

**MINUTES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY  
September 11, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kemi Alli, Chair; Gualberto Medina, Vice Chair; Merodie A. Hancock; J. Stanley Justice; Eric R. Lear; Brian Maloney; Lydia Stockman; Michael Toscani; Johnnie Whittington; Sanket Shah (student trustee) and Jennifer Hutchinson (student trustee).

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cynthia Baum, Vice President and Provost; John Thurber, Vice President for Public Affairs; Dennis Devery, Vice President for Enrollment Management; Chris Stringer, Vice President and CFO; Robin Walton, Vice President for Community and Government Affairs; Jennifer Hoff, General Counsel; Mary Chute, New Jersey State Librarian; Michael Mancini, Chief of Staff/COO and Secretary to the Board; and Jamie Adams, Executive Assistant to the President; Marilyn Pearson, former Board of Trustee; and Frank Clyburn, former Board of Trustee.

Dr. Alli officially called the public meeting to order at 9:04 a.m., followed by a statement of public notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 to 10:4-21.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Dr. Alli presented the following resolution to enter into Executive Session:

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-13 and 10:4-12 that the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University holds a closed session at 9:00 a.m. on September 11, 2020, for the purpose of discussing the evaluation of the President.**

**It is expected that the discussion undertaken in closed session will not be made public due to the confidentiality of this matter.**

Rev. Justice made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adjourn to executive session at 9:06 a.m. The motion carried unanimously.

**RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC SESSION**

Dr. Alli called for a motion for the resumption of the public meeting, which Mr. Toscani made, and Mr. Maloney seconded to reconvene. The motion carried unanimously.

The public meeting reconvened at 10:00 a.m.

**ELECTION OF STUDENT TRUSTEE**

Dr. Hancock provided a brief overview of Jennifer Hutchinson and her service.

Dr. Alli presented the following resolution:

- WHEREAS: New Jersey state law and the Bylaws of Thomas Edison State University provide for student representation on the Board of Trustees; and**
- WHEREAS: Said Bylaws specify criteria for the selection of student trustees; and**
- WHEREAS: The President of the University has certified that Jennifer M. Hutchinson meets the criteria; and**
- WHEREAS: The President of the University does hereby nominate Jennifer M. Hutchinson as a student trustee alternate in accordance with the procedures of the Board; now, therefore, be it**
- RESOLVED: That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby elect Jennifer M. Hutchinson as student trustee alternate effective September 11, 2020, for a term of one year, followed thereby as student trustee for a period of one year, which shall conclude at the annual meeting of the Board to be held in June 2022.**

Upon the reading of the resolution, Ms. Hutchinson recited her oath.

Mr. Medina made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously. Jennifer M. Hutchinson was sworn in and expressed her delight at having been selected for this honor.

### **CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Dr. Alli presented the minutes of the June 12, 2020 board meeting for approval and adoption. Mr. Maloney made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adopt the minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Hancock reflected on 9/11 and conveyed that her thoughts are with everyone.

Dr. Hancock took a moment to acknowledge all who were affected by the events of 9/11 and to know her thoughts are with them.

She welcomed the new trustees, Lydia Stockman, Michael Toscani, Johnnie Whittington and student trustee, Jennifer Hutchinson, who were sworn in individually by Jennifer Hoff, General Counsel. She continued by welcoming back Dr. Alli, Chair, and returning board of trustees. Dr. Hancock recognized former board of trustee, Marilyn Pearson, noted that Frank Clyburn will participate later and that Richard (Dick) Arndt was unable to attend but will play a message from him later in the meeting.

Dr. Hancock stated that with COVID being in the forefront, the University continued to balance a critical role during the economic downturn by supporting public health and our employees' mental

and physical well-being. She reported through all the issues during 2020, Thomas Edison has held onto the enrollment gains and progressed on many key initiatives. She continued to state that commencement will be virtual on October 19 and commended staff for working hard in making this one memorable for all graduates. Dr. Hancock added that the gala is scheduled virtually on October 29 and will honor our very own foundation board member, Dr. Debra Mican, as well as the nurses and other health care professionals who played critical roles during this pandemic.

Dr. Hancock stated that she is strengthening the recruitment function by streamlining enrollment funnel and launching new programs by adding support services and implementing proactive student outreach.

