was



Diashana M. Coleman celebrates earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice at Commencement 2017 with her sons, Traevon, left, and TyQuan.

intriguing to learn of the many theories and beliefs surrounding criminal behavior.”

From there, Coleman took things a step further, deciding to return to TESU to pursue her Master of Science in Management (MSM) degree in Public Service Administration and Leadership as an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 4277 Scholarship recipient.

“It was time to combine everything I had learned through education with my recent responsibilities as a public servant, as I have spent quite some time in an administrative assistant or supervisory capacity,” Coleman said. “Just before COVID-19 became rampant in the area, I was reassigned to the public safety department to hone my skills while growing and honing my educational background in the field.”

first:

Toward the end of March, Coleman's job shifted as the COVID-19 lockdown took over the country. For her, the extra time allowed her to cross the finish line on her graduate education.

"I could focus my efforts solely on completing the remaining course work without the added concerns of juggling school and work as in the past. The final assignments were completed with ease and less stress than during my typical routine," Coleman explained.

The completion and celebration of the achievement, however, has been difficult under the haze of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Honestly, I don't think I have fully embraced the idea of completing my graduate degree although I received the physical degree document back in June, thus making it official," Coleman said. "My feelings are like I'm sure those of many 2020 graduates, whether it is college, high school, middle school, etc. Something was missing in terms of the celebration of this major achievement. The chatter, thrill, hype surrounding graduation and all its splendor was truly overshadowed by COVID."

"I must admit, the onset of COVID-19 with its fatalities and lockdowns earlier in the year have given me a newfound realization of just how precious life is and how being able to spend time with family and friends is paramount."

Coleman resides in Union County with her family. Through the uncertainty that continues to send areas of the country, and the world, into differing states of quarantine, she is looking forward to discovering the future for herself, after spending so much of her life dedicated to the paths' of her children.

"Now that my children are adults, and I have finally completed my graduate degree, I am now focusing on myself and trying to determine what I want my life to look like," Coleman explained. "I might even look into possibly pursuing one of the certificate programs that are offered by TESU to complement my degrees.

"Time will tell."

To learn more about the programs available at the John S. Watson School of Public Service, please visit tesu.edu/watson.



"I didn't commit to actually attending TESU until May 2015. That was when it finally became time to enroll and accomplish the mission I had set for myself almost 30 years prior."

INTENSIVE CARE

**Michael Gallagher is
tending to the tiniest
and most vulnerable
patients amid the
COVID-19 pandemic.**



Michael Gallagher, BSN '19

While the COVID-19 pandemic left many of us sheltering in place, Michael Gallagher and fellow RNs never had that luxury.

"Where the pandemic most directly impacted us was in the almost daily institutional policy changes and our potential exposure during COVID-positive labor and deliveries," said Gallagher, a December 2019 graduate of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program.

In his current role as a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) nurse for Capital Health in Hopewell Township, N.J., he considers himself luckier than most.

"Even though COVID-19 has certainly changed the healthcare landscape, the impact to our department has been minimal," he noted. "The NICU has always been a closed unit, with rigid restrictions governing infection control and access."

Gallagher began his higher education journey as a biology major at Arcadia University in Glenside, Pa. It wasn't until his junior year that he began to consider a career in nursing. He said that his mother, Maureen, who has been in the profession for more than 40 years, set an indelible example of leadership, willpower and tenacity. In his shift into the field, he continued to look to her as a role model.

While attending Arcadia, Gallagher was also a D3 collegiate swimmer, serving as team captain in his junior and senior year.

"Those academic and extracurricular experiences helped hone my ability to adapt to most situations. During the summers, I served as both an inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation assistant for the Capital Health Rehabilitation Department," he said. The job was his first foray into patient care, and it solidified his attraction to the field.

The growing alliance of RNs in his immediate family includes his brother, Daniel Marino, who is currently a nurse manager at Penn Medicine Princeton Health in Princeton, N.J. Marino earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree from TESU in 2013.

When Gallagher enrolled in the Accelerated Program in 2018, fellow

students in his cohort were entering the field from many backgrounds.

"I am a huge proponent of exposure to diverse ideas and experiences. I also believe the single most important aspect of the program was how much the nurse educators and staff fostered the values of free thinking, competency and independence in aspiring nurses," he said. "While there was always a learning curve, TESU did its best to ensure that each student would be adequately prepared to go into any nursing situation and perform with professionalism and poise."

Once he had completed the program's condensed 12-month cycle of classroom-based courses, patient simulation lab exposure, online study and onground clinical experiences, he felt prepared to take on the NCLEX-RN exam.

"After about a month of studying using the resources provided by TESU and third party study apps, I passed the exam in the minimum amount of 75 questions at the time."

Gallagher admits that he was by no means a shoo-in as a nursing degree candidate, but noted that the program offered the necessary tools to overcome the hurdles and brisk academic pace.

"The single most important piece of advice for any student is one that I practiced constantly during my time at TESU: Do not be afraid to ask for help. This is not a debate about pride or ego, if you need help, ask for it, then make an effort to implement change and you'll likely succeed," said Gallagher, whose tuition costs were eased by the School's Helene Fuld Health Trust Scholarship Fund. "I altered my study tactics every term until I found what worked for me. I attended tutoring sessions provided by TESU, group study sessions and open labs. I stayed after hours to study and never hesitated to ask for assistance when I needed it. The nurse educators and deans were always available to help and sincerely wanted to see us succeed."

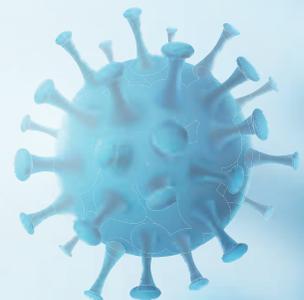
In a phenomena often repeated elsewhere, Gallagher is the only male RN in his unit. But times are changing. Though the field continues to be female dominated, males are entering the profession in growing numbers.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the number of males in the field of nursing has more than tripled since 1970, rising from 2.7 that year to 11.1 percent* in 2019. And the employment outlook for RNs overall remains favorable. According to the *BLS.gov* website, employment of registered nurses is projected to grow 12 percent through 2028 – much faster than the average for all occupations.

