

# Invention

Newsletter of Thomas A. Edison State College

Winter 1987

## \$1.8 Million Grant Paves Way for Edison's "Electronic College"

Edison State College was awarded \$1,827,541 this past summer as part of the Governor's Challenge Grant Program. The program, which began in 1985, challenges public higher education in New Jersey to build on its strengths and become second to none in the quality and excellence of its services to the residents of the State.

Edison's grant will be used to fund

the Computer Assisted Lifelong Learning (CALL) Network, which will elevate Edison State College to a position of national prominence by offering high-quality collegiate advisement and learning opportunities through various media and emerging technologies. Edison will assemble in one place the very best of educational technology that has been developed nationally.

This project will create a fourth dimension of service to Edison students by adding interactive computer access to a delivery system previously mediated by telephone, mail, and person-to-person contact. Interactive computer access will free

the distant learner from longstanding barriers of time and geography and will enable Edison to provide expanded and timely services to the workplace, thereby serving both the employer and the employee. The

(continued on p. 2)

## Edison Holds Fourteenth Commencement

Thomas A. Edison State College recently held its Fourteenth Annual Commencement. The traditional Commencement ceremony marks the achievements of 414 adult students, average age 40, who have completed associate and baccalaureate degree requirements throughout the past year.

This year's graduates came from 19 of the 21 counties in New Jersey, and out-of-state from as far away as California, Michigan, and Miami. To complete degree requirements, Edison graduates selected from a variety of methods of earning credits that best suited their individual goals and schedules. These methods include equivalency examinations, assessment of knowledge acquired

through on-the-job or other learning experiences, coursework at other colleges, guided independent study, correspondence, and computer-delivered courses.

Brigadier General (USAF Retired) Charles E. Yeager, the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound, delivered the Commencement Address. Yeager was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Aeronautics and Space Science.

Yeager commended the graduates for their hard work and the broad range of experiences that helped them to earn their college degrees. He emphasized the importance of education in a society that relies more and more on technology for day-to-day living.



Brigadier General Chuck Yeager speaking at Commencement.

## Dr. Pruitt's Leadership Commended in Exxon Education Study

In a recent study funded by the Exxon Education Foundation, Edison State College President George A. Pruitt, was named one of the most effective college presidents in the United States.

In the first study ever conducted about the characteristics of effective college presidents, Dr. James Fisher, President Emeritus of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and Martha Tack, a Professor at Bowling Green State University, asked 485 academics to pick the most effective presidents. Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame, was listed most frequently.

"We found statistical differences between effective and typical or representative college presidents," stated Dr. Fisher. According to Dr. Fisher, the study indicated that effective college presidents are strong

risk takers with a vision, a dream. They work longer hours, more of them are loners, and they rely on respect rather than popularity in dealing with others.

The effective president does not speak spontaneously as much. "They do not believe in spontaneous brilliance or spontaneous stupidity, they run things through their mind a bit," Dr. Fisher stated. He added, "They also appear to make decisions easier." According to the study, the most acclaimed presidents believe in the welfare of the individual and encourage creativity.

Dr. Pruitt has been President of Edison State College since 1982. Since that time the College has gained a reputation nationally as a model of adult higher education. At a time of declining enrollments at most colleges, Edison State College is experiencing a dramatic increase in applications. (continued on p. 2)



Governor Thomas H. Kean (left) with Edison President George A. Pruitt during the signing of the autonomy legislation.

## Governor Signs Autonomy Legislation

Governor Thomas H. Kean signed legislation July 9 to give Edison State College and the other eight State Colleges in New Jersey more autonomy over their fiscal and academic affairs. In signing the bills, the Governor declared that the legislation was a "victory for learning and a defeat for bureaucracy."

Edison President George A. Pruitt, who is Chairman of the Council of State College Presidents, represented the Presidents during the autonomy negotiations.

Operationally, autonomy will take on a different character for Edison than for the other state colleges. Many of the changes occur in the finance and administration area of the institution's management. First, there will be minimal changes in current Board of Trustee involvement for Edison because historically the

college has developed approval and information machinery appropriate to the post-autonomy environment.

The second area of difference is the degree to which Edison will continue to use the systems and processes of state government to carry out the College's business. For Edison to acquire the administrative infrastructure to become completely independent in the same pattern as the other state colleges will require an inflation in overhead cost disproportionate with any conceivable benefit for such a commitment of resources. Edison State College intends to establish a relationship with the Treasury Department that would permit them to continue the processing of the College's transactions without the application of Treasury regulatory standards.



Raymond L. Steen, former Chairman of the Board and President of Broad Street National Bank, recently donated "The George A. Bradshaw Collection" to Edison State College in memory of his wife, Mary MacPherson Steen. The collection includes sixty-five original etchings, many of historical Trenton landmarks. Pictured viewing the collection are, left to right, Steen, Edison President George Pruitt, Robert Bradshaw, and his wife, Jean.



CALL Network will improve the quality of Edison's academic and advising services by both increasing student options and enhancing the role of academic progress.

The CALL Network represents a necessary and logical evolution in the provision of college services to adults, who have become the majority population of many colleges. The national shift to a high tech/service economy and the decreasing numbers of young college graduates have forced employers to invest in the education of current employees at unprecedented levels. The products of technology—personal computers, video recorders, cable television—have made broad penetration in the home and workplace, and adult access to this technology increases dramatically every year.

The CALL Network will be established through the development of three primary components:

- **Creating the Infrastructure**—The implementation of the CALL Network requires the acquisition of, and access to, sufficient computer power to support the greatly increased use of computers to deliver Edison State College services. The CALL Network is dependent on the creation of, and access to, enabling software packages which manage communications and information flow as well as mini-data bases which provide an assortment of informational services. This "electronic infrastructure" will empower students, staff, and faculty in the utilization of a new delivery system for higher education.
- **The Simulated Classroom** will provide distant learners with high-quality courses which integrate print, video, and audio components. Most importantly, it will add a new dimension to distance learning: interaction. Through CALL Network, students will have direct access to a faculty mentor and be able to participate in a discussion of class material with their mentors and fellow students. The Simulated Classroom will enhance learning, increase student retention and completion rates, and accelerate student academic progress.
- **Computer Diagnostic Examinations** will be available through the CALL Network and will allow students to obtain a detailed understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in specific subject areas. Through an adaptive test, students will learn what areas of a subject they have mastered and what areas need additional study. The test program will also indicate when mastery appears to have been obtained. When ready, the student may register for a credit bearing examination.

Once the CALL Network is fully deployed, any adult with access to a computer and videotape player will be able to complete a college degree at home or in the workplace. Through state-of-the-art telecommunications processes, the College will offer its superior advisement services and coherent, high-quality learning opportunities to the adult learner individually or through the employer, independent of time and location. The implications of universal access through technology have potentially far-reaching benefits.

## Address Focuses on Value of Edison Degree



Pictured after the Commencement Ceremony are Graduate Carole Nerlino, third from left; Carole's daughters Angie (left) and Joanne; and her friend, John Cerepak.

By Carole Nerlino  
Speaker for Class of 1986

For each of us graduating here today, this occasion has a profound social and cultural significance. It's the moment when we extend our hand and close it around "that old sheepskin."

Now we all know why we want the degree, and we all know what we're going to do with it when we carry it out of here. But there's something else that we're going to do with it that in all likelihood we haven't given a moment's thought to—and yet it may be the most important thing of all. And it's that Something Else that I want to direct your attention to today.

Now think for a minute: What is the purpose of the degree? What is its value? For most of us this document is a ticket, and entry visa, a passport to an incredible land of promise—the expanding terrain of opportunity that American society today opens up to everyone who carries the proper credentials. Some decades earlier in American society the proper credentials consisted of a high school diploma. Today, for the most part, our society does not recognize students who come out of high school as being sufficiently prepared to be admitted through certain of the choicer portals to the American terrain of opportunity. The lack of a college degree becomes a barrier.

Through Edison College and its concepts of education we have been able to pick up the pieces of our fragmentary education. We are now acquiring the ticket, the passport, the entry visa that we lacked. Many of us will use it to gain admission to the land of promise that was previously closed to us.

Dr. Pruitt (continued from p. 1)

Throughout his career, Dr. Pruitt has studied and been sought out for his philosophy of the characteristics of effective leadership. His doctoral thesis, "A Blueprint for Leadership: The American College Presidency," has been cited by researchers.

Dr. Pruitt is active in the formulation of educational policy nationally and within the State of New Jersey. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL); Chairman of the Council of New Jersey State College Presidents; Member of the Commission on Higher Education and the Adult Learner of the American Council on Education; Chairman of the Committee on Alternatives and Innovation of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities; a member of the Trustee Committee on Planning and Development of the College Board, and a member of the Labor/Higher Education Council of the American Council on Education (ACE).

Others will be putting our diplomas to a somewhat different use—not as a ticket of admission, but as a credential to give us some official standing in the land of opportunity that we have already entered and prospered in.

The motivation that I've just described is my own. After high school, I bypassed getting a college degree in favor of pursuing the then recognized traditional values of the time such as raising a family. Having accomplished that, I then entered into the world of Finance as a Certified Financial Planner. In this arena I achieved success and recognition becoming a Vice President with a well-known financial institution serving clients who regularly invest tens of millions of dollars on the basis of my advice.

But I began to be bothered and nagged by a sense of incompleteness in my formal educational background. It may be unfortunate and unfair, but it is certainly true that we are sometimes appraised not by what we know or what we can do but by what credentials we have.

A sense of lacking the expected credentials can make one feel inadequate, incomplete, even vulnerable, as if someday someone might suddenly question your authority and your decisions based upon your educational background.

So it was for this reason that I undertook the Edison College program. And for me and others in my situation, what could we possibly do with our Edison diplomas than use it as official recognition of the knowledge and skill that our present success and status depend upon? For an answer to the question of what that important Something Else is that we're going to do with our Edison diplomas, let's reflect for a moment on what Edison College is and what makes it unique.

The first thing is that Edison College is a barrier breaker. As I've been describing, the lack of an official document attesting to college-level achievement can be a barrier.

The very name of the school was

chosen to emphasize this principle of barrier breaking. The inventor, Thomas Edison had very little formal education and possessed no college degree, yet during his lifetime he achieved a great deal. It seems safe to say that if we add up the contributions to human life of John Harvard, Eli Yale, and Ezra Cornell, they will be simply a drop in the bucket compared to the contributions of Thomas Edison.