Dr. Hancock introduced Dr. Ann Marie Senior who presented the 2020 Key Numbers. Dr. Senior presented a snapshot of students actively enrolled on July 1, 2019. The total number of students served for FY2020 is 14,726; 13,886 were seeking degrees; and 840 were non-matriculate students. There were 12,904 undergraduates and 982 graduates. Total number of applicants for FY2020 is 11,266; 960 are graduate degree applicants; 10,306 are undergraduate degree applicants. Total students enrolled for FY2020 are 4,289: 375 to the graduate program, and 3,914 to the undergraduate program. In addition, 2,362 degrees were awarded in FY2020 for a total of 66,658 degrees awarded to date.

Dr. Hancock introduced Chris Stringer who reviewed the accounting and auditing process with the board of trustees. Board discussion followed the presentation.

### **REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION, AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Dr. Alli introduced Mr. Lear to present the Administration, Audit and Finance Committee Report. Mr. Lear briefed the Board on the committee meeting held on September 3, 2020.

### **FEDERAL CARES FUNDING**

Mr. Lear discussed the various federal grants available to the University through CARES funding. The University received two grants directly from the US Department of Education with a combined total of \$500,000. In addition, the University is eligible for two federal grants that is being distributed by the New Jersey Office of Higher Education. A grant for \$3.3 million has already been received. The last grant application has not yet been available.

The grants received directly from the federal government will reimburse expenses that occurred in fiscal year 2020. The funds received through New Jersey will be spent in fiscal year 2020.

### **ACTIVE STUDENTS TO TUITION COMPARISON**

Mr. Lear discussed information provided by Mr. Stringer relating to data and research around headcounts, tuition and active students and its relation to revenue reports. The University reports headcount numbers from year-to-year. This report was created to supplement the head count report and to help explain how our revenue and student head counts do not always move proportionally.

### **AUDIT UPDATE**

Mr. Lear discussed the results of the audit, which is substantially complete. However, the numbers from the State to record pension and OPEB has not yet been received because state offices have been closed due to the pandemic.

### **REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Dr. Alli introduced Mr. Maloney who reported that the Committee met by teleconference on August 18 and September 3, 2020. Mr. Maloney introduced Dr. Baum to brief the Board on resolutions.

### **CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY**

Dr. Baum discussed the overall policy administrative review and clean up. This particular policy change in nomenclature to be consistent with state guidelines, moving parts out that are procedure and not policy. In addition, the policy change is to make policy match practice relative to transfer credit from a single source from a non-accredited agency

- WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for oversight of academic governance; and
- WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council has reviewed and recommended the revision to the Transfer Credit policy as presented; and
- WHEREAS:** The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees has reviewed and concurred with the recommendation from the Provost as presented; and
- WHEREAS:** The President of the University concurs with the policy changes as presented; now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the revisions to the Transfer Credit policy as presented and incorporated herein by reference.

Rev. Justice made, and Dr. Toscani seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

### **CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC EVALUATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION APPEAL POLICY**

Dr. Baum discussed changes to policy to streamline appeal process to make sure the appeal goes to the subject matter expert on the transfer credit appeal. Decision there is final.

- WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for oversight of academic governance; and

**WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council has reviewed and recommended the revision to the Academic Evaluation and General Education Appeal policy as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees has reviewed and concurred with the recommendation from the Provost as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The President of the University concurs with the policy changes as presented; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the revisions to the Academic Evaluation and General Education Appeal policy as presented and incorporated herein by reference.

Dr. Alli made, and Rev. Justice seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**

Dr. Baum discussed the changes to policy, which is mostly clean-up, removed statement that is no longer part of syllabus and added a line that a student cannot use previous submitted work without mentor approval

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for oversight of academic governance; and

**WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council has reviewed and recommended the revision to the Academic Code of Conduct policy as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees has reviewed and concurred with the recommendation from the Provost as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The President of the University concurs with the policy changes as presented; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the revisions to the Academic Code of Conduct policy as presented and incorporated herein by reference.

Mr. Lear made, and Dr. Toscani seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF INCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSITY AREA OF STUDY UPPER LEVEL DEGREE POLICY**

Dr. Baum discussed the change in the upper division requirements in two business programs, moving from 15 credits to 18 credits within a student’s area of study.

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for oversight of academic governance; and

**WHEREAS:** The University Academic Council has reviewed and recommended the creation of the University Area of Study Upper Level Degree policy as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees has reviewed and concurred with the recommendation from the Provost as presented; and

**WHEREAS:** The President of the University concurs with the new policy as presented; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the inception of the University Area of Study Upper Level Degree policy as presented and incorporated herein by reference.