"I've had an amazing introduction to my unit and am surrounded by amazing nurses, doctors and managers alike," he said. "The most challenging aspect of being a newly graduated nurse is that the NICU is such a specialized field vastly different from the adult patient world. I have to essentially learn about an entirely new category of patients as well as procedures often specific to the youngest, tiniest and often most vulnerable among them." On any given day, Gallagher's duties can range from assisting the neonatologists with deliveries that may require NICU team intervention (currently, with an experienced nurse by his side), to assisting in daily care for patients admitted to his unit. He also performs admissions to the NICU, patient assessments and educating parents about daily care for their newborns and what to expect after their discharge.

Off the clock, Gallagher serves as an assistant varsity swim coach for Pennsbury High School in Fairless Hills, Pa. He takes the 'healthy body, healthy mind' mentality a step further with daily exercise. He is also a podcast creator and amateur film maker whose work can be found on the Amateur Auteurs channel on YouTube.

To learn more about the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing programs, visit tesu.edu/nursing.



THE TASSEL WAS WORTH THE HASSLE.

They say the “Tassel is Worth the Hassle” and in no year were the challenges more palpable than this. Nonetheless, thousands of TESU graduates managed to power through their degree requirements to finish in style. Their *Invention* photo submissions commemorate the pride they took in their virtual celebrations. We share their pride and look forward to the University’s virtual Commencement in mid-October and to inviting our 2020 celebrants to join us in person during our fall 2021 Commencement.





2020

Thomas Edison State University
Certificate of Achievement
Bachelor of Science
Major in Business Administration
Name: [Name]

Thomas Edison State University
Certificate of Achievement
Bachelor of Science
Major in Business Administration
Name: [Name]

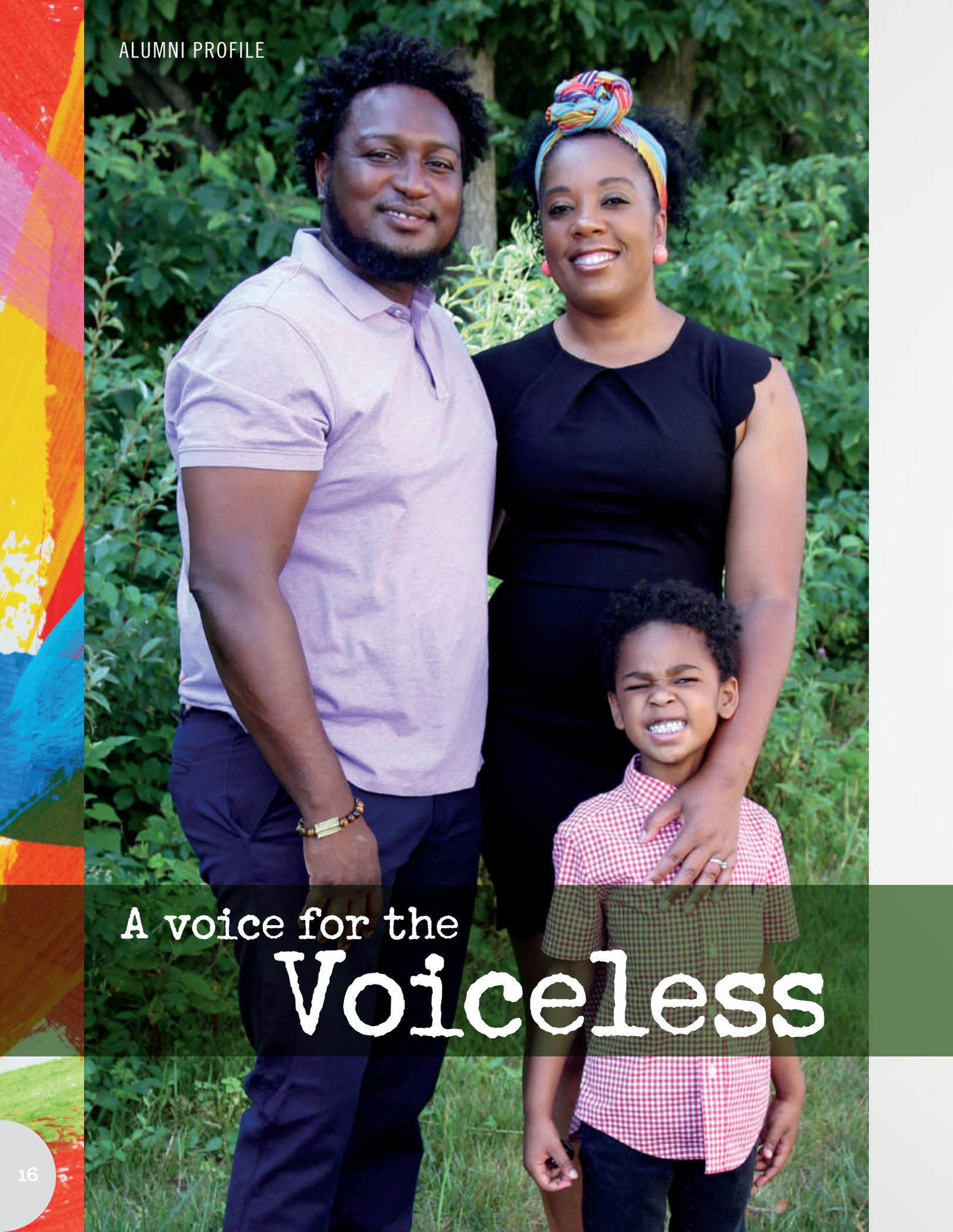
Thomas Edison State University
Certificate of Achievement
Bachelor of Science
Major in Business Administration
Name: [Name]

Thomas Edison State University
Certificate of Achievement
Bachelor of Science
Major in Business Administration
Name: [Name]

Thomas Edison State University
Certificate of Achievement
Bachelor of Science
Major in Business Administration
Name: [Name]



Invention Fall 2020



A voice for the
Voiceless

❖ Melody Ward, AAHS '18, BSHS '20

Melody Ward's newly earned degree is her passport to the next level of victim advocacy.

A TESU degree has helped Melody Ward realize her full potential. Her next chapter will focus on providing leadership-level advocacy so that others can do the same.

"My degree has significantly impacted my career and opened doors to many new opportunities in the human services field," said Ward, a Bachelor of Science in Human Services (BSHS) 2020 graduate, who recently began her role as a sexual assault advocate with the Center for Family Services in southern New Jersey.