But the names Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and others like them have clout. One of these names, attached to the word "degree" or the word "graduate" means something. It is a credential that implies a certain tradition, educational culture, and set of standards that enhances the standing of its holder in our own eyes.

How much clout does the name "Edison" have when attached to the word "degree" or the word "graduate"? What does it mean? What tradition does it imply, what educational culture, what set of standards—and what effect does it have on how we perceive the standing of its holder? Here then is the Something Else that we are going to do with our Edison diploma.

We are going to establish its value, its meaning, its clout in the eyes of the world. We are going to demonstrate by the way in which we conduct the pursuits backed by this diploma. There is in fact afoot in America today a fresh new approach to educational accomplishment and recognition that will break through many of the barriers that have grown up around the old established traditional approach. The burden of that traditional approach in terms of time, money, and other resources consumed has become enormous and is growing every year.

Can today's Edison College graduates—and this means us—be the barrier breakers? We who like the graduates who have preceded us at Harvard, Yale, and Cornell shall by our accomplishments make Edison College a school of renown. This then is our mission, the something else that we are going to do with our Edison Degree. If we can give this value to the Edison Diploma, won't it truly be the most important thing that we've done with it?

The Garden State Chapter of the American Institute of Banking (AIB) received the Joseph E. Chapman Award for 1986 from the American Bankers Association. The Chapman Award is given each year in recognition of excellence in chapter administration and educational programming.

The Garden State AIB cited its involvement with Edison State College's Center for Corporate Partnerships as a key ingredient in distinguishing it for this honor. Part of AIB's involvement with Edison includes an evaluation of AIB's training programs for college credit and assistance in helping bankers earn college degrees.



The Alumni Association presented the College with \$1,000 for its Scholarship Fund. These funds are from the proceeds granted to the Association from the 1985 Alumni Phonathon. Presenting the check is Frank Hawrylo '79, 1985-86 President, to Dr. Richard S. Hansen, Vice President for Public Affairs.



# Faculty Consultants at Thomas A. Edison State College

By Diane A. Martino '80

Over 200 academicians serve Edison State College as faculty consultants. They are drawn from the ranks of instructors through full professors at public and private, two-year and four-year colleges throughout New Jersey. Fifty-four percent hold doctorate degrees and many of them engage in research and international teaching. They come from the arts, the sciences, business and professional areas, testing and assessment, and learning resource fields.

What they have in common is their enthusiasm for Edison's nontraditional approach to higher education and their belief in the singular value of Edison for an often-neglected population—the adult learner. Perhaps most importantly,

the faculty consultants are committed to applying their highest traditional academic standards to the various Edison functions they perform. It is this commitment that helps support the academic integrity of the Edison State College degree.

Although they teach not a single formal class for Edison, the faculty consultants provide Edison services that are equally demanding and, in some ways, more challenging.

Some serve Edison students in an on-going, one-on-one mentoring capacity. This includes the College's increasingly popular Guided Study Program, as well as the Nursing Program Study Groups.

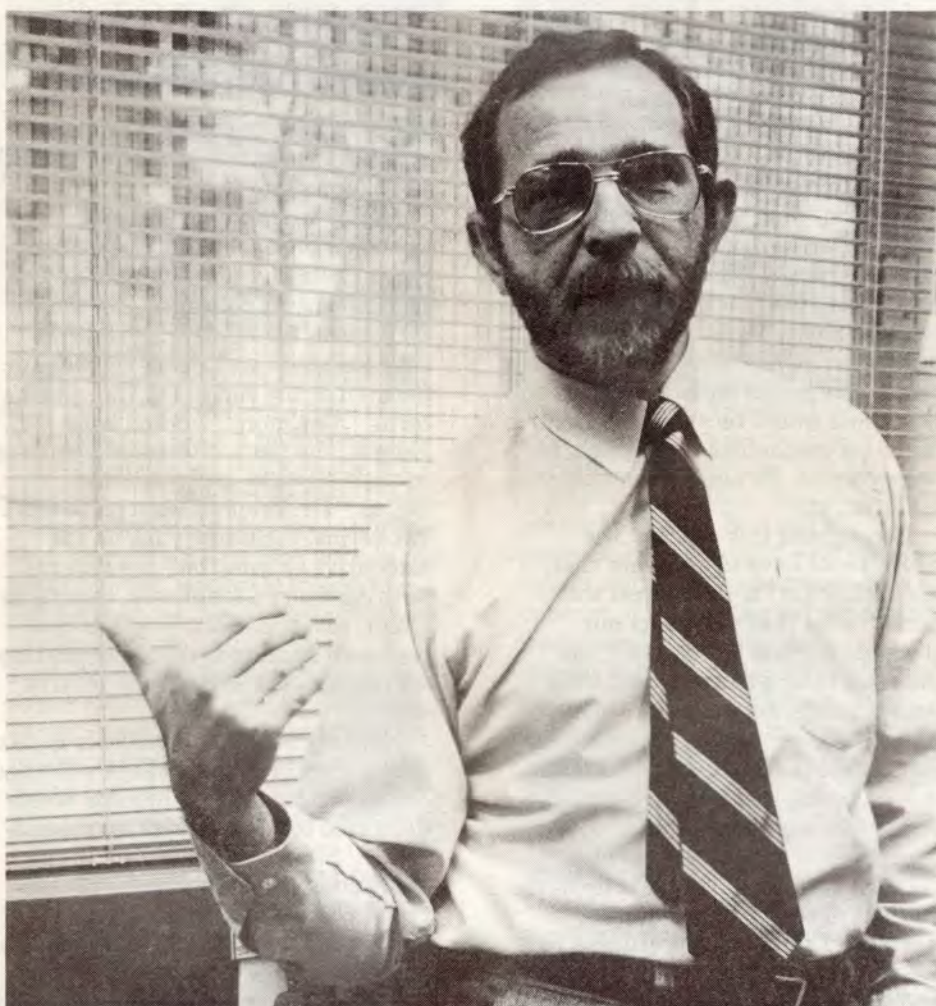
Others serve the College in a developmental capacity. In a team setting, for instance, they work to

develop tests for the Thomas Edison College Examination Program (TECEP), which enables students to demonstrate their knowledge gained through work and independent reading, for college credit. In an even larger team setting, faculty consultants, through the College's Academic Council, bring their collective experience and perspective to the broad-ranging task of providing overall academic guidance for the College's programs, policies, and standards.

Finally, and perhaps most visibly, Edison faculty consultants perform evaluative functions, again in one-on-one faculty/student settings. Many faculty assess student's knowledge, presented in portfolios, for credit. They also conduct the Pre-

Graduation Conferences required for all B.A. degree candidates, and meet with those students in the business and technical programs who must demonstrate currency for credits earned earlier in the career. Faculty consultants also evaluate the Advanced Level Practicum experiences of students seeking the B.S. in Human Services.

From Humanities to Applied Science and Technology, from the wide-ranging Academic Council to assessing a single course, the faculty consultants of Edison are vital to the College's academic integrity. In this series of articles, we will explore their specific roles to give you an insight into not only the processes, but also the people.



Tom Grites, Director of Academic Advising, Stockton State College

## “It’s a good check and balance system”

Nowhere is the diversity of Edison's faculty consultants more evident than in the 28 members of the *Academic Council*. With representation from state colleges, community colleges, private colleges, and corporate education programs, “It’s a good mix of people,” according to Tom Grites, director of academic advising at Stockton State College and a member of Edison's Academic Council for four years.

The Council comes together several times a year to discuss and

recommend, through a voting process, changes and additions to the content and requirements of Edison degree programs as well as the College's academic policies.

“It’s a good check and balance system,” notes Mr. Grites about the Council. He continued, “I’ve heard it described like a faculty senate on a traditional college campus and I think that’s a good comparison.”

The process is somewhat different in that recommendations come to the Council from the academic professional staff of Edison rather than being self-generated as in traditional faculty senates. The items on the agenda are either information and discussion items, or items for vote. Those for vote always have to do

with some academic policy, whether it’s a degree program or a specialization within a degree program, or a specific policy, for instance, basic skills testing for Edison students.

In addition to recommendations from Edison staff, the Council relies on the input of various Advisory Committees. There is a committee for each degree area, which is made up of faculty from that discipline. Specific changes in degree requirements, for example, “would go to the Advisory Committee first and then they would come to the full Council, with the recommendations of the Committee, for a final, formal vote,” according to Mr. Grites.

Grites is impressed with the commitment of the Council members: “People come in well prepared. If they have a question about whatever issue is on the agenda, they have the question ready. And that may generate questions that others hadn’t thought about. People, I think, take their role very seriously. They try to make all the meetings and to contribute.”

Such preparation and commitment results in a diligent attention to standards. This focus is often in the form of a compare and contrast discussion of the situations of traditional students—what is done for them, how they are placed, what is expected of them, *vis-a-vis* the nontraditional student. “This helps the Council ensure an academically sound frame of reference for decisions affecting Edison students,” according to Mr. Grites.

“There are certain issues that the Council has voted on that have been even more rigid or difficult than some of our community colleges or state

colleges policies at our own institutions . . . basic skills testing, for example. Edison has taken the State’s regulation, which says you have to test all freshmen, quite literally. Their freshmen are defined as anybody who comes in with less than 30 credits,” Grites explained. He is hesitant to make institutional comparisons on standards: “It really does depend on the issue. To put Edison, or the Council and the issues and policies that we talk about, on any kind of continuum varies with the issue and policy, and what you’re measuring it against.”

“The strength and probably the effectiveness of the Academic Council is that all of those individual constituencies are represented at the Council. Any policy that goes through has been looked upon from the lenient point of view and the more rigid point of view. The diversity of the group seems to act as a safeguard to keep any issue before the Council safely within acceptable academic standards,” Grites believes.

Such a mixture also makes for lively Council discussion. “It’s like any other heterogeneous group of people trying to solve a problem or discuss an issue. It’s interesting to see their perspective and their expectations. Their backgrounds are reflected in their comments and in the approach they’re taking to address the issue, and that’s good. I guess I get more from the business and industry people, or government people, who are on the Council than the other college people. When I want to think like a community college person, or a department chairman, I can. But I’ve never had a business background, so I learn more from them. You always pick up something,” Grites continued.



