

FALL 2018

Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY



JUSTICE LEAGUE

Eric Pennington, BSBA '87
Scott Pennington, AA '86

UNIVERSITY'S DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE PROGRAM GRANTED ACCREDITATION | HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP: DEBORAH LARSEN, BSN '10, MSN '16

WELLS FARGO AWARDS \$50,000 GRANT TO EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF VISIONARY LEADERS

W. CARY EDWARDS SCHOOL OF NURSING CELEBRATES 35 YEARS | CHANGE AGENT: TESHA GOODSON, BSBA '16



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For more than 46 years, *Thomas Edison State University* has served adult students with innovation and excellence.

This innovation has taken on many forms, including advancements in technology, degree program offerings and the service we provide in guiding our students to be successful, impactful graduates.

In this issue of *Invention*, we are pleased to share the stories of four such graduates who are actively working each day to change the world around them:

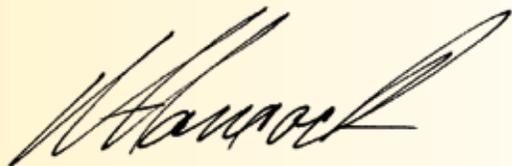
Eric Pennington '87, and Scott Pennington '86, brothers and attorneys based in South Orange, N.J.;

Deborah Larsen '10, '16, advanced nurse clinician with Virtua Health System in Voorhees, N.J.; and

Tesha Goodson '16, manager of Fiscal Resources with the State of New Jersey Department of Transportation in Ewing, N.J.

As we continue to have a hand in transforming the lives of those students and graduates we're privileged to serve, it's important for us to remember why we do what we do: to make an impact on the world at large. Through service to others, we are playing a role in changing their lives and making a difference in the lives of their families, friends and communities.

I am excited for what lies ahead and look forward to continuing to make strides in advancing the innovation that serves as a hallmark of what we do.



Merodie A. Hancock, PhD
President



DNP

University's Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Granted Accreditation

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program at Thomas Edison State University has been granted accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education*. The accreditation was officially awarded in May.

The program was granted accreditation for a five year period, the longest period of time for which a new program can be recognized.

"I want to express my sincere thanks to the staff of the W. Cary Edwards

School of Nursing who worked very hard alongside me to help attain this goal," said Dr. Filomela Marshall, dean of the School at the University. "We look forward to continuing to expand the scope of the DNP and offer more opportunities for nurses to advance their education."

The School recently graduated its first DNP cohort at the University's 46th annual Commencement ceremony on Sept. 29 at the CURE Insurance Arena in Trenton, N.J. The cohort of graduates included a chief nursing

officer, nurse practitioners, independent nurse consultants and nurse leaders in varied administrative roles from diverse clinical backgrounds.



*The baccalaureate degree program in nursing, the master's degree program in nursing and the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program at Thomas Edison State University are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>).

Dr. Dennis Devery Named University's Vice President for Enrollment Management

Dr. Dennis Devery '05, has been named vice president for Enrollment Management at Thomas Edison State University. Devery, who previously served as vice president for Planning and Research at the University, began his position June 4.

"I am pleased to have Dr. Devery leading our Enrollment Management division at the University," said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president of Thomas Edison State University. "His unique perspective as an alum and passion for all the University has to offer adult students makes him the ideal choice to lead this division. I look forward to continuing to work with him in this new capacity."

As part of his new role, Devery leads the University's marketing and recruitment efforts as well as the offices of Admissions; Strategic Partnerships; Military and Veteran Education; and Market Research. He has initiated new undergraduate and graduate recruitment teams and is collaborating with admissions, student services and academic affairs to integrate support for students from the point of enrollment through graduation. In addition, Devery has launched a New Jersey-focused

recruitment effort in order to further engage adults across the state in exploring the ability to complete their college degrees.

"I am honored that Dr. Hancock has selected me for this critical role as we begin this new chapter at the University," said Devery. "I look forward to working to enroll students who benefit from our exceptional academic programs and mentors, persist with us because of our flexibility and service and who graduate with credentials that enable them to improve their lives and change the world."

Before coming to the University in 2012, Devery had a distinguished 30-year military career serving in Afghanistan, Albania and various locations throughout the United States. His last military assignment was commander of the Joint Training and Training Development Center at Joint Base



Dr. Dennis Devery, vice president for Enrollment Management at Thomas Edison State University

McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. He retired at the rank of colonel having served as an aviation officer and helicopter instructor pilot, armor officer and infantry officer.