A 100-year-old organization with 1,400 staff members and volunteers, the Center for Family Services operates more than 70 programs – among them, the Services Empowering the Rights of Victims (SERV) program of which Ward is a part. "I'm immensely proud to be a part of

me in the direction I wanted to go professionally," she noted. Ward enrolled in the School's Associate in Arts in Human Services (AAHS) degree program where she was immediately exposed to the techniques and agencies necessary to serve the client populations to which she was already accustomed, with an emphasis on cultural diversity.

"Moving toward cultural equity and addressing health disparities in minority communities were driving forces in obtaining my degrees," said Ward. "I loved the diversity of students in our online courses. During our Discussion Board assignments there were so many different perspectives and visions associated with how to best address the topics covered, that I always felt engaged."

"I LOVED THE DIVERSITY OF STUDENTS IN OUR ONLINE COURSES. DURING OUR DISCUSSION BOARD ASSIGNMENTS THERE WERE SO MANY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND VISIONS ASSOCIATED WITH HOW TO BEST ADDRESS THE TOPICS COVERED, THAT I ALWAYS FELT ENGAGED."

Melody Ward

the SERV team and have always been motivated to help others who are at risk. My new role allows me to focus on my passion: providing a voice to the voiceless."

She and fellow SERV members routinely provide crisis intervention counseling, connection to resources and professional support to victims of sexual violence, domestic abuse and human trafficking through the program's 24-hour hotline, virtual support groups and emergency shelters.

Ward was originally referred to TESU by an alum when she was considering the idea of returning to college years back. As she searched local programs based on her career objectives, the John S. Watson School of Public Service immediately surfaced.

"The School's human services program was in line with the work I was doing at the time as a medical department secretary, and I knew it would take

In what she described as a "nice push toward furthering her education," Ward utilized the Dr. Merodie A. Hancock \$500 Inauguration Voucher to enroll in the BSHS program. The voucher was offered at Hancock's induction as TESU's fourth president during its 2018 Commencement ceremonies. The leg up was an inducement for Ward to power ahead.

"My journey has taught me that it is never too late complete a major goal. The hardest part was getting started, once I enrolled, I knew that I had to finish. I'm now tackling my career with the same tenacity. I started in my current position during my last term at TESU, and my course work continues to help me in expanding my victim advocacy skills."

Ward is not stopping there. Soon after fulfilling her BSHS degree requirements, she enrolled in the Watson School's Master of Public Service Leadership degree program. Her selected track, Nonprofit Management, will ensure

that she's at the forefront of executive-level decision-making and grant-writing management while expanding her knowledge of the laws and ethics governing public policy.

"TESU's online course model was the only way I could have completed by degrees," she noted. "I started attending school after having my second child, while continuing to work full time. Both of my children have medical issues that require a lot of my attention."

Both of Ward's sons, Roshard, age 14, and Roan, age 5, were born with the hereditary disorder Hemophilia that can cause sufferers to bleed uncontrollably as a result of the slightest injury. As a consequence, shepherding her sons through their rough-and-tumble years has held its share of challenges. "The mentors at TESU were always very sympathetic," she said. "They understand that as online learners we have a lot going on and many distractions. I was able complete my course work anywhere, even when that 'place' happened to be a hospital waiting room."

Her organization's current social distancing protocols mean that Ward is often working from home while homeschooling her sons. To stay balanced, she has focused on self-care, which includes incorporating meditation into her routine and exercising more. "My family has also made it a point to eat dinner together every night. That goal can be challenging, yet ultimately very rewarding."

Ward describes her family as being very supportive while she's worked toward her degrees. "My siblings, parents and grandmother have made accommodations to support me through this entire journey. My biggest support system has been my husband, Roshard Sr.," she noted. "He knew that I had dreams and would encourage me daily to work toward them, even when it required him to prepare dinner most nights." Ward and her family live in Camden County, N.J.

To learn more about the Center for Family Services, visit centerffs.org. To learn more about the programs available at the John S. Watson School of Public Service, please visit tesu.edu/watson.

The Business of

❖ Santiago Fuertes, BS '19 **ALUMNI AMBASSADOR**

For Santiago Fuertes, long hours coupled with long weeks are easy in a job you love.

Santiago Fuertes is a senior-level information technology (IT) professional focused on public health emergency response. That could account for the pattern of 7-day work weeks for the recent Bachelor of Science program graduate.

"I love my job! Lately it's been centered on COVID-19, but every day is different," said Fuertes, the Public Health Emergency Notification System coordinator and management information specialist for the County of Atlantic in Northfield, N.J. "My duties typically encompass dissemination of information and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Jersey Department of Health along with providing technical support, software support and training for partner agencies and staff."

Fuertes now works 7 days a week in a cycle of planning, analysis, IT support and generating data reports and lab forms needed for COVID-19 testing as well as case investigation and contact tracing. On a darker note, one of his responsibilities is running the report on the COVID-19-related death toll in the county each morning. Fuertes is also responsible for all IT components of Atlantic County's anti-bioterrorism efforts. Parallel to this, he is responsible for Atlantic County's Continuity of Operations and Government Testing and Training; creation, execution of the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation

Program; training for the Incident Command System; managing the Inventory Management and Tracking System as well as use and deployment of CDC's Strategic National Stockpile of masks and personal protective equipment.

"My Thomas Edison State University BS degree in Information Technology course work is already providing dividends," said Fuertes, a graduate of TESU's Heavin

"I REMAIN IMPRESSED WITH EVERY FACET OF MY TESU EXPERIENCE – FROM THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT OPTIONS, TO THE PROFESSIONALISM AND EXPERTISE OF THE STAFF AND MENTORS. AS A TECHNOLOGY-ORIENTED PERSON, I THRIVED IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT."

Santiago Fuertes

School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology. "I consider myself an expert at online learning now, and my degree will allow me to sit for a Registered Environmental Health Specialist Certification test that I would not be eligible to take otherwise. I remain impressed with every facet of my TESU experience – from the application process and portfolio assessment options, to the professionalism and expertise of the staff and mentors. As a technology-oriented person, I thrived in the online learning environment. One course I took required us to create a blog, a podcast, a slide show and a video presentation – that pushed our boundaries, but I got a lot out the experience."

Fuertes' career began as an engineering student who, due to a series of mishaps, became deregistered from his bachelor's degree program. He said that it took so long for the situation to get resolved that he finally left college in exasperation to join the workforce.