Mary Scotto, Associate Professor of English, Kean College

## Project LEARN

In the last year Edison State College has held several workshops for faculty consultants, to provide them with the orientation and training they need to work with Edison and its students. The workshop also provided a forum for discussion on various topics on adult nontraditional education. Funding for the workshops, and for this supplement, were provided through Project LEARN, a grant supported by the Kellogg Foundation.



Tom Grites is a receptive listener. He has oftened 'picked up' on something a student has said, in his academic advising office at Stockton, that prompts him to recommend that the student consider an Edison program.

"I keep a couple of examples, of Edison success stories handy for when I'm talking to students. I keep one woman's record to show students that (Edison) saved her at least a year of time, probably more than that. This was a woman in her early thirties, divorced I think, with three children, who came in here with a transcript with nine credits. She wanted to earn a degree as quickly as possible and came to Stockton because it was the closest four-year school," Grites explained. She was interested in the CLEP examination, so Mr. Grites advised her that her "best bet was to explore an associate's degree at Edison and then come back to us, because I knew that Edison accepted the CLEP General Exam and other examination programs. Six months later she was back in his office with the associate degree. She had earned a total of 66 credits with Edison and Stockton took 64. She then stayed at Stockton two years and got almost straight A's. Then she went to Rutgers-Camden Law School. I would guess by now that she might well be finishing law school," he said.

Lest he be considered disloyal to Stockton, Mr. Grites sees this kind of advising as "almost an indirect recruiting effort for Stockton. If a student comes in here and says 'I want to earn my degree from Edison, but I need 48 credits and I'm going to take them at Stockton,' that's fine with me! It helps our enrollment. I have another student who all along was getting his degree from Edison, but was taking his course work here."

And Tom Grites is also a receptive Council member. Of his Edison experiences, he observes, "I've learned a lot about nontraditional students and more about nontraditional education by being associated with Edison. I certainly see the value of it, respect their expertise, and am convinced that it's a great option. I've often thought that if I moved to some other institution that's not close by, I would still refer students to Edison. If I took a job in Arkansas and a nontraditional student came in with a great deal of experience, knowing it could all be done by mail and over the phone, I would probably still refer that student to Edison."

With Tom Grites' enthusiasm for Edison and the Academic Council, and higher education in general, Arkansas' gain would be our loss. We hope he sticks around.

## "I approach their work with expectation, but also with respect"

For some Edison faculty consultants, too much diversity can be a bad thing.

In contrast to the Academic Council, other 'teams' of Edison faculty consultants are decidedly singular in purpose and make-up. The three-person team whose mission is to create the tests for the *Thomas Edison College Examination Program (TECEP)* must not only be from the same academic discipline, but also have taught the particular undergraduate course to be covered by the test.

From the student's point of view, the concept of TECEP works clearly enough. Examinations, covering liberal arts, business and professional areas, give the student up to four hours to demonstrate their knowledge of the course content that they have gained outside the classroom. A test description study guide, available



Dr. Tom Simonet, Professor of Journalism, Rider College

from the College, provides an outline, sample questions, and recommended readings to prepare the student for each examination. Thus armed, a student can pass, and gain credit for, courses as diverse as Introductory Shakespeare, Advanced Financial Accounting, and General Physics. Simple enough.

But for the faculty consultants who must devise these examinations, it's not quite so simple.

"There are a lot of pedagogical principles involved in creating a test. I'm not sure I'm happy about that task, but it has to be done," observes Mary Scotto, associate professor of English at Kean College. Professor Scotto, along with her colleagues Jim Campbell of Essex County College and Myrna Smith of Somerset County College, began work in May of 1985 on the examination in Technical Writing. They met seven or eight times throughout the fall and continue to meet as the test continues to be revised and refined.

This was the first such task for Professor Scotto, although she has been associated with Edison for some five years, doing Portfolio Assessment. The make-up of her team impressed her. "Each of the three of us has a different background, although we have a common ground in teaching technical writing. Myrna, for instance, does a lot of off-campus consulting with corporations, and of course her point of view is different from mine. (Professor Scotto teaches, among other English courses, medieval and Renaissance English literature.) All of this has to come together in evaluating the test."

But let's begin at the beginning. This team of faculty consultants was asked to construct a test to measure whether a student has acquired the same knowledge and skills that are found in an undergraduate, accredited course in Technical Writing. They are given the parameters of three credits and four hours testing time. They must construct the test, find the materials, establish the grading system and the criteria for it, try out the test, and evaluate it for Edison.

"We had to decide just what of our three courses we wanted to test, because our outlines are different, yet have the same objectives. For example, we decided a person passing the course ought to know how to write abstracts—how to translate a highly technical document into plain English for an identified audience.

We also wanted to test the ability to create a document, the formal elements, such as a table of contents," Professor Scotto recalls.

"Once we agreed on what we wanted to test, after a lot of discussion, then we volunteered, Army-style, to be responsible for a separate part of the test. The next task was to find the materials, scour the textbooks, and write our own questions." They also determined the number of points for each portion and how those would be awarded—so much for mechanics, for diction, for organization, for use of technical material, etc.

Throughout this process, the consultants have to be aware that, while they are "trying to test the same things that we expect our students in class to achieve," the students taking the test, and their backgrounds, are an unknown. Faculty therefore recommend to Edison the textbooks that students should be advised to read before the test. "A description of the expectations of the test was also made available . . . (so) it is up to the student to see what is required." Through a syllabus, the student can see what is expected in the classroom and, reflecting the academic standards of Edison faculty consultants, Professor Scotto assumes "we are expecting . . . the same thing, the same knowledge acquired, but not acquired in the formal classroom, with the same end result on the written test. An abstract is an abstract, whether I teach it in the classroom or somebody learns how to write it (on the job)."

Mary Scotto, bolstered by her contact with Edison students in the Portfolio process, is confident about their ability to assume responsibility for their test preparation. "If they're courageous enough, and I do think it takes courage, to feel that they have this knowledge, however acquired, they should earn credit for passing the test. In some cases, they come better armed to this situation than students in the classroom would. They are much more mature and they're earning their livelihood, in most instances, in the field in which they are taking the test."

Professor Scotto and her colleagues will continue to work on refining the test. The experience of testing "in concert with other people" has been interesting for her. And it seems to both challenge and benefit the faculty consultants.

Tom Simonet, professor of

journalism at Rider College, worked on one Edison team to produce the Public Relations Thought and Practice test and is finishing up work with another team on a test for News Reporting I. Of the experience, Dr. Simonet reflects, "The advantage . . . for faculty is that it really makes you think about what you're doing and how you measure what you're doing. . . . I worked with two other journalism professors from other colleges, and it was nice to see how similar we were in our attitudes about what should be learned in News Reporting I and how it should be measured. But it's still hard to think . . . how are you going to do it if you're just going to give an exam, how are you going to measure if you're not going to have any other contact with the student."

Very carefully, as the saying goes. And very confidently, as Professor Scotto notes of Edison students—"I approach their work with expectation, but also with respect."

And, judging by the efforts of Mary Scotto and her test-writing colleagues, very conscientiously.

## "There's a serious-mindedness about Edison students . . . they've set their priorities"

For at least one Edison faculty consultant, the role of mentor is, well, not exactly an ego trip.

Nancy Breland, an associate professor of psychology at Trenton State College, became active at Edison when a colleague, Dr. Enid Campbell, recommended that she take her place on Edison's Academic Council at the end of Dr. Campbell's term. "The more I worked with Edison, the more interested I became in their services and academic issues," Dr. Breland went on to serve two terms, including time on the Executive Committee; the Liberal Arts Advisory Committee, serving as Chair; and the subcommittee that reviewed and made recommendations for changes in the Bachelor of Arts degree.

Her only current activity for Edison is as a mentor in the College's *Guided Study Program*. It's a role she seems delighted to characterize as 'second-fiddle.' She gives top billing to the course materials written for the six-credit course, *The Adult Years: Continuity and Change*, that she has guided for three semesters at Edison. "The text materials are so strong and marvelously written that therein lies the experience for the student. If they want to discuss something with me they can, but I think the materials are so exciting, they just grab the student and the student works on his or her own throughout the course."

"I think that's the way the Guided Study Program is designed—the faculty mentor is secondary to the text material. All of the materials are written ahead of time by a national consortium. I've rewritten a few of the exam questions, but pretty much what you're doing is managing a terrific course that someone else has written," Professor Breland states.

When a student signs up for Guided Study courses, which are offered in the social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, or business areas, they receive textbook materials, a study guide, videotapes for home viewing, (broadcasts are available on Public Broadcasting stations and local cable stations as well) and supplemental readings. "They are expected to complete the course in a semester's time, but there's a lot of flexibility because they work on their own. The TV programs set the pace, but students vary widely as to when they do the written assignments and take the exams,"



the psychology professor has observed.

*The Adult Years* includes psychology, sociology, and history. "There's a tremendous amount of reading in an interdisciplinary area," Dr. Breland says. "You read some materials drawn from the popular area, from 'Time' and 'Newsweek,' and some of the other materials are more technical. The student works through the course materials, what would be the equivalent to a professor's lecture series, and then there is a textbook and a reader—different articles by different authors on relevant topics. It's a lot of work, and it should be a lot of work—it's a six-credit course."

*The Adult Years* involves three written assignments, in which students have to write fairly lengthy essays, and two exams which are taken under supervised conditions. That's the majority of the student's grade, the essay, mid-term and final. The questions are very general and allow a lot of creativity in how they are answered. The student looks at overall issues."

And where does Dr. Breland fit into this process? "It's basically done through correspondence. I don't usually speak to the students. I send them a letter with my consulting hours and they call me up, but it's mostly for things like 'my assignment will be late' or to question a grade. They mail their assignments to Edison and the College sends them to me in batches. I grade them and then Edison sends the grades back to the students with my comments."

"From the student's point of view, it's got to be great. They can work on their own. They have quality materials. They get quick feedback (she endeavors to return exams in a week's time)."