Devery earned his doctoral degree in education from Rowan University. He has a Master of Strategic Studies degree from U.S. Army War College, a Master of Science in Management degree from Thomas Edison State University and a Bachelor of Science degree in management from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

University Partners with Raritan Valley Community College to Help RNs Complete Their Degrees

Raritan Valley Community College's (RVCC) RN students will be able to complete their undergraduate and graduate degrees thanks to a new partnership between Thomas Edison State University and the community college.

Under the newly signed partnership, eligible RVCC nursing students can enroll in Thomas Edison State University's RN-BSN or RN-BSN/MSN degree programs offered by the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing. Students will be able to transfer up to 90 credits toward their undergraduate degree at the University and may earn 12 credits toward their master's degree at the institution at the undergraduate tuition rate.

"Our new agreement with Thomas Edison State University offers graduates of RVCC's RN program a wonderful opportunity to complete their Bachelor

of Science in Nursing degree in one year with the transfer of the maximum 90 credits," said RVCC President Michael J. McDonough. "Many of our graduates begin working in the healthcare field soon after completing their associate degree, and our new partnership with Thomas Edison gives them the added convenience of continuing their education through online learning."

Dubbed the 'Finish in Four' program, this agreement helps to further address the nursing shortage that has been plaguing the nation.



"Our newly formed partnership with Raritan Valley Community College is meant to further underscore and address the current and future needs for bachelor's-prepared nurses in the workforce," said Dr. Filomela Marshall, dean of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing at the University. "We are pleased to partner with RVCC in addressing these workforce challenges and doing our part to ensure graduates are well-educated and prepared for the ever-changing healthcare environment."

Thomas Edison State University Partners with Ocean County College

Thomas Edison State University and Ocean County College have partnered to create an affordable dual-admission enrollment program that will allow students who are pursuing select associate degrees at Ocean County College (OCC) in Ocean County, N.J., to simultaneously enroll in a Thomas Edison State University (TESU) degree program.

"We are excited to partner with OCC to provide a flexible, online degree completion program to its students and alumni," said Juliette Punchello, senior director of Recruitment and Enrollment Services at TESU. "The program's tuition model makes it possible for students to earn a bachelor's degree in four years for less than \$20,000. Improving access to accredited, cost-effective degree programs is

central to this partnership and to both institutions' missions."

Under the partnership, students can select from six degree program pathways at TESU encompassing associate and bachelor's degrees in Business/General Management, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Information Technology, Liberal Studies and Psychology. In addition to online courses, students in the program will have the option of utilizing TESU's prior learning assessments to validate professional training and certifications or the college-level expertise they already possess for credits toward their degree programs.

"Our program provides a seamless pathway to bachelor's degree completion," said Dr. Joseph Konopka,



interim vice president of Academic Affairs at OCC. "The tuition model allows students to earn up to 90 credits - roughly 75 percent of their bachelor's degree requirements - at OCC's tuition rate. We look forward to enrolling and supporting students, many of whom balance other responsibilities, in one of the most affordable degree pathways in New Jersey."

Enrollment is open. For more information, visit www.tesu.edu/ocean.

University Partners with Bossier Parish Community College to Strengthen Number of Graduates with Cybersecurity Degrees

Thomas Edison State University and Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) in Bossier City, La., have partnered to help strengthen the cybersecurity workforce by graduating more bachelor's-prepared cybersecurity professionals.

According to the Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA), a nonprofit information security advocacy group, there will be a global shortage of approximately two million cybersecurity professionals by 2019. ISACA also noted that 53 percent of organizations experience delays as long as six months to find qualified security candidates.

"We are excited to work with Thomas Edison State University to create a pathway for our students to help fill the need for cybersecurity professionals," says Megan Martin, dean of BPCC's Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Division. "The collaboration between our two institutions insures that graduates will be prepared and have the knowledge in cybersecurity needed. Our partnership sets a new standard for training the workforce."

Through the agreement, students who earn associate in applied science degrees in cyber technology or systems administration with BPCC will be eligible to enroll in and graduate from the University's Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity degree program.



Dr. John Aje, dean of the School of Applied Science and Technology at Thomas Edison State University

"We are pleased to partner with Bossier Parish Community College in educating and graduating more bachelor's-prepared cybersecurity professionals so that they can help to strengthen the cybersecurity workforce," said Dr. John Aje, dean of the School of Applied Science and Technology at Thomas Edison State University. "Our partnership with BPCC will allow students to complete their Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity degree online, on their own time without sacrificing familial or job responsibilities."

