

Invention

SUMMER 2019

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

OPENING DOORS

Ivonne Roman, BA '04



STUDENT YOON KIM: THE WAY FORWARD | RACKING UP DEGREES: TINA LORRAINE MATTHEWS, AA '16, AAS '17, BA '17, MALS '18

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Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,

If education opens the door to opportunity, Ivonne Roman not only walked through that door, but is also determined to hold it open for others who follow her. Our cover story for this issue features Roman's quest to convert what she has learned in the classroom, as well as on the job as a Newark police officer for more than 20 years, to gain access and equity for all women.

Not only has Roman identified a gender disparity in the ability to pass the physical exams required for the police force, but she has taken matters into her own hands, conducting a weekend fitness class specifically designed to help more women prepare for the test.

In partnership with the Newark Police Superior Officers' Association, she founded The Women's Leadership Academy, whose mission is to provide women with the physical training, support and other resources required to become successful police officers and ultimately address the gender inequity.


Student Yoon Kim is seeking to level the playing field in other ways. When surgery for a brain tumor left Kim blind seven years ago, he used the experience to ignite a new passion and career goal.

Instead of dwelling on his setbacks, Kim decided he would focus on helping others. "That is when I realized I wanted to become an Americans with Disabilities Act specialist attorney," Kim explained. With the help of Thomas Edison's Center for Disability Services and assistive software, Kim began taking courses, earning his bachelor's degree and setting a goal to attend law school.

Also in this issue, we meet Santiago Bravo, who came to the United States from Ecuador at age 11. As an immigrant in a new country, he determined that the sky would be his only limit. Bravo has taken advantage of our partnership with his employer, JetBlue Airways, to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Maintenance Technology.

"JetBlue Scholars provided an avenue for my college education," Bravo explained. "It allowed me to attend classes online while still fulfilling my job and family responsibilities. In the process of completing my bachelor's degree, it allowed me to mature professionally, view JetBlue from a broader point of view and understand how my role plays in the overall success of the company."

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Invention* with its many examples of how education, and the people who seek it, create positive change in our world.



Merodie A. Hancock, PhD
President



The Way Forward

YOON KIM'S INDOMITABLE SPIRIT WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO GIVE INTO HIS LIMITATIONS.

Yoon Kim

A surprise medical diagnosis and the side effects of surgery led Yoon Kim on an unexpected journey.

Yoon Kim was a typical 30 year old planning his next chapter when a brain tumor upended everything. The medical operation that followed left him blind and confined to a wheelchair.

"I'm grateful for having had the chance to live a completely healthy life until seven years ago," said Kim, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Liberal Studies student at Thomas Edison State University (TESU). "The doctors removed a golf ball-sized tumor from my brain, and, although they were able to save my life, I was left with physical impairments, and I lost the gift of sight."

Kim's indomitable spirit, however, will not allow him to give in to his limitations.

"For a while I felt worthless and wanted nothing more than to throw in the towel. Accepting the fact that my path was going to be very different took a monumental effort. It was only after I acknowledged and accepted my reality that I was able to move forward," said Kim.

noted. His initial enthusiasm, however, was hampered by the reality of tuition costs.

The path toward personal and professional fulfillment for Kim has been eased by scholarship support from the Thomas Edison State University Foundation, made possible by the Robert A. Mills Foundation. The scholarship provides financial support toward degree completion for TESU students with disabilities. In the important final stretch in his degree journey, the funding has enabled Kim to purchase specialized adaptive technology and has helped defray remaining tuition costs and graduation fees.

"Having been unemployed for six years, my financial situation is anything but rosy, but I am committed to taking my positive experience from TESU and applying it toward a law degree. I knew it would be a reach, but I also feel that if there is a will, there will always be a way," Kim says.

"The Center for Disability Services at Thomas Edison is hands down the best," said Kim. "ADA Coordinator Laura Brenner-Scotti has helped me from the start, and I don't know where I would be in my degree pursuit without her. From converting previously inaccessible books and articles for me, to live assistance in exam proctoring, Laura has been integral to my TESU experience."

Brenner-Scotti said that she is awed by Kim's determination and delighted at the path he's chosen.