A specialist in adult development and aging, Dr. Breland agrees that *The Adult Years* is a particularly appropriate course for Edison students. "Its subject matter is very provocative. Here they are, all living this. There's a marvelous unit on the adult learner, perfectly suited to studying about exactly what Edison students do. So many Edison students have a great variety of life experiences and this course is very much about development after adolescence. They bring so much to it and the essays they write, some are just brilliant. They've been there, they've lived so much."

"A lot of *The Adult Years* deals with families and cross-generational experiences. There are some sections on alternate family styles, on the effects of divorce. Many of these students have unusual family backgrounds, so that they can take some of the research on families in America and apply it to their own family. Their extensive family experience is right in line with what they're reading about."

The course is suited for Edison students in another way. It requires that special kind of self-motivation. "Unquestionably," Dr. Breland exclaims, "You couldn't get through all this if you didn't have your act together. You've got to set up a reasonable study plan . . . it takes a lot of time . . . with a lot of words! And because it is so personally grabbing, you've got to set aside some time just to think about what you're reading. But Edison students can do that."

Beyond motivation, Dr. Breland also observes of adult learners that "They want a quality experience. They won't put up with junk. There's a serious-mindedness about them and they've set their priorities." She therefore sees the Edison program as "so well suited to the needs of the adult learner. The idea . . . is just very exciting, the way Edison can adapt to people with different lifestyles in a way that traditional colleges can't. When you look at the achievements of Edison students you see how far they're able to go with their degrees. They're not stopped by the fact that their degree is from a nontraditional institution."

"In my interaction over the years with Edison, their efforts to maintain academic standards are just so clear. In many ways, the standards for Edison courses are higher than the standards for traditional four-year students. You know they don't accept any foolishness. The academic standards are very high and I think the higher education community knows that about Edison." She gives much of the credit to the Academic Council. "They keep tightening up. Sometimes I almost think they're too tough, but that's part of the image. You've got to look almost too tough when you're doing something nontraditional. You can't let people look at it and say you're giving away degrees. And they aren't."

As she talks about Edison, one is struck by Nancy Breland's articulateness, her wit, and ease of communication. Returning to the concept of guiding a course without traditional faculty/student interaction, she concedes that the lack of classroom exchange is somewhat of a loss, particularly for those students with experiences to share. "They don't get the interaction with the professor or the students. That component is missing. But for many Edison students, it's this or nothing. And the quality of the materials is so great. I'm sure they're getting the equivalent of a high-powered-six-credit course, with a marvelously well-written textbook, much better than the standard, dry, boring textbook."

We don't think Nancy Breland would have any more to do with a dry, boring textbook than she would with mediocre academic standards.



Dr. Nancy Breland, Associate Professor of Psychology, Trenton State College



Gloria Boseman, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Jersey City State College

## "They need to know it can be done"

Sometimes the line between faculty mentor and student gets a little fuzzy.

And if that happens with Edison faculty consultant Gloria Boseman, it's alright with her. It means that her Nursing Program *Peer Study Group* is really on track. "It's where you want to get them," she says. "Initially, they wouldn't meet without me, but now they've progressed to the point where the goals are set . . . they know what they should be doing. So they do occasionally meet without me, although they reassure me that they still need me," she notes wryly.

The primary goal of the Peer Study Group is to help students prepare for the rigorous written and performance examinations they must pass for the Professional Nursing Component of their B.S. in Nursing degree. The assistance is as much morale as it is informational, and the Edison program is unique, according to the assistant professor of nursing at Jersey City State College. Her program there is upper division, meaning that, like Edison's, it enables students who are already Registered Nurses to achieve the B.S.N. degree.

"The underlying concept of support—perceptor, director, facilitator" is common to nursing, observes Professor Boseman, "but the actual idea of having this group come together is new not only for Edison but for all the external degree programs. I think what Edison found was that, even though we've got self-directed, motivated, independent people . . . the nursing exams and curriculum are so specific, so intense, that what needed to develop was (more than) academic advisement to guide them as to when to take the examination. (There are five written and three clinical performance examinations, some lasting two and a half days each.) It's not only tedious and rigorous, but also very draining emotionally."

So the Peer Study Group is, first, a way of looking at the student's methods of taking the exams and, second, a support mechanism. Each nursing exam study guide alone is "often not less than a couple of hundred pages long, and that can be

overwhelming for someone to look at and know that they're going to have to address these issues and be able to perform with 100 percent accuracy. You need to know that it can be done, and then how to do it."

To this end, Professor Boseman gladly relinquishes the comfortable role of teacher during the Thursday meetings. "That's not my role. The facilitator is just that—to move the group to a point where they establish a cohesiveness and a network . . . so that they can rely on one another to help them put into words what some of their concerns are, as well as help them see *how* we need to design an approach to conquer this 'monster.' Using a discussion format, those who have completed a segment come back and share their information. They take on the teacher's role."

Once started, a Nursing Peer Study Group is potentially neverending, since its members may come in at different stages of their degree program. Professor Boseman started her group in August 1985, meeting at New Jersey's University of Medicine and Dentistry, with six people. "We lost one immediately—when we're talking about the adult learner, we're talking about a lot of other roles, needs and priorities sometimes. So we had five, all at different stages. Some students had all their liberal arts requirements (60 credits) and were waiting for the written exams; some students were without the liberal arts, but wanting to do the nursing component early; one student had completed all the 'written exams' and was waiting for the health assessment. They come from all points of activity with different objectives. It has to be ongoing as they pass one element and go on to another."

How long a student remains with the group depends on the individual. "Their pacing is different. I have one student who is moving very rapidly. She was unsuccessful in her first attempt at the health assessment exam, but she petitioned to take it again in a month or two, and they let her. She's going to be taking her professional performance examination next and that's going to slow her down. But her speed became contagious. When she comes back (from an exam) and says, 'Yeah, you can do it, I did it,' all of a sudden everybody's ready to go!"

With such diversity, one wonders if the program might be more effective with one-on-one counseling. Professor Boseman's response is an emphatic



no. She substituted for another facilitator once in such a situation and was dissatisfied. "One person doesn't like to ask questions. Other people's questions generate more questions. It's easier to be insecure in a crowd," she laughs. But her point is serious. "It's easier in a group format because one of the primary things is establishing the comraderie, the feeling of belonging, as well as sharing a lot of information. The problems are not so unique that it's a one-on-one situation. The people who are going to sit for the written exam are going through the same types of anxieties as those who are getting ready to take the health assessment."

While the students provide peer support through tales and tips on their exam experiences, Professor Boseman is supplying the guiding hand. "What I'm able to do for them is question their readiness for the next exam. And they need me to answer questions like 'how do I use this study guide?' I'm able to point out things like 'This is a better bibliography selection than that one, this one is more comprehensive, this one addresses a particular part of the exam,' etc."

A particular function of her role that Professor Boseman has to work on more, she feels, is getting her students, who are licensed nurses and practicing in most cases, to understand and accept the fact that, for the B.S.N. degree, they must separate what they learned and the way they learned it from what they actually do in the workplace. They have to be able to go back into the student's role."

"We're never going to ask them to validate their prior nursing education. We know that by licensure. So we're not going to teach them how to take blood pressure. But they do have to prove that they have the theoretical content, the concepts that would be a part of a course."

She feels that Edison students are "able to recognize and accept that difference, and accept it a little more easily" than traditional nursing students. There are other differences as well. "The Edison group realizes that they won't find me in the office tomorrow." Even though they can call her, they have to assume more responsibility for their education. They have no one to hold responsible for their problems or failures, she notes. "Even though the Edison student can say to me, 'That was a horrible exam,' the accountability is still with themselves. The facilitator is there but (they) still have to know where (they're) going. In this population, I just help them get there. And I learn so much from them. They bring you real experiences that they can evaluate from a real perspective. They are very intelligent, motivated students. They've got it!"

Gloria Boseman submits quarterly reports to Edison, evaluating the Peer Study Group's functioning and methods. Lively and vivacious as she

is, she may or may not mention their tradition of celebrating with a champagne toast when one of them passes one of the grueling examinations. But in this group of motivated students, as she says, "We toast those accomplishments."

## "I'm amazed at the quality of these students"

For one Edison faculty consultant, the Advanced Level Practicum is often more interesting than its counterpart in traditional college programs. For another faculty consultant, the Practicum provides more to work from than a typical Portfolio Assessment. For many Edison students seeking the B.S. in Human Services, it is the last step.

The *Advanced Level Practicum*, a six to 12 credit capstone requirement, is based on current experience in the student's field of specialization. It ties together theory and practice. The Practicum is assessed by the faculty consultants in an interview session supported by letters from supervisors and other documentation.

During the Practicum Conference students identify "Eight to 10 unique aspects of their experience that demonstrate major concepts and principles in their subject area," explained Al Carter, assistant professor of sociology and chairperson of math and physics at Mercer County Community College. Students are required to be very specific and illustrate their skills using personal examples.

Linda Lengyel, associate professor and chairperson of criminal justice at Trenton State College, conducts interviews for Edison students seeking the criminal justice specialization. She finds that "With the Edison Practicum, it's even a little more interesting than with traditional programs because you have the combination of academic knowledge and experience in the field. It is fascinating to see how particular students have been able to put their academic experience to good use in their work, and to relate their experiences to even broader issues."

Whether it be in criminal justice, or the social services interviews conducted by Professor Carter, both consultants put great effort into their interviews. Dr. Lengyel puts together "a long series of issues that I think the student should be able to handle, looking at their past academic record. I conduct a very informal interview, leading them into certain areas and having them discuss their feelings and ways of handling (the areas), to see whether or not they're able to relate their academic experience to their work." In her post-interview evaluation, she makes careful note of those issues which the students raise on their own, as well as how they handled her issues.

For one student, Professor Carter, who also serves MCCC as assistant

dean of academic affairs, invested considerably more time, and conscience, than the usual hour or two interview. "I had someone who was flying in from Europe. My concern was that, with the individual coming that far, at considerable expense, and only having one day here—what if he failed?"

"So when that individual came, I spent the whole day with him. For the Practicum, I put him through role-playing, to create a laboratory in which everything happens in a short time. I played a client and he had to write cases for me. He had to do the social work and write a report. We talked about theory. I gave him situational things and assessed his responses. We dealt with confrontational things, like race, sex, age, or class. This particular individual was excellent. He had prepared well, and had translated all of his experiences into meaningful academic knowledge and skills. It turned out to be a pleasing experience, but it's the kind of thing that makes you work a little bit harder."