The University will accept up to 60 credits in transfer from students who have completed their associate degrees in cyber technology or systems administration at BPCC. Bossier Parrish Community College is just miles from Barksdale Air Force Base and has a longstanding partnership with the branch.

To learn more about programs within the School of Applied Science and Technology, visit www.tesu.edu/ast.

"OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH BPCC WILL ALLOW STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN CYBERSECURITY DEGREE ONLINE, ON THEIR OWN TIME WITHOUT SACRIFICING FAMILIAL OR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES."

Dr. John Aje

W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing Celebrates 35 Years

This year, the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing celebrates its 35th year of offering nursing degree programs that meet the workforce and lifestyle needs of working adults looking to advance their education.

The School dates its anniversary to the launch of the University's first nursing program, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), implemented in October 1983 with an initial enrollment of some 300 students. Since then, the School has enhanced its offerings to include an Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program,

Thomas Edison State University, the New Jersey Board of Higher Education authorized higher educational institutions throughout the state to develop and offer a new nursing degree, a BSN. At the time, the healthcare field was pressing for the baccalaureate degree to become the minimum credential for the nursing profession, which would have disenfranchised an estimated 80,000 nurses in New Jersey who had no direct pathway from their registered nurse (RN) credentials to a BSN. Pruitt sought out funding for the creation of the program and enlisted the assistance of W. Cary Edwards, who, at the time, was chief counsel to then-Gov. Thomas H. Kean.

While nursing was one of the academic areas Thomas Edison State University was created to provide, no funding for the development of a nursing program had been authorized. It was crucial that the state's budget include funding as a means to cement the implementation of the degree offering at the institution.



development of the School of Nursing.

In 2010, the School of Nursing was named in honor of W. Cary Edwards for his instrumental role in securing the initial funding to establish nursing education at the University. Throughout his lifetime, he maintained a distinguished record of service to higher education and the state of New Jersey, serving as attorney general, chair of the State Commission on Investigation and serving as a member of the New Jersey Assembly.

"We are excited to celebrate and honor the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing's 35th anniversary as it continues to serve as a hallmark of nursing education throughout New Jersey and across the nation," said



W. Cary Edwards pictured in his office during his time as New Jersey assemblyman, where he served from 1978-1982.

Master of Science in Nursing degree programs and graduate certificate programs as well as the University's first doctoral program, a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

"I am honored to lead such a dynamic School whose programs provide a seamless pathway to advanced degrees for nurses and those who wish to become nurses," said Dr. Filomela Marshall, dean of the School. "With more than 3,600 graduates from the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing, we look forward to the future and our role in producing leaders equipped to actively participate in the transformation of healthcare. I am excited for what is to come for both the University and the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing."

In 1982, shortly after Dr. George A. Pruitt assumed the presidency of

Edwards had a keen understanding of the industry pressure for a BSN in the field given that his wife, Lynn, was a nurse. He worked with the Kean administration to place \$240,000 in the state budget to fund development of the University's nursing program, working to gain the support of legislative leaders. The budget passed with the provision in place and the governor's signature was the starting point for

Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president of Thomas Edison State University. "I look forward to the advancements we'll continue to make in providing superior nursing education for adult students who are looking to make an impact on the ever-changing healthcare space."

To learn more about the University's W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing and its programs, visit www.tesu.edu/nursing.

"WITH MORE THAN 3,600 GRADUATES FROM THE W. CARY EDWARDS SCHOOL OF NURSING, WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE AND OUR ROLE IN PRODUCING LEADERS EQUIPPED TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF HEALTHCARE."

Dr. Filomela Marshall

Thomas C. Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic Raises Nearly \$87,000

The 24th annual Thomas C. Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic, which took place at The Ridge at Back Brook in Ringoes, N.J., on May 14, helped to raise nearly \$87,000 for the Thomas Edison State University Foundation. This year, more than 100 golfers and guests attended and supported the event.

“It was my honor to take part in the Thomas Edison State University Foundation’s annual golf outing this year,” said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president. “With the support of the Foundation and successful events such as these, the University will be able to continue to expand its reach by offering more flexible strategies to complete a degree, provide scholarship support to

our students who need assistance and strengthen our comprehensive course offerings and programs.”