"I had stints as a machine operator for product manufacturers before I eventually began working as a claims processor for an insurance company. It was there that I began writing Structured Query Language (SQL) to generate data for reports and began programming in Visual Basic and Java. The value my skills began bringing to the workplace and the satisfaction I was getting in data reporting and programming was what pushed me to return for my degree."

While working full time, Fuertes made his way back to higher education and earned an associate degree in computer science in January 2002 from Middlesex County College. By February 2002, he had netted a position at a pharmaceutical research firm along with a grueling commute while living in southern New Jersey. Fortunately, he was hired by Atlantic County later the same year in a newly created position and has remained in its administrative offices since.

"The interview process went smoothly as they were seeking someone with interpersonal skills and a more well-rounded background rather than someone strictly technology focused. I have had this job since its creation in 2002."

Now ensconced in a position that fit his background and career path, he began reconsidering bachelor's degree

Continuity

programs, enrolling first in SUNY Empire State College before stopping again – this time to help shoulder the responsibilities of his growing family. “I completed a few courses, but had to stall the process for my family. My kids were little, and I needed to focus on them.”

Years later, after revisiting the idea of completing his degree, he made a quick assessment of programs that fit his objectives and transferred his Middlesex County College, Rutgers University School of Engineering and SUNY Empire credits to TESU. With about 40 credits remaining to fulfill degree requirements after an evaluation of his credits, he took advantage of TESU’s Full-Time Flat-Rate Tuition option and enrolled.

“TESU’s credit transfer process went flawlessly. I used the prior learning assessment track and was able to test out of four to six courses per term. It was perfect for me,” he explained.

In the scant time he has left off the clock, Fuertes volunteers for the Atlantic City Rescue Mission preparing meals and the Atlantic County Food Bank making packages and preparing and distributing food to those in need. He volunteers with the Jewish Relief Agency, MetroWest, of Morristown, N.J., with his girlfriend, Kathy Loesberg. He also volunteers his time with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary teaching boating safety. He participates in, and advocates for, regular blood donations to the American Red Cross and stays in touch with his college-age son and daughter through video conferencing and FaceTime as much as possible.

To learn more about the available programs in the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, visit tesu.edu/heavin.

Santiago Fuertes and Kathy Loesberg enjoy a leadership event together in June 2019.
Photo credit: Felix Feygin of Fred Marcus Studio



Breaking Through

❖ Bettyann Fiore, MBA '19

Bettyann Fiore's setbacks were no match for her iron-clad bucket list.

Through perseverance and with a helping hand, Bettyann Fiore was able to fulfill dreams that were decades in the making. Now, she is ready to pay it forward by helping others whose lives take unexpected detours.

Fiore had her plans set when she was just a teenager. President of her high school honor society, Fiore was a driven leader focused on moving to New York City to study accounting. From there, she intended to take the certified public accountant (CPA) exam and work for a prestigious accounting firm. Unfortunately, that vision for her future would be disrupted.

"In my own circle, college was looked down upon because I was expected to work for the family sanitation business," Fiore explained. "I fought the good fight to continue my education and, finally, negotiated enrollment at Bergen Community College, working part time for the family business before becoming a full-time employee."

For a while, Fiore continued down that road. She married her high school sweetheart at 22, had a daughter, continued to work for the family business and remained in her hometown.

Twenty-five years later, after her marriage ended, and her family sold the business, Fiore was starting over, but this time things were different. She was in her early 40s with an 8-year-old daughter, Taylor,

as her motivation and her "strength through a very hard time in life."

For the first time, Fiore felt in control of her destiny.

"This felt like the beginning of my comeback and Thomas Edison was a huge part of that," said Fiore. "I applied, completed my bachelor's degree in accounting and graduated in December 2012. It wasn't easy. While taking the classes, sometimes I was an inch away

graduate-level credits in order to sit for the exam. TESU had worked so well for me, even while I was working full time, that I decided to return for my master's degree. I knew if I managed to complete my undergraduate degree during those hectic years as a working, single mother, I would be able to complete my graduate degree now, and I didn't want to deeply regret not continuing my education."

Fiore now has no regrets. She graduated with her Master of Business

"I KNEW IF I MANAGED TO COMPLETE MY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE DURING THOSE HECTIC YEARS AS A WORKING, SINGLE MOTHER, I WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPLETE MY GRADUATE DEGREE."

Bettyann Fiore

from giving up. Classes were harder than I imagined, and, with working full time, I was always exhausted. But I knew there was more to come in my life, and I needed to finish that degree to continue on the path I was meant to take."

And she didn't stop there.

"For a long time, I felt the regret of not following my dream of becoming a CPA," Fiore elaborated. "Once I finished my bachelor's, I looked into taking the CPA exam, but the requirements had changed in the intervening years. I now needed

Administration (MBA) from Thomas Edison State University in December 2019.

"I am a big believer in following your 'gut feeling,' and, ultimately, I trusted my intuition on finishing my degree. I always knew I was capable of going this far with my education, and possibly beyond," Fiore said. "Back in high school, my motivation for education was career advancement, but when my time finally came to pursue it, it was to fulfill a personal goal. That personal goal can now be checked off my bucket list."

Fiore is ready to take her personal growth another massive step forward by sharing a closely held secret she has carried for decades.

“I am HIV positive,” Fiore revealed, adding that until now, she had never made the admission publicly. “I was diagnosed more than 30 years ago after I contracted the disease from a long-term relationship, and since then I’ve only chosen to tell a few select family members and friends. I always thought ‘who is going to accept me? Who is going to come near me or talk to me again?’ But I am tired of living with secrets; it’s been too long.”

Fiore hopes no one else suffers through the same

challenges alone and encourages others to reach out for the help that is available.

“One of the main reasons I wanted to share my diagnosis is because TESU’s Center for Disability Services has been a lifesaver for me as a student. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Support Services Coordinator Laura J. Brenner-Scotti welcomed me to the program and helped me to succeed as a student. She helped me when I needed course extensions and any other assistance. I would suggest anyone who needs that level of support, contact her and the department.”

The Center for Disability Services at Thomas Edison State University assists students with disabilities to access University programs and services, and Brenner-Scotti said that she is

blessed to work with this population at the University.