"It is my honor to assist Yoon with accommodations for his course work. Online education is difficult under any circumstance, but certainly more challenging with physical impairments and without sight. From our first telephone conversation approximately 18 months ago, I have been humbled by Yoon's determination and dedication in completing his degree. I'm all the more proud of him hearing that he will be using his degrees, combined with his experiences as a person with disabilities, to be an ADA attorney and advocating for people with disabilities. Yoon is a shining example of true selflessness and incredible drive; I have every reason to believe he will successfully complete his undergraduate and law school degrees, and go on to an equally successful career in ADA law. The world is a better place because of people like Yoon," Brenner-Scott said.

Kim noted that his ability to complete his courses is greatly aided by assistive technologies and said screen reading software such as Microsoft's Job Access With Speech (JAWS) and Apple Inc.'s VoiceOver have been life savers. "Screen reader software

"THE FOUNDATION OF MY EDUCATION IS ROOTED IN A SOLID CURRICULUM THAT WILL ALLOW ME TO BE A VARIED BUT KNOWLEDGEABLE CITIZEN OF THE 21ST CENTURY, BUT WHAT I APPRECIATE MOST IS THAT MY BA DEGREE WILL PROVIDE ME WITH A SENSE OF VALIDATION."

Yoon Kim

It was during this time that Kim had an epiphany of sorts. Instead of dwelling on his setbacks, he would focus on helping others. "That is when I realized I wanted to become an Americans with Disabilities Act specialist attorney," he

Working with staff at the University's Center for Disability Services has also helped Kim. Currently, the University serves 115 students with one or more disabilities as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

helps those with vision impairments by interacting with them by voice. It also verbalizes characters that are typed by the user. The software is about 90 percent accurate in reading the text of the screen,” noted Kim, who also admits that there is a significant learning curve. “It is like learning a new language. To complicate the issue, each screen reader has its own unique set of

commands. There is also the software’s inability to interpret graphics.”

He urges educators and course designers to understand the limitations. “Exams and assignments should be free of any graphics that measure the aptitude of students as our interactive software is often limited in its ability to translate shapes, charts or diagrams to

those with vision impairments,” he said.

Kim describes his BA degree program’s focus on broadening critical-thinking and communication skills along with its emphasis on civic engagement, as an excellent preamble for law school. “The foundation of my education is rooted in a solid curriculum that will allow me to be a varied but knowledgeable citizen of the 21st century, but what I appreciate most is that my BA degree will provide me with a sense of validation.”

To learn more about the University’s accommodations for students with disabilities, visit tesu.edu/ada or email ada@tesu.edu. To find out more about available scholarship opportunities at TESU, visit tesu.edu/scholarships or email scholarship@tesu.edu.

“YOON IS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF TRUE SELFLESSNESS AND INCREDIBLE DRIVE; I HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE HE WILL SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE HIS UNDERGRADUATE AND LAW SCHOOL DEGREES, AND GO ON TO AN EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN ADA LAW. THE WORLD IS A BETTER PLACE BECAUSE OF PEOPLE LIKE YOON.”

Laura Brenner-Scotti - ADA Coordinator at TESU



Laura Brenner-Scotti, ADA coordinator, Center for Disability Services, with BA student Yoon Kim (center) and his parents Sue and Hank.

Racking up Degrees.

❖ Tina Lorraine Matthews, AA '16, AAS '17, BA '17, MALS '18

Tina Lorraine Matthews earned four degrees in less than four years by taking advantage of a unique Bachelor's to Master's Program.

Armed with tenacity and her personal motto: 'The challenges in your life are not meant to break you, they are meant to be broken!', Tina Lorraine Matthews set her sights on her educational goals and excelled, earning four degrees in less than four years.

"What I found most valuable was having the opportunity to enhance my career goals while maintaining a balanced work-life," she explained. "I chose to place my personal life on hold to concentrate on and complete my studies at a faster pace, but that was a personal decision."

Matthews started her educational journey with Thomas Edison State University in December 2014 with 9 transfer credits from another school and earned an Associate in Arts degree in June 2016. She continued with TESU, earning an Associate in Applied Science degree in Criminal Justice and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 2017. On Sept. 14, 2018, she graduated with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology.

"The ability to achieve my goals in the time frame that I wanted was mainly achievable because of the online capabilities that Thomas Edison State University provides," Matthews explained. "Earning four degrees in less than four years - something that should have taken six years or more - is amazing; yet, I would tell everyone 'you must be diligent and truthful with yourself, and assess your career goals and your personal realities.' I owe it all

to the grace of God, TESU and believing in myself."