This year’s tournament raised the second largest amount in the event’s history. The outing featured a scramble format and the first place foursome was comprised of Bruce Post, Robert Crawford, Matt Balitsaris and Chuck Scholer.



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Dr. Merodie A. Hancock with Tom Streckewald’s family: his wife, Cathie; brothers Matt and Fritz; and sons Dan and Kevin.



Golfers from GE Power enjoy the reception on The Ridge’s deck overlooking the beautiful course.



The team from Lear & Pannepacker, LLP, one of the Golf Classic’s most loyal sponsors.



NJM Insurance Group’s Kim Owens and Christine Cookson enjoy a day together out on the course.

Foundation Board member Alex Binder makes it a family affair, golfing with his son, Austin



Wells Fargo Awards \$50,000 Grant to Empower the Next Generation of Visionary Leaders

Wells Fargo has awarded a \$50,000 grant to Thomas Edison State University as part of its commitment to supporting high-quality education in the state of New Jersey.

The grant provides support for the development of the Center for Leadership and Governance at Thomas Edison State University. The Center's cutting-edge work will focus on developing and guiding emerging leaders in the fields of higher education, government, and nonprofit health and human services while strengthening the effectiveness of those already serving in leadership roles.

"The funding to support the newly established Center will help us provide executive leadership development opportunities to shape future leaders, and guide current leaders, to serve with purpose, vision, values and integrity

and to provide effective strategies for governing boards in higher education, non-profits and government entities," said Linda Meehan, center director. "We are immensely grateful to Wells Fargo for its support of this endeavor."

With the benefit of more than 35 years of presidential experience that Dr. George A. Pruitt, president emeritus and board distinguished fellow, brings to the Center, its offerings will comprehensively address the current challenges that face those in leadership positions and will educate and empower the next generation of visionary leaders.

"At Wells Fargo, we believe that visionary leadership is a critical



Pictured (from left) Chad Acosta, district manager for Greater Princeton, Wells Fargo; Linda Meehan, senior fellow and director, Center for Leadership and Governance at Thomas Edison State University; and John P. Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs at Thomas Edison State University, at the check presentation outside George A. Pruitt Hall.

component to the success of our communities," said Wanda Saez, SVP, community relations manager for Wells Fargo. "Thomas Edison State University's commitment to the city of Trenton, the state of New Jersey and beyond, is a model of what true leadership can accomplish."

Bristol-Myers Squibb Awards \$30,000 Grant to Provide Scholarships That Will Enhance Learning Opportunities for BSN Students

Thomas Edison State University has received a \$30,000 grant from Bristol-Myers Squibb in support of the institution's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program (Accelerated BSN).

This grant provides financial support to help cover tuition costs for up to 15 nursing students enrolled in the 2017-2018 Accelerated BSN cohort. Students in this program already possess another baccalaureate degree and thus face unique financial struggles. Their eligibility for Pell grants and other financial aid is limited, as 95 percent carry loans from their previous degree programs.

"I am grateful for the continued support of Bristol-Myers Squibb to the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing," said Dr. Filomela Marshall, dean of the

W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing. "This commitment to nursing scholarships enables our students to reach their goal of becoming nurses who provide high-quality care to the communities that they serve."

Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) is a global biopharmaceutical company, focused in discovering, developing and delivering innovative medicines for patients with serious and life-threatening diseases. As global citizens, BMS works sustainably, responsibly and seeks to give back to the community, in part through the New Jersey Community Giving Program. The N.J. Community Giving Program is focused on improving STEM education in underserved communities and building a diverse STEM pipeline of future professionals.



Dr. Filomela Marshall, dean of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing at Thomas Edison State University

"We are proud to support the nurses of tomorrow through our grant to the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing," said Johanna Mercier, head of the U.S. commercial organization, Bristol-Myers Squibb. "Building a strong pipeline of STEM professionals is important to our mission to help patients overcome serious disease - with nurses at the center of the care continuum."



JUSTICE LEAGUE

Eric Pennington, BSBA '87

Scott Pennington, AA '86



JUSTICE LEAGUE

“PEOPLE ARE OFTEN SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT, ALTHOUGH I AM AN ATTORNEY, I AM ALSO A HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT... IT TOOK ME APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS TO COMPLETE MY DEGREE AT THOMAS EDISON. IN ADDITION TO UTILIZING CLEP® TESTS AND PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT, I WAS ABLE TO APPLY CREDITS FROM MY MILITARY TRAINING AND FROM COURSE WORK COMPLETED AT VARIOUS COLLEGES.”