“I work with some absolutely exceptional students whose drive and determination are inspiring. Bettyann is a perfect example of one such student,” Brenner-Scotti said. “She is managing challenges and obstacles tough enough to derail most people and has persevered through her graduate courses like a rock star. I am humbled to hear that she feels inspired by the assistance she received, but Bettyann deserves all the credit for her hard work and tenacity. Having played a small part in her path to success and now knowing that she is inspiring others through the story of managing and overcoming decades of challenges is inspirational and why I love what I do!”

Fiore is now sharing her journey to show others help is available to anyone who is struggling with similar challenges.

“I have seen a lot of positive changes when it comes to HIV and AIDS over the years. If you take your medication, see your doctor for checkups and take care of yourself, you can live a happy, healthy life. It’s a chronic diseases you have to live with and manage, even if it is invisible to those around you,” Fiore explained. “I believe that God has a bigger plan for me, whether it is educating others or representing living with this diagnosis. I believe that this happened to me for a reason.”

Fiore, of East Hanover, N.J., now works for an accounting firm alongside colleagues who are helping lead her to her next goal of taking the CPA exam. She hopes her story will inspire others who may be struggling under the weight of secrets or unfulfilled dreams to reach out for help and carry on, as she did.

To learn more about TESU’s support for students with disabilities, visit tesu.edu/about/ada/. To learn more about the academic programs in the School of Business and Management, visit tesu.edu/business.



One Moment



TAMEKA FOGG REALIZED THAT THE ANSWERS WERE ALL UP TO HER AND THAT HER TIME WAS NOW!

❖ Tameka Fogg, BA '20

For Tameka Fogg, receiving her bachelor's degree diploma was an 'I made it' moment.

Fogg, who serves as agency service representative with the state's Department of Health New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIIS), explained that earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies while maintaining a solid GPA at Thomas Edison State University and wearing the hats of wife, mother and a member of the workforce is an accomplishment for which she is most proud.

"I remember hearing a presentation long ago and being interested in the fact that Thomas Edison could take my working experience and use it toward college credits," explained Fogg, who took advantage of the University's Corporate Choice® program partnership with the New Jersey Public Sector. The program evaluates professional training programs and credentials to determine if they are equivalent to college course work that can be applied to academic programs.

"I was also able to transfer credits from Monmouth University and used TESU online courses to achieve my goal," she continued. "It took me two years to complete my course work, which resulted in a BA degree in liberal studies and a Certificate in Human Resources Management."

Fogg recalled that her first foray into higher education did not go as smoothly.

in Time

“Monmouth was my first attempt at college and, while I was there, I just didn’t feel worthy,” she said. “I was coming from a poor family, and I didn’t know what career to pursue. It seemed

“My unit is responsible for helping organizations establish web-based interface connections to New Jersey’s vaccine registry for the purposes of sharing vaccine and health information.



Jeremy Fogg, dressed in his quarantine garb of a dinner jacket, shorts and a superhero tee, celebrated his birthday on May 31 on the lawn at home surrounded by his daughters (pictured clockwise to Fogg’s right) Logan, Sydney, Paisley and Noa.

everyone there was affluent and knew exactly what they wanted to do. I now know that wasn’t true.”

Since 2014, Fogg has worked at NJIIS, which provides current recommended immunization schedules for infants, adolescents and adults. It consolidates immunization information from all providers into one record to provide an accurate immunization assessment and eliminates the use of manual vaccine administration logs. NJIIS assists state and federal agencies with population assessments in the event of a preventable disease outbreak and helps communities assess their immunization coverage and identify pockets of need.

“I respond to inquiries regarding program activities, enrollment and processes for NJIIS. In addition, I provide support to NJIIS quality assurance initiatives, and I work closely with NJIIS trainers and quality assurance staff to ensure providers compliance with NJIIS programmatic and technical standards,” she explained.

“Our workload hasn’t increased much because our role is mainly vaccinations and the technical part of maintaining those vaccinations – people are actually getting vaccinated less frequently,” she added. “However, we are anticipating a busy season when the COVID vaccine is released.”

Off the clock, Fogg says she enjoys coloring. “Nothing like a fresh pack of colored pencils and one of those adult coloring books. So relaxing. I also enjoy dabbling in interior design for fun.”

Fogg has resided in Ewing Township, N.J., with her husband, Jeremy, and their four children, for the past nine years. She credits her family with helping her to achieve her goal of completing her educational endeavors.

“I’d like to thank my amazingly, supportive husband who spent many nights proofreading my papers,” she said. “He has also returned to college, so now it is my turn to support him. We wanted to serve as living examples to our girls to show them that we truly can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

“And to thank my awesome girls, Noa, 8, Logan, 7, Paisley, 4, and Sydney, 1, who motivate me to be better,” Fogg added. “By returning to college, my husband and I are trying to create a legacy of educated people who make good decisions. Ultimately, we want to raise good people. We’ll tell our children ‘you’ll be able to tell how rich you are by the list of things you have that money cannot buy.’”

She also hopes that her girls will grow up in a more inclusive world. As an African American woman living during this time, Fogg wishes for worldwide equality and diversity.

“I think all of the great experiences and cultural differences that people bring to the table are exchangeable commodities that can help everyone gain an appreciation and respect for their fellow man if those differences were allowed to flow freely and not suppressed due to a lack of understanding,” she said.

When asked about her proudest accomplishments, Fogg responded, “My greatest award, after my marriage certificate and my children’s birth certificates, is my degree in liberal studies and my certificate in human resources. It wasn’t easy, but it was worth it!”

To learn more about the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, visit tesu.edu/heavin.

GRADS 2020

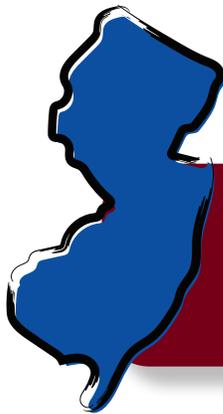
by the numbers

2,243 Degrees and Certificates Awarded 

Females
978



Males
1,265



Graduates from every county in New Jersey

35.8 Average Age of Grads

Oldest Grad

71

#TESUgrad20

MicroBachelors® Programs Help Adult Learners Pursue Bachelor's Degrees

In January, *edX.org* announced the MicroBachelors® programs, the first credit-backed stackable credential, marking a significant milestone in online learning. Created by edX in an innovative partnership with top universities and Fortune 1000 corporations, MicroBachelors® programs deliver immediately transferable skills to meet the real-world needs of employers, while providing a pathway to a full bachelor's degree.