In addition to its flexible online programs, Matthews noted that TESU offered another way for her to fast track her studies while helping with finances. She took advantage of the University's Bachelor's to Master's Program that enables undergraduate students to earn up to 12 graduate-level credits that they can apply to both their bachelor's and master's degree programs at the undergraduate tuition rate.

Although Matthews, who holds a New Jersey cosmetology license, had served in management and supervisory positions throughout her career, she faced her biggest disappointment when she applied for a position with a major cosmetics company for which she had always wanted to work. She was turned down during the telephone interview because she did not have a college degree.

"After much disappointment along with several tears, I decided to return to school," she recalled. "Since I was on unemployment, I went to its One Stop career center and spoke with the manager about my options. It was then that I learned about TESU; I applied and enrolled a month and a half after the interview with the cosmetics company."

Currently, Matthews is a risk/quality assurance analyst at a subservicing company for the banking industry. Her department is responsible for auditing or testing the processes and procedures for various departments

within the industry. She previously worked for the Hess Corporation as a managing supervisor for the oil-ordering department, scheduling deliveries on the east coast. She has also worked in the telecommunications field as a customer service representative, customer service trainer and, then, as the quality assurance supervisor at Cablevision.

"My role in telecommunications was far different from the energy/oil industry and my position in the banking industry; yet, the commonality that is consistent within each role is that they are all customer-service oriented. Now that I have my degrees in addition to the experience, I believe that it will enhance my career overall to earn a role whereby my past and present work and academic experiences will be welcomed in any industry; preferably in training and development, which was why I pursued a BA in psychology and a master's in that field," said Matthews.

A TESU Alumni Ambassador, Matthews' desire to help people is evidenced in the career accomplishment she is most proud of, which occurred when Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey in 2012.

"During that time, I had just acquired the role of managing supervisor at Hess," she recalled. "This was probably the most challenging time in my career because it was a state of emergency like no other. Since I was one of the direct leaders of the oil-ordering department, I was responsible for those working on my team as well as arranging for fuel deliveries to locations that were on high alerts, such as hospitals. After 10 long, stressful days, it was a success as we were able to slowly get things back to normal."



“NOW THAT I HAVE MY DEGREES IN ADDITION TO THE EXPERIENCE, I BELIEVE THAT IT WILL ENHANCE MY CAREER OVERALL TO EARN A ROLE WHEREBY MY PAST AND PRESENT WORK AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES WILL BE WELCOMED IN ANY INDUSTRY.”

Tina Lorraine Matthews

“I consider this an accomplishment because I was able to remain calm, cool and collected to make the best decisions for the staff, customers and myself – including leaving my home for 10 days with a grandfather-sized tree laying across my own property – to serve those devastated communities.”

Matthews explained that the experience showed her she was capable of doing anything as long as she believed in herself. “It is this type of confidence that I have tapped into in order to conquer the goals, dreams and desires for my career paths, and I’m proud that I took

the major leap to enhance my education with TESU degrees to complement the experience I have worked so hard to obtain over the years.”

Originally, from Edison, N.J., Matthews has called Cliffwood Beach, N.J., home for 23 years. Prior to buckling down for school, Matthews noted, she traveled a few times a year and is anxiously looking forward to doing so again. “My favorite place to go is anywhere where I can sit in the sun surrounded by water, preferably on an island. Aside from traveling, I enjoy spending time with friends and family.”

Matthews said that there were many supporters “that walked this collegiate journey” with her, including her mother and stepfather, and a host of other family and friends. “However, I must add a special ‘thank you’ to my deceased maternal great-grandparents and grandfather, Waymon Jeter, for leaving behind amazing artifacts and a chronicled history of life that enabled me to write an 84-page thesis about our lineage; it is their story that has aided in my collegiate success.”

Scholars WHO SOAR

❖ Santiago Bravo, BSAST '17

What started as a high school internship, has turned into a dynamic 17-year career with JetBlue Airways Corporation for crewmember Santiago Bravo.

Santiago Bravo, who came to the United States from Ecuador at age 11, began looking skyward early on. "The key to my inspiration is knowing that my career centers on aviation," he explained. "It may sound a bit cliché, but being around a massive piece of machinery that can take off in the air just like any bird is impressive and inspiring."