Scott Pennington

Eric Pennington, BSBA '87, and Scott Pennington, AA '86

With generations of attorneys forging the way, practicing law was in the bloodline for Eric and Scott Pennington. It seems only fitting that the brothers have established a new family tradition, earning degrees at Thomas Edison State University (TESU).

The Pennington brothers practice their calling as partners in The Pennington Law Group in South Orange, N.J. Scott practices in the areas of criminal defense, DWI/DUI, and traffic and harassment/discrimination consulting; older brother Eric, who was recently appointed as business administrator for the city of Newark, practices part time, as counsel to the Pennington Law Group, by representing victims of sexual harassment and discrimination, and civil rights litigation. Until recently, Eric served as the attorney for the city of Orange Township, N.J., and taught civil rights law as an adjunct professor at Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark, N.J.

“The field of law is in our blood,” explained Scott, who earned his Associate in Arts degree in Liberal Arts/General Studies in 1986. “Our paternal second great-grandfather, Charles P. Dargan, was a lawyer in South Carolina during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and our maternal great-grandfather, Guy B. Booth, was a 1918 graduate of Howard School of Law - quite miraculous for the son of a man who escaped from slavery. Booth’s son became a lawyer after World War II and his grandson graduated from

Georgetown Law School in the early 1980s. Now that my son, Bradford, has graduated from Rutgers Law School; we have six generations of law school graduates in our family tree.”

Although genealogy may have played an important role, one of the strongest influences in the course of the brothers’ lives was their mom.

Raised under difficult circumstances by their single mother, Ashley, the brothers drew from her perseverance and resolve. “Our mother had a lifelong ambition of becoming an attorney, like several in her family who preceded her,” said Scott. “Unfortunately, she spent the majority of her adult years raising her family, while battling what was considered at the time to be a terminal illness, which often rendered her bedridden and barely able to speak. Somehow, she was led to believe that she could not be an attorney if she could not rely upon her speaking ability, so she went in a different direction altogether.”

“My mother went to college while raising five children, all of whom were under the age of 13 when she began her education,” added Eric, who earned his Bachelor of Science in Business

Administration degree in Marketing in 1987. “She was pursuing her PhD at the time of her death at age 52. Her determination and commitment to educational excellence was the single most influential factor in encouraging me to pursue and complete my degree.”

Scott was the first to complete his education at the University. While serving in the United States Air Force during the early 1980s, his base education officer recognized his educational potential and strongly recommended that he consider enrolling in a TESU degree program.

“People are often surprised to learn that, although I am an attorney, I am also a high school dropout,” Scott noted. “It took me approximately two years to complete my degree at Thomas Edison. In addition to utilizing CLEP® tests and portfolio assessment, I was able to apply credits from my military training and from course work completed at various colleges.”

Eric, who learned about TESU from Scott, finished his degree in three years.

“I was attracted to Thomas Edison because of its flexibility and the myriad of ways one could earn credit,” Eric explained. “I earned credit through transferring prior earned credits; CLEP® tests; portfolio assessment; TECEP®; and ongoing course work at other colleges and universities.”

With educational excellence and judicial endeavors in mind, the brothers decided to celebrate their mother’s legacy in a very special way. They established the Ashley J.



“I WAS ATTRACTED TO THOMAS EDISON BECAUSE OF ITS FLEXIBILITY AND THE MYRIAD WAYS ONE COULD EARN CREDIT... I EARNED CREDIT THROUGH TRANSFERRING PRIOR EARNED CREDITS; CLEP® TESTS; PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT; TECEP®; AND ONGOING COURSE WORK AT OTHER COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.”

Eric Pennington

Pennington Scholarship, which enables the Pennington family to help other aspiring attorneys through law school and carry on their mother’s commitment to human rights and justice.

“It was her commitment to social justice, world peace and humanism that has shaped the manner in which I pursue civil rights on behalf of others,” Eric reflected. “I have wanted to be a lawyer my whole life. I want to represent people who I believe are not treated fairly. I wake up every day eager to get to work and grateful that I have a job that is rewarding.”

“Undoubtedly, we each have our individual reasons for becoming attorneys; however, I am sure we have collectively done so in no small part to honor our mother and to have her dream vicariously realized through us,” explained Scott, speaking of himself, Eric and their brother Daryl, who is also a lawyer.