Rev. Justice made, and Ms. Stockman seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF NEW UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Dr. Baum discussed the following candidates for consideration as new members of the Academic Council and the change in the representation on the Council to comport with policy.

**1. Amanda McClain, General Education Committee Chair**

The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby appoint Amanda McClain, Heavin School of Arts, Sciences and Technology mentor and co-chair of the General Education Committee, as a member of the University Academic Council for Thomas Edison State University during her term of service as co-chair of the General Education Committee. The action herein taken is pursuant to a recommendation by the Provost of the University.

Dr. Toscani made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**2. Jordan Goldberg, Applied Science & Technology Disciplines Curriculum Committee Chair**

The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby appoint Jordan Goldberg, Heavin School of Arts, Sciences and Technology mentor and Curriculum Committee chair for the applied science and technology disciplines, as a member of the University Academic Council for Thomas Edison State University during his term of service as Chair of the Curriculum Committee. The action herein taken is pursuant to a recommendation by the Provost of the University

Dr. Alli made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**3. Petri Virkkula, Student Representative**

The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby appoint Petri Virkkula as a member of the University Academic Council for Thomas Edison State University for a two-year term serving as the Student Representative. The action herein taken is pursuant to a recommendation by the Provost of the University

Mr. Lear made, and Dr. Alli seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

Upon the request of Mr. Maloney, Dr. Baum discussed retention efforts. She indicated that new students that register and make it to day ten and become an enrolled student with a high watermark in August of 98% retention to day ten. Dr. Baum talked about some organizational changes to better synergize academic advising across all student populations. With consistency in practices, it is expected retention will continue to get better.

Dr. Baum also discussed five-year academic program review that includes a comprehensive review from prospect to graduation, financial, market research, etc. Results of review might include changes in program delivery, courses, or sunset of program.

Dr. Baum reported that the DBA and Cybersecurity program launched. DBA was budgeted for ten in January and ten in July, both terms had almost 20 students. There was \$388,000 in tuition, grant investment of \$175,000, \$65,000 in supporting program, and approximately \$150,000 in surplus. For Cybersecurity, there was a budget for 20 students across the year, 11 have started, with expected high enrollment in September, with a 100% retention of January students.

Dr. Baum discussed the Academic community impact program, which strengthens relationships with non-profits, and business project at a local non-profit (web design, marketing, etc.). There are \$100,000 seed money in Provident Bank and two small grants in recent weeks. First two students will be enrolled in September. The executive director at provident bank expressed her excitement about the grant and our progress.

**RESCINDING BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE**

Dr. Baum described the email that academic affairs received from a graduate who noted he cheated on courses transferred in from a third party provider. He described the process in which academic affairs engaged to validate the identity of the person and the process they followed to recommend rescinding a degree.

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University has the authority and the responsibility for the conferring of degrees; and

**WHEREAS:** The Provost, pursuant to the academic policies and procedures of the University, has recommended to the President that the degree previously awarded to Maxfield H. Thomson be rescinded; and

**WHEREAS:** The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees at its September 3, 2020 meeting concurred with the President's recommendation and recommends to the full Board that the Bachelor of Arts degree awarded to Maxfield H. Thompson on September 16, 2016, be rescinded; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby rescind the Bachelor of Arts degree awarded to Maxfield H. Thompson effective this day, September 11, 2020.

Mr. Maloney made, and Mr. Lear seconded, a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREE**

Dr. Alli presented the following resolution:

**The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the awarding of the appropriate degrees to those September 11, 2020 candidates cited on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference.**

**The action herein taken is pursuant to a certification by the President that the aforementioned candidates have satisfied all relevant degree requirements as recommended by the Academic Council and as established by the Board of Trustees.**

Mr. Medina made, and Rev. Justice seconded, a motion to approve. Mr. Shah recused himself and the remaining members voted in the affirmative.

**CONSIDERATION OF PERSONNEL ACTIONS**

Dr. Alli presented the following resolution to approve the personnel actions:

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University is authorized to approve and act on employee-appointment

recommendations for employees of the University, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 64-6(h) and (i), as well as for State Library employees, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 73-34; and

**WHEREAS:** The President has made the employee-appointment recommendations as indicated on the list provided and incorporated herein by reference; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the employee-appointment recommendations as indicated on the list provided and incorporated herein by reference.