TESU is a provider of college credit for MicroBachelors® programs created by *edX.org*, the trusted platform for learning. MicroBachelors® programs are designed for adults without a college degree who believe they need additional education to advance in their careers. This group, like the majority of Americans, cannot afford a traditional bachelor's degree and cannot take the time away from work to pursue one. Additionally, the rate at which technological change is affecting the global workforce means that adults need immediately transferable skills that can be delivered in months, not years.

"Thomas Edison State University was founded to create innovative ways to deliver flexible, high-quality collegiate learning. We are proud to collaborate with edX to continue this tradition and play a key role in expanding access to high-quality undergraduate education for nontraditional students and workers with edX's MicroBachelors® programs," said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president, Thomas Edison State University. "By recognizing MicroBachelors® programs for credit, we are creating yet another diverse and alternative method to gain access to a relevant and affordable undergraduate education."

The University recently completed its review and offers college credit for a New York University Tandon School of Engineering's MicroBachelors® program in Computer Science Fundamentals offered on *edX.org*.



THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY OFFERS NEW PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS AND TUITION RATES TO MAKE EARNING A DEGREE MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR ADULT LEARNERS.

NJ Community College Students Aided by TESU/NJ 3+1 Pathways Program

Thomas Edison State University offers students who graduate from any New Jersey community college guaranteed admission to Thomas Edison to pursue a bachelor's degree, and the University waives the application fee. Furthermore, TESU expanded its statewide TESU/NJ 3+1 Pathways Program to include more than 50 programs of study earlier this year.

This builds on Thomas Edison's commitment to work with the state's community colleges to remove hurdles, reduce costs and streamline access to higher education credentials for New Jersey students.

"By partnering with New Jersey's community colleges, we are supporting New Jersey's families by making college more affordable while offering the education needed to obtain better jobs and economic prosperity across industries throughout the state," said TESU President Dr. Merodie A. Hancock.



TESU Board of Trustees Approves New Tuition Rate

The Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees approved new tuition rates at its regularly scheduled board meeting June 5. The rates, effective July 1, 2020, include a 10 percent reduction in full-time tuition for in-state residents. The University will keep rates unchanged for part-time New Jersey students, graduate, military and most nursing students.

The threshold, which was previously at least 10 credits, has been lowered to at least 9 credits to be considered full time.

"IN LIGHT OF THE PANDEMIC AND AS NEW JERSEY'S LEADER IN ONLINE EDUCATION, WE ARE DOING EVEN MORE TO MAKE EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR OUR STUDENTS, ACROSS NEW JERSEY AND AROUND THE GLOBE."

Merodie A. Hancock, PhD

The full-time rate will be reduced from \$3,963 to \$3,579 for in-state students.

"Thomas Edison State University has always been there for our students, our communities and our employers," explained Thomas Edison President Dr. Merodie A. Hancock. "But now, in light of the pandemic and as New Jersey's leader in online education, we are doing even more to make education accessible and affordable for our students, across New Jersey and around the globe."

President's List and President's Award Honor Programs Celebrate the Best in Student Achievement

The University recently unveiled the President's List and President's Award honor programs to officially acknowledge academic excellence in its enrolled students. The programs represent the highest academic honors that the University bestows and the distinction allows President Dr. Merodie A. Hancock to personally acknowledge and celebrate TESU students' academic success with the entire University community.

"These academic honors provide an opportunity to showcase our students' extraordinary accomplishments in maintaining high GPAs while also juggling numerous responsibilities in their careers, communities and family lives," said Hancock.

Visit tesu.edu/academics/achievements to learn more.

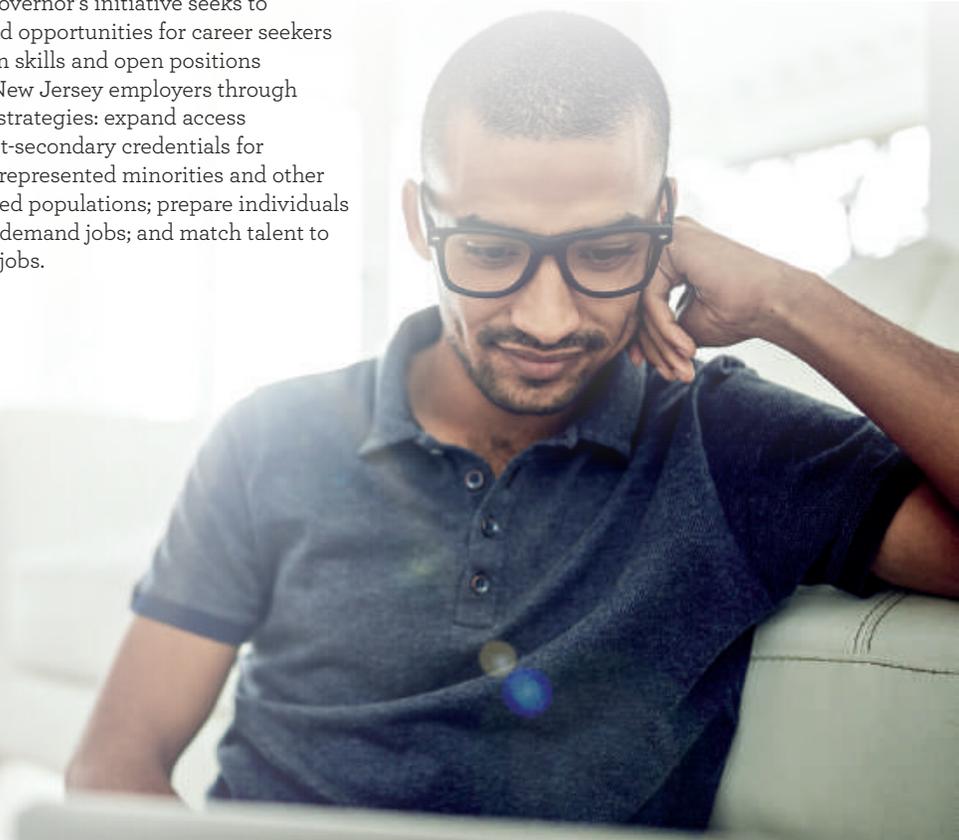


Jobs NJ Program Focuses on Adult Learners

Reacting to Gov. Phil Murphy's announcement of his talent-based economic development strategy, Jobs NJ: Developing Talent to Grow Business in the Garden State, Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, TESU president, said recently that she was pleased to see the governor's focus on adult students, a core area of the University's expertise, making TESU uniquely qualified to drive success in key areas of the Jobs NJ plan.