In fact, the Association of Black Law Students honored all three brothers

during its annual gala a few years ago. Furthermore, Scott was named to the Super Lawyer’s list of Rising Stars and, most recently, was honored by Project Redirect-NJ with a Lifetime Achievement Award. He is a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and has served on numerous nonprofit boards throughout New Jersey. Eric is also a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity as well as the New Jersey State Bar Association and Garden State Bar Association. Additionally, he once clerked for the Hon. Robert N. Wilentz, chief justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, and then the Hon. Damon J. Keith, on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He has served as a commissioner of the N.J. State Commission of Investigation, chief judge of the Orange Municipal Court; vice chairman of the Board of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ; and, on a lighter note, he was a regional under-13 yo-yo champion.

Eric lives in his hometown, Orange, N.J., and has a daughter, Imani, who is a graduate student at Rutgers-Newark, pursuing her Master of Social Work. In his spare time, Eric loves to cook, travel, read, attend the theater and go to the movies.

Scott lives in West Orange, N.J., with his wife, Christina, who is also a lawyer. In addition to his son, Bradford, who, prior to Rutgers, graduated from the University of Michigan with distinction and honors, Scott has a daughter. Named after her grandmother, Ashley recently received a Master of Public Administration degree from Rutgers-Newark. Off the clock, he takes pleasure in researching his genealogy, and enjoys traveling and painting.



HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP

Deborah Larsen, BSN '10, MSN '16

Deborah Larsen loves a challenge. Whether it is in her career or in her educational pursuits, she finds the charge to improve and excel a rewarding endeavor.

"I thought I was done with school after I achieved my dream of obtaining my BSN," said Larsen, who completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree at Thomas Edison State University (TESU) in 2010. "The University makes it doable for the adult learner who is working full time, has a family and other responsibilities going on with life in general. And, once I was finished, I talked about my positive experiences so much that I am not sure how many applicants I am responsible for that ultimately enrolled."

She does know that one of those applicants was her son, Kevin M. Larsen, who was attending a community college program when he decided to transfer to TESU to obtain his associate degree.

"In 2013, Kevin graduated with an Associate in Applied Science degree in Applied Computer Studies," she explained. "On his Commencement day, I asked him if he was thinking about going on for his next degree at TESU and he said: 'I will if you will.' We both enrolled, and it was a running joke that maybe we would graduate and walk together, however, he finished before me and graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree in Computer Information Systems in 2015. It took me one more year to complete my Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree."

An advanced nurse clinician (ANC), Larsen will be the first to tell you that she has come full circle back to the medical surgical floor that she started on at Virtua Health System when she became an RN in 1983.

"I worked on a medical-surgical unit until the end of 2008 when I transferred to the critical care area and worked on a progressive care unit (PCU). Today, my responsibilities include ensuring that staff are competent, and that we maintain the quality metrics of the

"THE UNIVERSITY MAKES IT DOABLE FOR THE ADULT LEARNER WHO IS WORKING FULL TIME, HAS A FAMILY AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES GOING ON WITH LIFE IN GENERAL."

Deborah Larsen

floor. I work with some of the best RNs and patient care technicians (PCTs) in the hospital dedicated to safe, quality care for our patients. I am also blessed that Virtua is an employer that is pro-education and has a tuition reimbursement program for eligible employees to make educational dreams a reality."

Originally planning to attend another institution, Larsen's educational plans took a turn when she saw an article about Thomas Edison State University's partnership with Virtua Health System. "I started to ask around and found many of my colleagues were already enrolled and that they were very satisfied with the program."

Once she started researching the University, she was pleasantly surprised that, due to the partnership held between the two organizations, per credit, it was less expensive for her to attend than other institutions she was considering.

"I always had the goal of obtaining my BSN one day, but family came first," Larsen explained. "The plan was that once my son was older and almost out of school, I would return. Working full time, being a wife and mom, and conscientious about my grades were all considerations for me. So, I only took one course at a time. I looked at this journey as a marathon and not a race. I wanted to succeed and not set myself up for failure by taking more than one course, so it took me approximately three years to obtain my BSN."

Once her educational trek was complete, Larsen reflected on her triumphs.