The consultants' hard work rewards them as well as the student. A practicing lawyer and former assistant prosecutor for the City of Trenton, Dr. Lengyel tries to be prepared for anything, but "This is so different. As much as you can prepare, and you do a lot, often one remark will trigger a very different area of discussion than I would have considered in my initial evaluation. Some students, for instance, are really into the social aspects of their position. When you deal with police officers, their perspectives are very different, depending on their age, personalities, preparation, the type of police work they do. So you can't anticipate everything."

"But I'm amazed at the quality of these students. They're doing interesting things, they've accomplished a great deal. They're able to think and analyze along the lines that we hope people with a baccalaureate are able to do." She sees municipal police officers, those in immigration and water patrol ("Their whole perspective is a lot different."), drug enforcement, some probation officers, and some chiefs of police, including the president of the International Chiefs of Police Association. "You learn a lot about what students are doing. It's enlightening . . . I've conducted few Practicums where I haven't learned something."

For Professor Carter, students in social services come from both professional and volunteer ranks. "They've worked with senior citizens, with juveniles, in institutions for the mentally retarded, with abused children, in prisons, and various other programs."

All are subject to traditional academic standards. "As long as the theory of the Practicum doesn't change," asserts Dr. Lengyel, "it's workable. I try to uniformly apply (standards) to both the traditional

and nontraditional students. I expect students to be able to recognize and analyze issues, and to express themselves." She concedes that it is more difficult to evaluate Edison students' writing and research abilities in the Practicum. So she tries to "couch the interview in terms of analyzing and expressing oneself, in addition to specific information. You certainly have to adjust your evaluation process, but your standards remain the same."

Walking that same tightrope, Professor Carter finds that "The consultants battle to make sure that, on the one hand, we are not saying that you have to go through the classroom experience, but, on the other, we are also very committed to the fact that, as academicians, we are loyal to the philosophy of academia and that once we say 'yes,' we are certifying that individual." He credits Edison's professional staff for help in the "battle." "The kind of advice that the consultants get has been increasingly one of support . . . that the standards we, who are active in the traditional area hold, are sound and legitimate for translating experiential learning into academic credit."



Dr. Linda Lengyel, Associate Professor and Chair of State College

## "Relevancy is at the heart of the DOC"

It was appropriate for Victor Gerdes to raise the issue. The vice president for academic affairs of the College of Insurance in New York City, and long-time Edison faculty consultant, has been a professor in the world of finance for almost 30 years. He has seen trends come and go, overnight changes and evolutionary cycles. They happen in the business world . . . and in the academic world, particularly in the business and technical fields.

From his observations of, and concern about, these changes, Edison's *Demonstration of Currency* (DOC) requirement was born. "It was an outgrowth of one of the advisory meetings," recalls Dr. Gerdes. "I had been on Edison's advisory committee in the business area for a number of years (and still is), and we were discussing the requirements for the program and looking at the courses we were accepting. And somehow it occurred to me that, well, suppose you had a person who had taken a computer course back in 1965 and they're transferring credit to Edison in, say, 1986. Do you give them credit for a course 21 years old in a highly specialized, professional area such as this?"

"I raised the question and there was considerable interest generated. Perhaps as a result, Edison formulated the 10-year rule," which states that any credits earmarked for the basic component of the business degrees that are older than 10 years must be validated for currency. Though he recalls that he was



Al Carter, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Chairperson of Mathematics and Physics Department, Mercer County Community College



probably the one who “threw out the figure of 10 years,” he maintains that “There’s nothing magic about a 10-year period. What it (the DOC) really does is state that if you want credit for a course in a professional area, it must have been completed in the last 10 years. If it hasn’t been completed in the last 10 years, that does not mean that Edison cannot give credit for it. It’s just sort of a red flag.”

The Demonstration of Currency requirement is applied to courses in the professional segment of the program. The specific areas affected by the 10-year DOC are the core, the options, the specializations, and business electives as found in the B.S. in Business Administration and the A.S. in Management. Because of the rapid changes in technical fields, the DOC concept also has been applied to both the B.S. and A.S. in Applied Science and Technology degrees, with a five-year limitation.

The student ‘demonstrates’ currency through an oral conference with a faculty consultant on contemporary topics and issues within the subject. Dr. Gerdes, appropriately enough, conducted Edison’s first three DOCs. His DOC conferences have all been to validate



chairperson of Criminal Justice, Trenton

undergraduate courses in marketing, management, finance, accounting, and a “couple of computer courses.”

For the conference, Dr. Gerdes looks for the student to “provide a minimum of two experiences or readings, perhaps attendance at a seminar, or papers they’ve written, or changes in job title, for each course. They’ve got to give you a couple of developmental issues for discussion. Now they could state these in as few as two or three lines.” This approach provides a bare outline for the interview, with Dr. Gerdes then having to push the student to delve more deeply into each issue.

More successful is the approach taken by one student Dr. Gerdes recalls. “He listed the course and two or three issues for the course. But then he summarized, maybe four pages per issue. In other words, he produced in his writing, basically, all the evidence he had to support his contention that he was still knowledgeable in the area that he studied years ago.” The summary had been done more for the student’s benefit than Dr. Gerdes’, but it paid off when he brought the material to the conference. “He said, ‘I don’t know if you want to see this. In order to prepare for the conference, I wanted to get my own thinking in order.’ Well, I read them, asked him some questions based on that, and we finished the conference in about 45 minutes. By the end, he had the credit.”

The internationally recognized scholar feels that the conference should prove a level of articulation. Rather than “probe and probe, I try to make the students do most of the talking, because they’re the ones being tested.” Such articulation should be expected, according to Dr.

Gerdes, because, “Going back to one of the basic principles of the conference, the student, who has designated the course, is the one who has chosen the topics as well.” However, Dr. Gerdes reserves the right to reject a student’s choice of topics if he doesn’t feel they will provide a sufficient or relevant basis for evaluating currency of knowledge.

“I get the material six weeks or so before I ever see the student. If I don’t like the topics selected, I tell the College that I’m not able to conduct a DOC conference until the student gives me more relevant topics.”

Relevancy is at the heart of the demonstration of currency. Comparing it to another Edison program, Dr. Gerdes notes that, “In the Portfolio process, you’re attempting to ascertain whether the candidate has the college-level equivalency of learning. In the DOC process, you’re speaking with a person who has already demonstrated that, at least once upon a time, he or she had not only college-level equivalency, but had gained this knowledge through a recognized educational institution. So it’s simply a question of bringing it up-to-date. The real issue is how you bring it up-to-date, not that you ascertain that the person had the knowledge. Again, we can’t penalize the person because they’re not taking the course today, yet we can’t reward them because they completed it once upon a time. So the Demonstration of Currency is this linkage between the ‘was’ and the ‘is’.”

Dr. Gerdes believes the DOC should demonstrate “the ability to use concepts and theories learned long ago to draw logical conclusions as you face the same subject matter today.”

Like faculty consultants in other Edison programs, Dr. Gerdes looks to traditional academic standards in determining whether old business credits can be validated. “Edison College is not in the business of selling college credits. They follow guidelines very, very carefully. In my case, and I’m sure it’s true of the other consultants, there are, especially in the area of learning acquired in other than classroom environments, Middle States guidelines and ACE (American Council on Education) guidelines, etc. to follow. I follow them unconsciously. It’s just part of my professional behavior.”

In addition to widely recognized academic standards from such “leading organizations and accrediting bodies within the profession,” Dr. Gerdes acknowledges the role of Edison’s professional development programs. “We have a considerable amount of interchange of ideas. We have frequent workshops in which the consultants exchange ideas as to how we can do a better job.

I’m constantly amazed at the staff they have. They really are a group of creative people that I’ve worked with, and this has been a creative process.”

Appropriate, albeit modest, words from the man who played a major creative role for Edison.

## “It’s more of a conversation than an interrogation”

It’s kind of a case of ‘trash and treasure’ . . . or “one man’s meat is another man’s poison.”

Students nearing completion of the B.A. degree at Edison may very well face the *Pre-Graduation Conference* with a mixture of anticipation and dread. However, at least some of the faculty consultants responsible for conducting the “PGCs” look forward to them unabashedly as rewarding experiences.

“Of course I’d emphasize the benefits to the student . . . but there are real benefits to the faculty,”



Dr. Victor Gerdes, Vice President for Academic Affairs, College of Insurance

claims Tom Simonet, professor of journalism in the communications department at Rider College. “I’ve met some wonderful people, both in Portfolio Assessment and in the Pre-Graduation Conferences, and have made good contacts through Edison. People tend, I think, to be kind of humble about what they know. They just don’t realize how much they know, especially if they’ve been working in a profession for years.”

The Pre-Graduation Conference is required of all B.A. candidates who have achieved 100 hours with 30 credits in their Area of Concentration or Specialization. It is, as Dr. Simonet sees it, “an opportunity for them to discuss their field in a way that reflects their knowledge of theory and practice. The PGC shows whether they can apply their readings and can generalize from their experience. That’s what marks a college graduate—not just somebody who knows *how* to stick type on a page, but somebody who knows *why* they’re doing that, how it might be done better, and who can explain that in an organized manner. They usually are very well-prepared and have interesting things to say. It’s more of a conversation than an ‘interrogation’ and I learn things from every one of them.”

Still, with some 50 Pre-Graduation Conferences under his belt, Dr. Simonet is keenly aware of the student’s perspective going into the PGC. “They’re really nervous. This looms before them from the time they enroll at Edison and it is an intimidating experience. We’re not used to anything like oral exams in this country . . . . But you could argue that every college ought to have something like this. It’s particularly needed at a place like Edison because so much of the contact is not face to face. To finally deal with this student is a nice safeguard. The student really exists and you can tell in a conversation if he or she knows what they’re talking about.”

The conference lasts about an hour and takes place at Edison. The student has selected three topics for discussion from a subject in the Area of Concentration or Specialization, such as journalism/mass media, biology, literature, etc., and has listed at least two books and other

readings for each. “They may have read them for a course, or on their own, or even for the PGC,” according to Dr. Simonet. He gets the material about a month before the conference and following the conference he provides a written evaluation. The student either passes or is deferred with recommendations for improvement.