Mr. Maloney made, and Mr. Lear seconded, the motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously.

### **CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACT RENEWALS**

Dr. Alli presented the following resolution to approve the contract renewals:

**WHEREAS:** The Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University is authorized to approve and act on contract renewal recommendations for employees of the University, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 64-6(h) and (i), as well as for State Library employees, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 73-34; and

**WHEREAS:** The President has made the contract recommendations as indicated on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference; and

**WHEREAS:** The action taken herein is pursuant to an evaluation of each employee's work performance; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** That the Board of Trustees of Thomas Edison State University does hereby approve the contract recommendations as indicated on the lists provided and incorporated herein by reference.

Rev. Justice made, and Mr. Lear seconded, the motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously.

### **REPORT OF THE NOMINATION AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Medina provided an overview of the candidates, which have been vetted by the committee, whose names will be submitted to the governor's office for approval. The following candidates are Meredith Moore and Richard Thigpen.

## **HONORING OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS**

Dr. Alli introduced Dr. Hancock to offer words of appreciation for the outgoing board members, Ms. Marilyn Pearson. Ms. Pearson expressed her gratitude serving as a board of trustee over the years.

**WHEREAS,** Marilyn Pearson has been a member of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees since 2002, serving as Board Chairperson from 2007 through 2009 and as a member of the Nomination and Governance Committee; and

**WHEREAS,** the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees recognizes the knowledge and expertise that Ms. Pearson brought to the Board that enabled her to provide guidance in all facets of the Board's work; and

**WHEREAS,** her invaluable skill and work ethic enabled the Board to fulfill its functions in an efficient and organized manner; and

**WHEREAS,** that the members of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees thank Marilyn Pearson for her contribution to the work of the Board and for her commitment to its mission; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** that on this 11th day of September, in the year 2020, the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees extends its sincere appreciation to Ms. Pearson for the high regard that she exhibited for her responsibilities to the Board during her eighteen years of service and commends her for the manner in which she discharged her duties.

Rev. Justice made, and Mr. Medina seconded, the motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Alli introduced Dr. Hancock to offer words of appreciation for the outgoing board member, Mr. Frank Clyburn. Ms. Clyburn expressed his gratitude serving as a board of trustee during his tenure.

**WHEREAS,** Frank Clyburn has been a member of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees since 2015, serving as Board Chairperson from 2018 through 2019 and as a member of the Executive Committee; and

**WHEREAS,** the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees recognizes the knowledge and expertise that Mr. Clyburn brought to the Board that enabled him to provide guidance in all facets of the Board's work; and

**WHEREAS,** his invaluable skill and work ethic enabled the Board to fulfill its functions in an efficient and organized manner; and

**WHEREAS,** that the members of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees thank Frank Clyburn for his contribution to the work of the Board and for his commitment to its mission; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** that on this 11<sup>th</sup> day of September, in the year 2020, the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees extends its sincere appreciation to Mr. Clyburn for the high regard that he exhibited for his responsibilities to the Board during his five years of service and commends him for the manner in which he discharged his duties.

Dr. Alli introduced Dr. Hancock to offer words of appreciation for the outgoing board member, Mr. Richard Arndt, who was unable to attend. Dr. Hancock played a message from Mr. Arndt expressing his gratitude serving as a board of trustee over the years.

**WHEREAS,** Richard Arndt has been a member of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees since 1993, serving as Board Chairperson from 1997 through 2000, and as both a chair and member of the Academic Affairs Committee; and

**WHEREAS,** the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees recognizes the knowledge and expertise that Mr. Arndt brought to the Board that enabled him to provide guidance in all facets of the Board's work; and

**WHEREAS,** his invaluable skill and work ethic enabled the Board to fulfill its functions in an efficient and organized manner; and

**WHEREAS,** that the members of the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees thank Richard Arndt for his contribution to the work of the Board and for his commitment to its mission; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** that on this 11<sup>th</sup> day of September, in the year 2020, the Thomas Edison State University Board of Trustees extends its sincere appreciation to Mr. Arndt for the high regard that he exhibited for his responsibilities to the Board during his twenty-seven years of service and commends him for the manner in which he discharged his duties.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Submitted by,



Merodie A. Hancock, PhD  
Secretary of the Board

Approved by,



Kemi Alli  
Chair