"First, I am most proud that I accomplished my MSN degree as a nurse educator. I truly enjoy teaching and promoting education. I have always focused on improving myself, and, from the beginning of my career, I have worked on achieving that goal. In addition to my TESU degrees, I obtained my Med-Surg certification and Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN) certification, but obtaining my Progressive Care Certified Nurse (PCCN) certification was the hardest and most rewarding when I was working in PCU."

Larsen is a member of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) and the Organization of Nurse Leaders of New Jersey (ONL), and belongs to Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society.

Living in Marlton, N.J., Larsen said that in her spare time she goes to the gym, plays the piano and reads, and travels with her husband, Bill, who fully supported her in her educational endeavors. True to her calling, Larsen noted that if she could have one wish that would come true it would be that she and her family and friends live a healthy, happy, long life.

CHANGE AGENT

❖ Tesha Goodson, BSBA '16

After years of encouraging her daughter to finish what she started, Tesha Goodson found it was time to take her own advice.

"I paused my education after earning my associate degree in order to finance my daughter's education," Goodson began. "I had always imagined myself as a successful manager within an organization, but her dreams came first."

With her daughter now a successful business owner, Goodson has found the opportunity to pursue her own education and dreams.

At age 16, she began working for the state of New Jersey at the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), serving the next 14 years in various positions between the DEP and state's office of management information systems. In 2000, Goodson was delivered a layoff notice, realizing her next step would be the most crucial.

"I had to make the decision as to whether I would stay local and take a demotion or be laid off," she explained. "For me, family comes first, so I chose to take the demotion to remain close to my family and my daughter."

Though the demotion could be seen as a setback, Goodson wouldn't allow the news to shake her.

She pressed the restart button on her ascension up the corporate ladder, this time with the state's Department of Transportation (DOT), where she still works today. During that time, she took advantage of the DOT's 'grow your own employee' pilot program, which gave her the chance to earn 21 college credits in accounting from Mercer County Community College in West Windsor, N.J. Upon successful completion of the program, Goodson was appointed accountant trainee with the department.

Since then, she has been working as manager of Fiscal Resources with the

agency, overseeing a staff of 26, after being promoted several times over the years.

"Being a manager has been my dream since I began working for the state," she explained. "Over the years, I worked hard, learned all I could and, most importantly, I listened to those who spoke directly to me and those who spoke around me. I learned quickly to identify the difference."

Day-to-day, Goodson manages a team that oversees the entire accounting operations for the DOT, assisting with audits, cost benefit analysis, effectiveness and ensuring processes remain in financial compliance with state guidelines.

In order to help her along her path, Goodson discovered that earning a college degree was necessary to advance.

Armed with previously earned credits and an associate degree, Goodson took advantage of the DOT's career development program, which reimburses the cost of tuition for employees up to 12 credits per fiscal year at select New Jersey colleges and universities. With Thomas Edison State University on the list and in her hometown, Goodson got the ball rolling almost immediately.

"My experience at the University was shaped by the many mentors who I had the privilege of learning with while earning my bachelor's degree," she explained. "Mentor Nathan Cox, in particular, taught my Ethics and the Business Professional (PHI-384) course and made a real impression on my learning. He asked us to outline steps we would take to become a more effective change agent, which helped to further shape me as a manager."

In 2016, Goodson completed her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree in Accounting at the University, but didn't wait until graduation to begin putting her knowledge to work for her.

"The team I manage has been my constant motivation and gives me purpose each day," she said. "Many of the skills I learned while earning my degree I immediately applied to my job and practiced on them. As a result, I have been able to improve my effectiveness and better understand that each individual can learn from different perspectives and experiences."

Outside of her regular duties, Goodson has also found ways to give back and make an impression on the local Trenton community.

"The city of Trenton has been my home my entire life, and it only makes sense for me to help others in my community," she explained. "Years ago, I began serving with a local foundation dear to my heart, Building Our Youth Development (B.O.Y.D.) and have been so fulfilled in doing so."

B.O.Y.D., which was founded in 2003, was created to give children more opportunities and prepare them for their future by making sure students are well-read, well-dressed, well-spoken, well-traveled and well-balanced.

"We believe children should have a clear understanding of who they are and where they are going," Goodson said. "Our ultimate vision is for the students who come through our program to live lives that are enriched and leave armed with a sense of responsibility not only to themselves but for their community."