“I start off talking about their own experiences . . . and that puts them at ease right away, and usually leads naturally into one of the three topics. I look for a sense of objectivity. For instance, one woman was the public relations person for a major electric utilities. I would require that she be able to look critically at her industry. I think that’s a mark of a college graduate if you can do that. It doesn’t make you disloyal, or mean that you’re not a good public relations person. (But you have) to be able to say ‘Yeah, we do have a real problem in that area and we’re still working on a solution’, etc. Edison is making sure that the person isn’t just ticking off credits, but instead really is able to think and articulate the way a college graduate should. I think that’s what the PGC is trying to validate.”

“And that’s something. I’m not sure that all of the ‘traditional aged’ four-year college graduates could get through something like this with as much grace. Certainly not as well as these students do.”

The journalism professor is “most comfortable” with a student who brings a combination of traditional classroom learning and professional experience to the PGC. “They have shown their adeptness at relating theory to practice. For the person who has just classroom experience it’s hard sometimes to develop an in-depth case history with which they’re really familiar. But I had one like that, a woman whose credits were mostly in public relations. She had studied the A.H. Robbins/Dalkon Shield controversy. She knew a lot about it, was really familiar with the detail, the dates, timetable, how long it took them to respond, etc. She got that from classroom learning, *but* she was also able to say what they should have done, and she could contrast it with other cases, for instance, Johnson & Johnson’s handling of the Tylenol situation. She was able to



point out the advantages that J&J had, and it was a good classic case. The case history is what education is all about—teaching them how to think and apply, and the PGC can show if they've learned that."

Dr. Simonet also sees the PGC as kind of the last safeguard for academic standards in this particular Edison degree program, "although there are safeguards all along. It is a demanding program and I think the staff has done a very good job of keeping it demanding. These are students who did it the hard way, raising families, working jobs, and at the same time, most of them have been plugging away at their education for years, getting credits here and there. Most importantly, they've been learning on their own."

The value of the PGC is echoed by faculty consultant Nancy Breland of Trenton State College. Having conducted "a half dozen or so in psychology," Dr. Breland "likes the idea of the Pre-Graduation Conference very much. I would certainly hope that it would stay in the Edison degree program. I like the topics. The whole thing is just an essential part of the degree." She too enjoys "The idea that, as a student, you do get some interaction with a professor."

Interaction is taken seriously by Tom Simonet. "Sometimes the books they list are new books that I haven't read." Though he does some preparatory 'homework' before the conferences, he uses those occasions to promote more dialogue. "I can find out (about the books) from them. I can say 'Tell me about this new book, I haven't read this.' It's easy and also non-intimidating for them because now I'm not grilling them. They're the expert and can do what they're supposed to in the Pre-Graduation Conference—show off their knowledge."

## “There’s a lot of talent out there”

If Edison State College was halfway around the world, its programs wouldn't raise an eyebrow. And that fact was enough to attract one faculty consultant to the Edison ranks for *Portfolio Assessment*.

"My basic education was in India," recalls Parthasarathy Iyengar, professor of mechanical technology at the County College of Morris, "and I'm used to the British system. The British system is quite flexible and in India there are a lot of the same concepts. There are many, many colleges where you can obtain a degree through examination and portfolio, because, with the large population, there just aren't enough walls to accommodate all the students."

"So there was no way I could refuse to become involved (with Edison) because the concept is so brilliant. I had done similar work in India in the British university system. I believe in the concept of helping people who have a lot of experience with a company, but who do not have all the courses, in the traditional sense. If they have worked with engineers, worked with the processes so that they've learned everything that a book would give them, there is no reason to deny them the opportunity to have the degree."

"There's a lot of talent out there," continues Professor Iyengar. "We have to encourage them to pursue their work with recognition from us in an academic sense. You don't need teachers all the time. There are people, men and women, in this



Parthasarathy Iyengar, Professor of Mechanical Technology, County College of Morris

country and the world, who can do these things on their own."

Doing things on their own is what Portfolio Assessment is all about—earning academic credit for college-level knowledge acquired through work experience, independent reading, military experience, volunteer activities, etc. The Portfolio process requires students to identify their knowledge and skills in the context of particular college course descriptions. That knowledge is then documented in the portfolio, to be turned over to a faculty consultant, who teaches in the field in question, for assessment.

Documentation in Professor Iyengar's areas of manufacturing engineering, machine design, and other physics-based courses, might include "drawings, a write-up, work performance, calculations, pictures of the work processes, physical models, slides, etc. . . anything to prove their knowledge." He has often had students overlook an area of knowledge in their documentation, only to find evidence of it in a supervisor's letter of recommendation.

There is a particular challenge for Professor Iyengar because of the nature of his field. "Some technical courses are bound to have more mathematical analysis than liberal arts courses. Here, if someone claims to have some experience, they have to back it up with some theoretical correlation. Some analysis work and mathematical treatment has to be there, because we relate everything mathematically, in a mathematical model we develop before any work is done. And many times students don't send us all that information."

The critical role of documentation is echoed by faculty consultants in other areas as well. "Crucial to the Portfolio process is how it's put together," says Dr. Victor Gerdes, business and finance expert from the

College of Insurance in New York. "I've had people who've had an abundance of knowledge, but who seemed to go out of their way to keep me from finding out they had it. Success depends on the ability of the student to put their knowledge into a framework."

"It's not that they don't know the subject," agrees journalism professor Tom Simonet of Rider College, "but they haven't documented it. There have been times when I've known that a person knows the subject—a television anchor, for instance, who has worked at seven stations in this country. I know he knows about television news, but putting a sampling of him anchoring the news into his portfolio doesn't show that he knows it, it shows that he does it. But talking with him about the issues of producing a news show, the differences between news and print, the limitations of the media, etc., that's what indicates the knowledge."

To more completely satisfy his standards, Professor Iyengar often gives tests as part of the Portfolio process, if he has "not been happy with a particular part of a Portfolio. One student asked for a huge number of credits." Not completely satisfied with his documentation, Professor Iyengar asked for a meeting with the student. "I gave him two or three tests, he passed all of them and I gave him credit. Or sometimes I'll ask students to do a report or write an essay for me. It provides additional evidence of how they can relate their experience to what they're asking credit for."

Writing special pieces is a technique also used by technical writing assessor Mary Scotto of Kean State College. "Technical writing boils down to three things—audience, level of technical expression, and purpose. If you're aware of that you can handle the course. The student who seeks credit at Edison must be

aware of the fact that, even though his or her technical knowledge has been gained through working in, let's say, hydraulics, the assessor may not be an expert in hydraulics. They've got to write to their audience, who is the assessor. So what I've done in Portfolios is ask the assessee to do a special piece of writing for me, including all the formal elements, in their field of expertise, but they're identifying me as the audience."

If documentation in the Portfolio is the means, then relating the experience is the end. "Whenever I do Portfolios, or Pre-Graduation Conferences," observes Mercer County Community College's assistant dean of academic affairs, Al Carter, "I look at them with the same standard—the student's ability to talk about major theories in the area and to apply those theories outside of the classroom. If the individual is applying for experiential credit, I expect them to be able to relate what they've read to both the theory and application. And ultimately I look at how they're able to deal with the information creatively. I expect those same kinds of things in the classroom."

Professor Iyengar also looks for evidence of problem-solving ability in his Portfolio Assessments. "In the engineering area, what we do theoretically may not be useful right away, but what they should be doing is learning how to look for information, where to look, and what to look for. If we see and understand the problem, the solution is easy. So that's what I look for in the Portfolio—if a student is able to analyze a problem."

Most of the time, these demanding, standard-conscious faculty assessors find what they're looking for. The 'pass' rate for all Edison Portfolios is about 90 percent. Professor Iyengar estimates that about 70 percent of his are so clearly documented from the outset that they're easily accepted, while another 20 percent may require further documentation or an exam. Many of the few rejections in his area "have been in mathematical theory courses, which are very hard to document."

And sometimes they find more than they expected. Dr. Simonet relates his "most astounding Portfolio ever. The student teaches photography at a local college, but his degrees are not in photography, they're in history. His college wanted him to have a degree in Photography, so he was working toward a B.A. at Edison. He submitted a request for one course in Archival Photography (the preservation of photography). As his evidence, he submitted 11 scholarly articles that he had had published in scholarly journals on the subject! He's a leading national authority!"

Fortunately for him, and thousands of Edison students, Edison State College is not halfway around the world.

Formerly the director of communications at Rider College, Diane Martino is currently president of Communication By Design, Inc., specializing in organizational communications and public relations consulting. An enthusiastic supporter of the Edison program, she agreed to do this article. With one Edison degree in her pocket, Diane is closing in on another, concentrating in photography. She therefore provided the pictures for this article as well.



# Faculty Workshops

This marks the first year that Edison State College brought its faculty consultants together to attend workshops and address a variety of quality assurance issues identified by the College.

President George A. Pruitt and Dr. Jerry Ice, Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided the faculty with information on new areas of endeavor for the College. Dr. Ruth M. McKeefery, Dean of Academic

Programs, also welcomed the group, pointing out that the interaction of faculty with staff will assist the College to make even better use of faculty services and will improve the quality of Edison support programs.

There are 218 faculty who work with the College in a variety of ways. Of that number, 120 attended one of the three faculty workshops.

## Prior Learning Assessment (Portfolio)

Ann Bielawski, Director, Office of Prior Learning Assessment; Senior Portfolio Advisors Richard Hamilton, Daniel Negron, and Janice Palmer; and Rebecca Hull, Assistant to the Director of Prior Learning Assessment, worked with all faculty attending the workshop. They reviewed and made recommendations for improvement in clarity and process for the Student Handbook as well as looked at quality assurance issues in the determination of recommendations for credit based on materials submitted to the College through the portfolio process.

Students may demonstrate their college-level knowledge and skill through the College's Portfolio Assessment Program. This Program provides optimum flexibility because it recognizes that each student's learning is unique and often cannot be fully evaluated through an examination.