"Thomas Edison State University has decades of success working with adult learners to help close the gap between the needs of employers and the skills of employees," said Hancock.

The governor's initiative seeks to expand opportunities for career seekers to gain skills and open positions with New Jersey employers through three strategies: expand access to post-secondary credentials for underrepresented minorities and other targeted populations; prepare individuals for in-demand jobs; and match talent to those jobs.



TESU Foundation Provides Financial Relief to Students During COVID-19 Crisis

Thomas Edison State University Foundation launched the Student Relief Fund in March to provide assistance to enrolled students with evolving financial needs as a result of the pandemic.

“We have always been uniquely qualified to support students with competing responsibilities who are earning their degrees,” said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president of TESU. “At no time has this funding been more valued and critical to our students and their communities.”

TESU’s student population encompasses working adults including nurses, first responders, active-duty military and reservists, and professionals from nearly every sector of industry. They are also busy parents and family caregivers – those most likely to have their higher education endeavors derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have been humbled by the generous and positive response by our alumni, mentors, students, employees and friends of the University thus far,” said John Thurber, executive vice president of the TESU Foundation.

The need, however, continues to grow each day. Thurber added that 100 percent of all donations will be used to support students and help them get closer to finishing their degrees – something that could be their greatest asset as they and their families seek to recover from this economic crisis.

The Student Relief Fund has helped more than 35 students who have been impacted during the pandemic. Those interested in supporting the Fund can make a donation at give.tesu.edu/studentrelief.



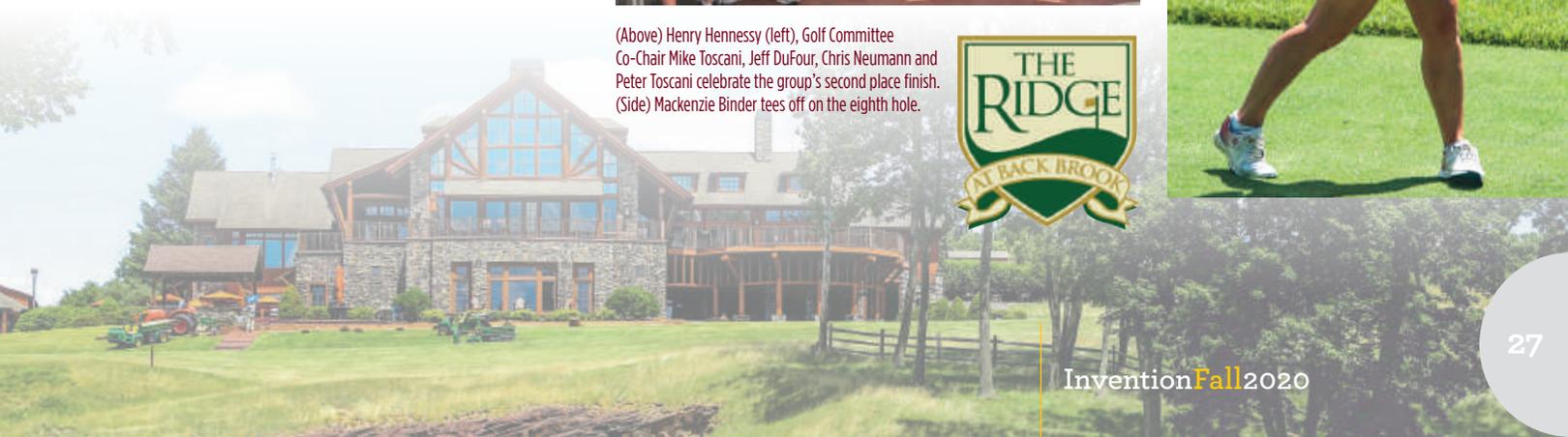
TESU Foundation Golf Classic Raises Nearly \$70,000 in Support of Student Relief

The 26th Annual TESU Foundation Golf Classic, which took place at The Ridge at Back Brook in Ringoes, N.J., in June, raised nearly \$70,000 for the Thomas Edison State University Foundation in support of TESU’s Student Relief Fund established to help TESU students affected by the pandemic. This year, more than 90 golfers and guests participated in the event.

To see the full list of sponsors and view the photo gallery from the event, visit: tesufoundation.org/events/golf.



(Above) Henry Hennessy (left), Golf Committee Co-Chair Mike Toscani, Jeff DuFour, Chris Neumann and Peter Toscani celebrate the group’s second place finish. (Side) Mackenzie Binder tees off on the eighth hole.