Goodson and husband Mark live in the city of Trenton, and are the parents of adult daughter Marketta. When she's not working or volunteering, Goodson enjoys traveling and spending time with her family.



class notes

❖ Dr. Gregory Vincent Avery

ASPSS '92, BSHS '92

Dr. Gregory Vincent Avery earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in African American Ministry from Newburgh Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Ind., in June. He currently serves as a deacon for Antioch Baptist Church in Hempstead, N.Y.



❖ Anthony V. Bilotta Jr. BSBA '98

Anthony V. Bilotta Jr. was named executive vice president and chief banking officer of Kearny Bank. Bilotta has been a banking professional for the past 37 years and serves primarily as a deposit strategist, with an emphasis on helping the bank expand its treasury and cash management service businesses.



❖ Susan Miranda Breton

MAEdL '10, '12

Susan Miranda Breton was named acting school superintendent of Mount Olive, N.J., schools. For the past six years, she has served as principal of Mount Olive Middle School and was promoted in June to district director of curriculum and instruction. She has worked in the district since 2009.



❖ Elizabeth Brown-Hill

BSBA '09

Elizabeth Brown-Hill was named executive director of Finance with the Lawton Board of Education in Lawton, Okla.



❖ John DeJesus AAS '15

John DeJesus had his first book, *TACO - A Brooklyn Tale*, named as a finalist in the 'Book of Excellence Awards.' The book is about a Puerto Rican boy growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., with themes of surviving, growing where you are planted and realizing goals and dreams.



❖ John J. Deltuvia Jr.

BA '91, MAPS '06

John J. Deltuvia Jr. was honored with the 'Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award' presented by *Marquis Who's Who*, a world publisher of biographical profiles. Deltuvia serves as a systems and operations analyst and information technology developer in the Administrative Office of the Court in New Jersey, a position he has held since 1999.



❖ Jorge Escobar

BSBA '14

Jorge Escobar was named acting president of San Jose City College in San Jose, Calif. He has previously worked at Merrill Lynch, Princeton University, Laureate International Universities and the National Hispanic University.



❖ Diane S. Fox

MAEdL '14

Diane S. Fox was named New Jersey Association of School Business Officials President-Elect for 2018-2019. Fox currently serves as the Middle Township (N.J.) Board of Education business administrator and Board secretary.



❖ Rev. Tom Johnson-Medland BA '95

Rev. Tom Johnson-Medland has published his 15th book, *Coming Back Home: Poems on Leaving Prison*. Medland has volunteered for two years at Monroe County Correctional Facility in Stroudsburg, Pa., teaching a weekly poetry class, and this volume contains his poetry and that of his students. He currently serves as the director of Bayada Hospice in East Stroudsburg, Pa., and lives in the Poconos with his family.



❖ Gerald T. Reiner Jr. BSBA '11

Gerald T. Reiner Jr. was recently presented with the 'County Service Award' by the New Jersey Association of Counties at its 68th annual conference in Atlantic City, N.J. Reiner works as the director of Purchasing for the County of Bergen in New Jersey.

❖ Daniel Sargis

BSAST '14

Daniel Sargis was named resident inspector at Clinton Nuclear Plant in Clinton, Ill., by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in June. Sargis joined the NRC in 2015 as part of the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program. Prior to joining the agency, he served six years in the U.S. Navy.



❖ Maryanne Spatola

BA '06

Maryann Spatola was named one of *NJBiz's* 'Best Fifty Women in Business 2018.' Spatola works as senior vice president and chief human resources officer at Solix, Inc. in Parsippany, N.J.



❖ Lael Weinberger BA '09

Lael Weinberger graduated from the University of Chicago Law School in Chicago, Ill., earning a JD degree with high honors in June. While in law school, he was an articles editor of the *University of Chicago Law Review* and served as president of the school's Christian Legal Society chapter. He will soon begin a clerkship with Judge Frank Easterbrook on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. He is also a PhD candidate in the University of Chicago's Department of History.

❖ Ernest Wooden Jr. BSBA '06, MSM '07

Ernest Wooden Jr. was named to Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI)'s 2017 'Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales, Marketing and Revenue Optimization.' The honor is given to leaders in the hospitality, travel and tourism industries for measured accomplishment during a given year. Wooden, who has been president and CEO of the Los Angeles Convention and Tourism Board since 2013, was nominated for the honor by Thomas Edison State University mentor, Dr. John Mellon. Mellon was one of Wooden's mentors during his time at the University, and the two have remained close throughout the years.



ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

To learn more about the Alumni Ambassador program at Thomas Edison State University, please visit www.tesu.edu/ambassador.

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