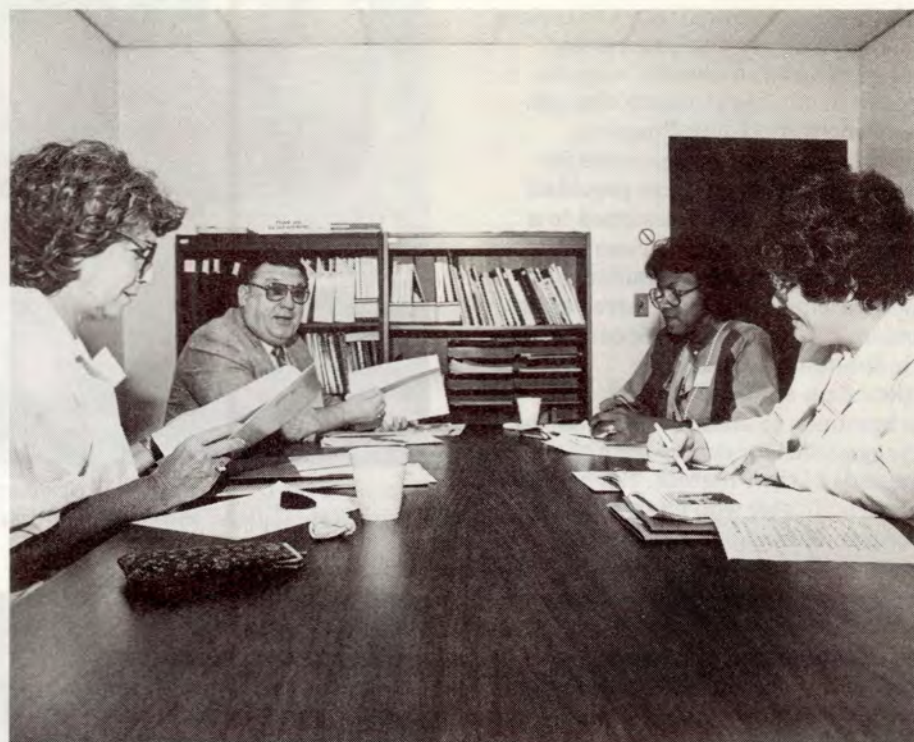
The portfolio assessment program enables students to define their learning in terms of college courses that are taught at accredited colleges across the United States. Students then provide evidence in the form of written documents and products, and demonstrate that the learning they already possess is equal to what is taught in those courses.



Members of the Prior Learning Assessment (Portfolio) Office who attended the workshop included (left to right) Senior Portfolio Advisors Dan Negron (left) and Richard Hamilton (right) and Ann Bielawski, Director of the Office.



Dr. Jerry Ice, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Edison State College.



Discussing the human services practicum at the workshop were Nickie Berson, Kean College; John Visceglia, formerly of Cumberland County College; and Theresa Bowman, and Dr. Susan Friedman of Edison State College.



Listening to a presentation on portfolio assessment are (front, left to right) James Campbell, Essex County College; Peter Wiesner, Rutgers; Iris Saltiel, Edison State College; back row, Dan Negron, Edison State College and Mary Robertson-Smith, Bergen Community College.

## Human Services Practicum

Dr. Susan Friedman, Coordinator of Bachelor of Science Programs, Theresa Bowman, Senior Program Advisor, and Norman Lederer, Senior Program Advisor, met with faculty who assess the practicum experience for students in the Human Services Program.

The Practicum is the capstone requirement tying together theory with the practical experience the

student has gained through employment. Students must have current experience in their field of specialization in order to complete the degree program. While this is usually current full-time paid employment, it may also be extensive part-time or volunteer experiences. The Practicum is a special assessment by a faculty member appointed by the College.





Bill Seaton, Director of the Center for Learning through Telecommunications, speaking with Bob Mehlman of Trenton State College.

### Guided Study

William Seaton, Director of the Center for Learning Through Telecommunications, provided information to the faculty concerning the Edison program on Guided Study.

Designed for the adult student whose circumstances do not permit them to attend a classroom-based institution on a regular or full-time basis, Guided Study integrates distance learning through video technology, extensive reading, and faculty tutoring. The courses provide

a complete home study package for the student. All course materials are mailed directly to the student's home. Students receive learning units, textbooks, assignment files, tutor materials (letter of introduction, syllabus), and where appropriate, audio and/or video cassettes or a television viewing schedule for the Public Broadcasting Service.

At the workshops, faculty were able to speak with Bill Seaton to indicate their interest in becoming a faculty mentor for a Guided Study course.

### Pre-Graduation Conference

Dr. Timothy Mott, Acting Coordinator of the Liberal Arts Program and Robert Herbster, Senior Program Advisor, met with faculty to review the policies and procedures for the Pre-Graduation Conference. The faculty discussed various aspects of the Conference and the method of evaluation for completion.

All B.A. students must pass the Pre-Graduation Conference (PGC)

before graduation. The purpose of the conference is to determine that the candidate demonstrates an acceptable knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts, theories, and principles in the Area Concentration or Specialization, and can apply these concepts, theories, and principles to given problems, issues, and situations. The conference itself is a one to one discussion between the student and a faculty assessor.

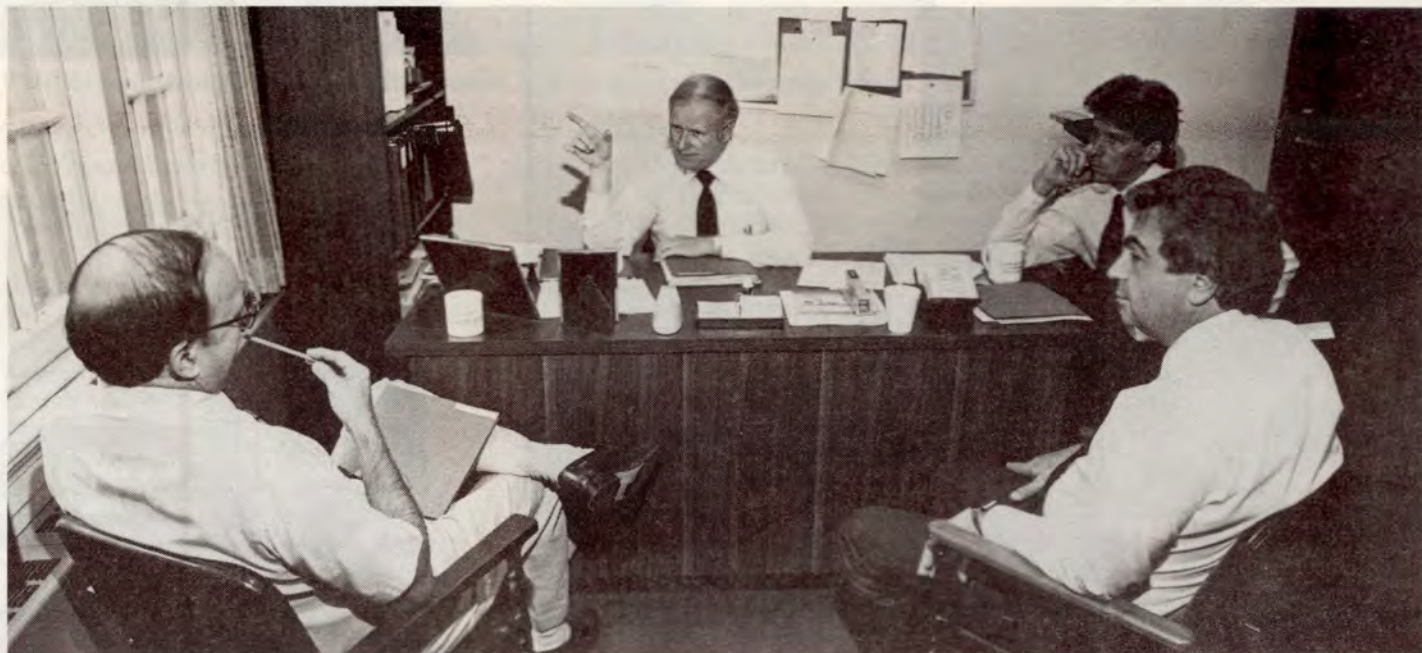


From left to right, Bob Herbster, Edison State College; Dr. Mervin Dissinger, Rider College; Dr. Timothy Mott, Edison State College; June Tipton, Rider College; and Bob Mehlman, Trenton State, discuss the Pre-Graduation Conference.

### Nursing Peer Study Groups

Dr. Dolores Brown Hall, Director of the Nursing Program and Marian Stone, Senior Program Advisor, met with Peer Study Facilitators to review the Peer Study Group process and procedures and to identify ways to work with nursing students through the Peer Study Group Program.

To assist students to prepare for the examinations they are provided with study guides and assigned to a study group located in or near the county of their place of residence or employment. The group serves as an academic support network comprised of individuals with diverse experiences and educational backgrounds to facilitate the sharing of suggestions for coping with the demands of the Program. Each group has a Facilitator who has a Master's degree in Nursing and collegiate nursing experience. The Facilitator's responsibilities include assisting students to identify effective study and test taking techniques and locating the sources for references in the study guides.



Discussing the Demonstration of Currency policy are Anthony Natale, Trenton State College; Ron Sukovich and Thomas Eklund, Edison State College, and Jack Waintraub, Middlesex County College.

### Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI)

Mr. Lanse Davis, Corporate Education Specialist, reviewed the Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction. This American Council on Education program sends a team of consultants to a corporate site for a comprehensive review of corporate and business training programs. Consultants recommend credit if they determine that the training program is equivalent to college-level courses that are being taught in the traditional classroom. During the past three years, Edison has worked with the American Council on Education and reviewed 59 training programs for credit recommendation.



Dr. Ruth McKeefery (right), Dean of Academic Programs at Edison and Corporate Education Specialist Lanse Davis, also from Edison, at the workshop.

### Demonstration of Currency

Mr. Ronald Sukovich, Coordinator of Business Programs, and Thomas Eklund, Coordinator of Academic Advisement, met with faculty consultants who conduct the Demonstration of Currency Conference for students in the Business and Applied Science and Technology Programs. They emphasized ways to improve the process and the criteria used for satisfactory Demonstration of Currency.

Because of the rapid changes occurring in technical fields today, it is important for today's college graduate to maintain up-to-date knowledge. Credits identified as "old" by the College require a Demonstration of Currency, which is validated through an oral conference with a faculty consultant on contemporary topics/issues in the subjects.





New officers for the Alumni Association are, left to right, Millie Kevit '82, First Vice President; Irma Friedmann '82, Second Vice President; Norma Horton '83, Secretary/Treasurer; Liz Rocchetti '82, Director; Al Quinton '82, President; Bev Rednor '84, Director; Jaqui Berends '79, Director; Walt Keller '78, Director; Mildred Koslow '82, Director.