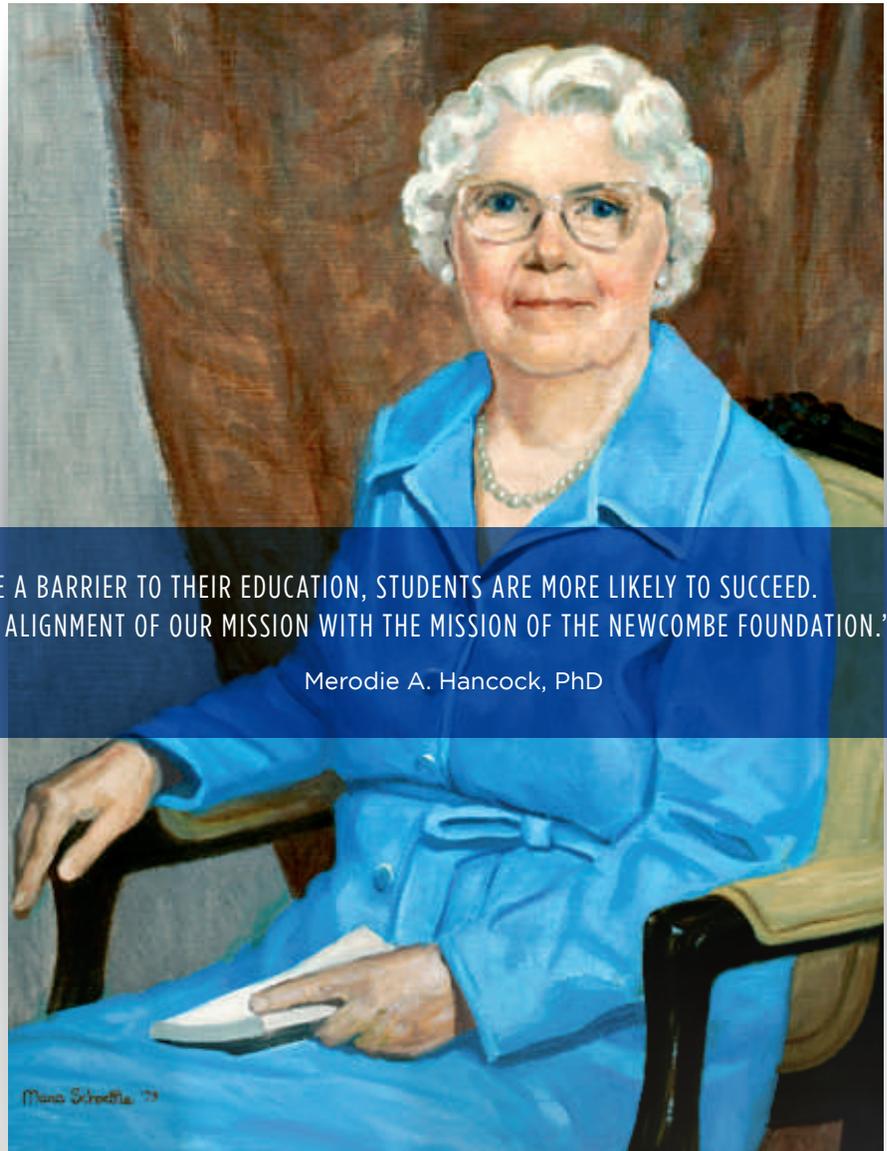


Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation

The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation has awarded Thomas Edison State University a \$50,000 grant for 2020-2021 through the Foundation's Newcombe Scholarships for Mature Students program.

"We are honored to receive this important scholarship funding on behalf of our students," said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president, Thomas Edison State University. "Our adult learners juggle many challenges from career and family obligations to financial constraints. Any time we can help to remove a barrier to their education, students are more likely to succeed. This award effectively recognizes the alignment of our mission with the mission of the Newcombe Foundation."

The Newcombe Foundation is an independent foundation that began in 1979 as the result of a bequest from the estate of Charlotte W. Newcombe, a Philadelphia philanthropist. In her will,



"ANY TIME WE CAN HELP TO REMOVE A BARRIER TO THEIR EDUCATION, STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED. THIS AWARD EFFECTIVELY RECOGNIZES THE ALIGNMENT OF OUR MISSION WITH THE MISSION OF THE NEWCOMBE FOUNDATION."

Merodie A. Hancock, PhD

Newcombe created a foundation that would continue her lifelong interest in supporting students pursuing degrees in higher education. The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation is now based in Princeton, N.J., and has awarded grants totaling \$70.8 million since 1981 to provide scholarships and fellowships in higher education.

"The Newcombe Foundation is proud to partner with Thomas Edison State University to help provide scholarships for the high quality, accessible degree pathways that are so vital for today's adult learners," said Dr. Gianna Durso-Finley, executive director, The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation.

Portrait of Charlotte W. Newcombe by Marc Schoettle, photo of portrait by Pete Borg

MEET ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

••• **Dina Silbernagel-Krohne, BSBA '15,**
Current DBA Student **ALUMNI AMBASSADOR**

It had always been Dina Silbernagel-Krohne's passion to work in operations management, and she quickly realized she needed her bachelor's degree to advance her career. After transferring credits to Thomas Edison State University (TESU), Silbernagel-Krohne used the Thomas Edison Credit-by-Examination Program (TECEP®), finishing 19 courses while balancing family and work obligations. In less than a year, Silbernagel-Krohne was able to complete her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree in Operations Management.

I ENJOY SEEING HOW PEOPLE START TO LIGHT UP AS THEY REALIZE FINISHING THEIR DEGREE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY.

Dina Silbernagel-Krohne

Not long after, Silbernagel-Krohne landed her dream job at Amazon.com, Inc. as an operations manager.

"The BSBA degree's specialization in Operations Management gave me skills and knowledge I use daily in my career. If it wasn't for the flexible approach to

higher education from TESU, I would not have been able to complete my bachelor's degree and be in the career I have now," she said.

For as long as she can remember, it has been Silbernagel-Krohne's passion to help people achieve their goals and maximize their potential. She is able to translate this passion at work by helping people become process experts. "The best part of what I do is to witness how far a team has come. It's wonderful to see how proud they are of their accomplishments," remarked Silbernagel-Krohne.

As an Alumni Ambassador, Silbernagel-Krohne seeks out opportunities to encourage those who don't feel like they have a chance to finish their degree. "I enjoy seeing how people start to light up as they realize finishing their degree is a real possibility." She shares her TESU experiences with prospective and current students, refers students to TESU, volunteers at Open Houses and donates to support TESU.

Silbernagel-Krohne is also currently enrolled in TESU's Doctor of Business Administration program.



Be an TESU Genius!

Alumni and friends of TESU are invited to join the new Genius program. Simply complete five steps to be eligible for the prize!

See complete details at tesu.edu/genius.

Keep Us Posted!

To connect with the Office of Alumni Affairs and fellow TESU alumni, join the conversation on social media:

Alumni Facebook Group: tesu.edu/FacebookGroup

Student and Alumni LinkedIn Group: tesu.edu/LinkedInGroup

Alumnifire: tesu.edu/Alumnifire



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University Store

TESUshop.com is Thomas Edison State University's online store for TESU students, alumni, employees, mentors and TESU families. Declare your TESU pride with apparel and products bearing Thomas Edison State University's logo.



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HONORING HEALTHCARE HEROES AND
CELEBRATING 2020: THE YEAR OF THE NURSE

THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION'S
Annual Event to benefit TESU students is going VIRTUAL!

Please join us from the comfort of your home on

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2020 ~ 7 P.M.

Registration is free! All registrants will receive a TESU mask and will be entered for a chance to name our nursing program's infant simulator.

Door Prizes ~ Silent Auction ~ Entertainment.

HONORING

Deborah Mican, PhD, MHA, BSN, RN, CNOR

*Vice President of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer,
Capital Health*

The TESU Foundation thanks President's Circle Sponsor


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**THOMAS EDISON
STATE UNIVERSITY
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For more information and to register for this free virtual event visit: tesufoundation.org/events/gala