Alumni received Certificates of Appreciation for services to the College including the Phonathons; Application Day; Information Sessions; Reception for New Graduates. Anna Groves is not an Edison graduate but assists whenever her mother, Alumna Armelee Lewis, participates. Seated, left to right: Armelee Lewis '83, Ondina Jeffers '82, Al Quinton '82, Frank Hawrylo '79, Lou Price '84. Standing, left to right: Norma Horton '83, Jaqui Berends '79, Millie Kevit '82, Liz Rocchetti '82, Ida Hammond '78, Nancyanne Kopp '76, Walt Keller '78, Barbara Friedman '79, Irma Friedmann '82, Patricia DeVed '84, Anna Groves.



Setting up the Registration table, left to right, Frank Hawrylo, Barbara Friedman, Millie Kevit and Annette Singer, Director of Alumni Affairs.



Taking advantage of the beautiful May weather are alumni Nancyanne Kopp, Bob Light, and alumna Joan Light. Bikes were provided free of charge.



Spirits were high as Sol Koslow, husband of alumna Mildred, joined waitresses on the dance floor.



Having fun with indoor shuffle board are Al Quinton and wife Carol.



Alumna JoAnne Stiff '82 and husband Bob looking through registration materials.



Alumni Weekend Chair Mildred Koslow '82: "We proved that Edison graduates do not need a school campus to create the atmosphere we experienced at our first Alumni Weekend this past May. Watch for the special mailing with details about the 1987 Weekend scheduled for May 16-17.

## Edison Alum Counsels Military in Germany on Educational Options

Upon joining the Army after completing high school in 1978, I expected to be stationed overseas eventually, but I never dreamed that I would end up spending my entire life in Germany! The summer of 1981 was a special time for me. I married by German girlfriend, Dagmar, was promoted to sergeant, and, after reading favorably about Edison State College in *Bear's Guide to Nontraditional Degrees*, enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts program. Between 1978 and 1981, I earned 90 credits in liberal arts subjects via CLEP and DANTES exams by demonstrating college-level knowledge gained from at least five sources: a solid college preparatory curriculum from Midlothian High School (VA); helping my dad start a mail order military history bookstore in our home (a decade ago *Essential Press* in Richmond, VA, was among the leading Civil War book dealerships in the nation!); being well-read and trained in my Christian faith; work experience as an Army Cavalry Scout; and finally, living and traveling in Europe.

Completing the remaining degree requirements was not only a rewarding exercise in self-assessment but also lots of fun. For example, all of Europe could serve as my classroom in fine arts. Now discharged from the Army, I took part in a fascinating study tour to Czechoslovakia sponsored by University of Maryland's Munich campus: The Art Nouveau of Prague. Next, drawing upon my experiences in applied geography and as a Liaison NCO with the Bundeswehr (German Army), I applied for a portfolio

assessment to earn upper-level social science credits. I found the essay exams in political and historical geography and the written Pre-Graduation Conference to be all tough but fair.

There was no pomp and ceremony when I graduated from Edison State College with a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities in 1983. In fact, I can't recall receiving a single graduation card! Some friends remarked that I had a unique European Souvenir and others said that it was great that I "completed my education on time" with my full-time college peers. But I knew then that my accomplishment had affected me profoundly.

The excitement of custom designing a degree program around my strengths and goals inspired me to pursue further this nontraditional route to education, perhaps even as a career! Equipped with initiative, self-discipline, and good study skills—all products of my independent academic experience—I felt confident about graduate study. By age 24 I had earned over 200 undergraduate credits by exam and a Master of Education in Human Services from Boston University (Overseas Program) without ever stepping foot on a college campus! Throughout this time I maintained full-time employment outside the United States and had family commitments too. My wife Dagmar and I have two boys.

After my Army discharge I went directly into the education business. I bid on and was awarded a series of Department of the Army education services contracts. For the next three years I provided instruction and

testing services as a self-employed contractor at an Army Education Center in Ansbach. Yet despite having appropriate work experience and a graduate degree in the field, I was unqualified for the position of professional Guidance Counselor with the Department of the Army because I lacked a counseling practicum on my transcripts. Had I pursued the needed practicum with the university that offers it here in Germany, it would have taken eight months to complete with tuition exceeding \$1,200, not to mention the effort to demonstrate skills I felt I already possessed by virtue of graduate training (theory) and work experience (practice).

Edison came to my rescue by allowing me to come to Trenton for a 6 semester hour credit assessment in counseling. Flying in from Germany for just this purpose, I was able to validate my counseling skills in one (demanding!) three-hour session. Thanks to the hustle of the Edison staff, I flew back the next day transcript in hand! That's a perfect example of what nontraditional education is all about!

In my new job as Guidance Counselor, I am in a key position to help the 1,800 soldiers (and their family members) at my Army post near Nuremburg. I feel very comfortable recommending the nontraditional route to obtain educational goals because I know first hand that many times it can best meet the needs of the student.

I enjoy working with soldiers because they tend to be more well-rounded than those who have gone through a traditional educational

route where all too often only mental achievement is evaluated and students feverishly chase after grades rather than learning or excellence. In the Army, besides job knowledge, other factors such as physical and mental toughness (not merely recall), comradeship, bearing, character, leadership example, and common sense are essential to soldiering excellence. Many of my soldier-clients have had bad experiences with "school," and it's great to see them get "turned on" to bettering themselves through education.

My favorite way to initiate this is an evaluation of military learning via the ACE guide. What a boost for that hard working soldier to be awarded 15, 30, or 45 college credits (and the same number of promotion points) for years of civilian comparable learning. These credits can be applied to a degree program at Edison or posted on a transcript as a limited service to be used elsewhere.

Looking toward the future I see nontraditional education expanding. To this end I plan to pursue further graduate study and would like to eventually work as a program coordinator with an institution starting up nontraditional offerings. Before I leave Germany, though, I aspire to design my own M.A. in German Studies, so I'm keeping a watchful eye out for budding nontraditional graduate programs. Any correspondence stemming from this article is welcome.

Douglas Batson  
Army Education Center  
Montieth Barracks  
APO New York 09068-0012



# Alumni Notes

Alumni who wish to be included in the next issue of the Alumni Notes column should send information to the Office of Alumni Affairs, Edison State College; 20 Evergreen Place; East Orange, NJ 07018; 201/266-1950. Be sure to include which Edison degree you earned and the year. Announcements cannot be accepted without this information. Photos are welcome—black and white glossy only. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Michael Baldigo** (BA '76) Santa Rosa, CA, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship at the School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Alor Star, Kedah Malaysia. Michael attended the School of Business and Economics at Sonoma State University.

**Vincent Conte** (BA '82) Marietta, GA, completed the final phase of training and examinations to become a Certified Financial Planner. Vince intends to enroll in a Masters program at Georgia State. He is currently a financial counsellor with CIGNA in Atlanta.

**Chuck Hicks** (BSTS '84) Cypress, CA, has been transferred from Washington, DC to the Western Pacific Region of the Federal Aviation Association. Chuck is an Aviation Safety Inspector and is interested in meeting Edison alumni in the California area. He can be reached at 714/826-7502.

**Walter M. Wess** (BSTS '82) Absecon, NJ, has received a Master of Audiology degree from the Graduate School of Hahnemann University (PA). Walter is an audiologist and hearing aid dispenser at Hahnemann Hospital.



*Barbara Glatt Friedman*

**Barbara Glatt Friedman** (BA '79) Cherry Hill, NJ, has been included in the 21st edition of *Who's Who in the East* and the 15th edition of *Who's Who of American Women*. Barbara is a mental health counselor and clinical hypnotherapist in private practice.

**Jay J. Kessler** (BA '80) Arlington, VA, earned a JD Degree from the University of Toledo School of Law. Jay is a member of the Massachusetts Bar and is currently the Deputy Special Assistant for Medico-Legal Affairs for the United States Navy.

**R. Lois Dollbaum** (BSBA '80) Elmwood Park, NJ, has joined Blinder, Robinson and Co. (Paramus, NJ) as a securities account executive. Lois is licensed to sell securities nationwide.

**Alfred A. Curran** (AA '81) New Britain, CT, has completed a book entitled *German Immigration to Pennsylvania: 1683-1933*. The book describes the settlement of predominantly German communities in Pennsylvania, and describes the society German immigrants found on arrival and what they left behind.

**Syed Alsagoff** (AA '81) McLean, VA, received an MBA from the University of the District of Columbia. Syed currently works for the Embassy of Malaysia, Malaysian Students Dept. in Washington, DC.

**Barbara Mann** (BA '84) Fort Myers, FL, has been honored by having the new Performing Arts Hall at Edison Community College and University of South Florida named for her. The decree to name the building was issued by the Florida legislature and signed by the Governor. Mrs. Mann was honored for spending more than 50 years of her life dedicated to the arts. Four years prior to dedication of the Performing Arts Hall, Mrs. Mann was honored by the state with the Governor's Award for the Arts. Leaders of the Florida community attribute the entire cultural development of the Fort Myers community to Mrs. Mann.

In addition to the countless hours Barbara has spent organizing and encouraging the arts, she has also worked full-time as office and financial manager of her husband's contracting business. She was a professional organist and church choir director for 36 years.



*Barbara Mann*

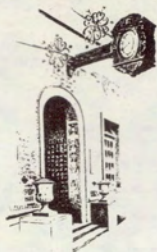
**Capt. Charles T. Buntin USAF** (BA '79) West Germany, is Officer-in-Charge of the 60th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Special Airlift Support Branch, Ramstein Air Base in West Germany. Capt. Buntin is enrolled in a Master of Science Degree in International Relations with the American University extension program in Europe.



*The Alumni Board had some fun by surprising outgoing Association President Frank Hawrylo '79 with a troubador who presented Frank with balloons and a series of jingles created especially for the occasion.*

*College ring information may be obtained by writing to: Jaqui Berends '79, Ring Sales Chair, C/O Alumni Office, Edison State College, 20 Evergreen Pl., East Orange, NJ 07018.*





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*Invention* is a newsletter of Thomas A. Edison State College. It is distributed to students, alumni, and friends of the College.

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