Bravo began his education at Aviation High School in Long Island City, N.Y., a co-educational high school that prepares students for careers in aviation maintenance and the aerospace industry, allowing them to graduate with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as well as

continue his education with the demands of a full-time job and family. "I spent many hours and resources simply commuting to and from college," he said. "To add to the dilemma, classes were only offered during morning and early afternoon hours, which conflicted with my work schedule. I had no choice but to discontinue my studies."

A solution for Bravo came in the form of the JetBlue Scholars program launched in 2016. The employer-sponsored program offers crewmembers an opportunity to earn a fully accredited college degree from Thomas Edison State University while JetBlue covers most of the cost.

"JETBLUE SCHOLARS PROVIDED AN AVENUE FOR MY COLLEGE EDUCATION," BRAVO EXPLAINED. "IT ALLOWED ME TO ATTEND CLASSES ONLINE WHILE STILL FULFILLING MY JOB AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES. IN THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE, IT ALLOWED ME TO MATURE PROFESSIONALLY, VIEW JETBLUE FROM A BROADER POINT OF VIEW AND UNDERSTAND HOW MY ROLE PLAYS IN THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF THE COMPANY."

Santiago Bravo

Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) licenses. He then enrolled at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, where he completed an associate degree in mechanical engineering.

After earning his associate degree, it became increasingly difficult to

"JetBlue Scholars provided an avenue for my college education," Bravo explained. "It allowed me to attend classes online while still fulfilling my job and family responsibilities. In the process of completing my bachelor's degree, it allowed me to mature professionally, view JetBlue from a

broader point of view and understand how my role plays in the overall success of the company."

Bravo, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Maintenance Technology, also found that the access to success coaches and tutors employed by JetBlue allowed him to make the most of his education.

"My coaches continuously offered positive reinforcement and were always available for a quick meeting or a consultation. They periodically checked up on me to offer assistance if needed and to evaluate my overall satisfaction with the program."

The program allowed Bravo to make use of alternative credit providers like *Study.com*, to earn credit to be applied directly to his degree program. He explained that the platform allowed him to pause and continue courses as he needed, providing him maximum flexibility in completing his degree. He was also able to earn college credit for the A&P licenses he'd previously earned.

In completing his Capstone course, Bravo found many parallels at Thomas Edison State University to his former classroom-based experiences.

"Although the entire course was online, it allowed all students in the class to interact with one another and give feedback on each other's work," Bravo said. "I was able to meet some of the other students without the burden of commuting to a physical location. The professor was immensely helpful and provided tips and strategies on how to improve my writing or elaborate on ideas."



He explained that finishing his bachelor's degree allowed him to mesh 16 years of aviation experience with the university degree he's always wanted.

Starting as an intern with the airline in 2000, Bravo initially had been hired full time as a technical operations material services employee in 2002 and continued to progress in the organization. Two years later, he was promoted to technical repairs, overseeing aircraft component repairs with various JetBlue business partners. In 2005, Bravo moved to quality control where he spent the next 11 years ensuring aircraft material, engines and landing gear were procured in accordance with mandates and policies.

Today, Bravo serves the airline as an engine and APU (Auxiliary Power Unit) buyer based at the airline's hub at John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, N.Y., a position he's held for three years.

"I oversee JetBlue's fleet of engines and APUs assuring they receive quality repair and overhaul in accordance with technical data, FAA mandates and internal policies," he explained. "I also ensure that entitlements and contractual terms are met in order to reduce cost. In addition, I work with different groups in our finance area to forecast spending and insurance claims in order to keep costs within budget."

When he's not focused on airplanes, he's traveling in them to cities around the world. Bravo has been to more than 80 cities in more than 25 countries, enjoying the culture that each has to offer. In addition to traveling, he is a devoted distance runner. "To date, I have completed 13 marathons throughout the United States and Europe and more than 30 half marathons," he explained. "Running doesn't stop, whether the thermometer dips below freezing or goes above 100 degrees; snow, rain or heat, I'm always outside logging my training runs." Like any devoted New Yorker, Bravo said he enjoys a good slice of pizza, bagels and the many attractions New York City has to offer.

To learn more about the JetBlue Scholars program, visit www.jetbluescholars.com.

Ivonne Roman, BA '04

OPENING DOORS

Ivonne Roman's story is one of hard work, dedication and continuing education. Along the way, there have been a series of firsts, both for women and for Latinas, and a newfound passion to open doors for others who will follow in her path.

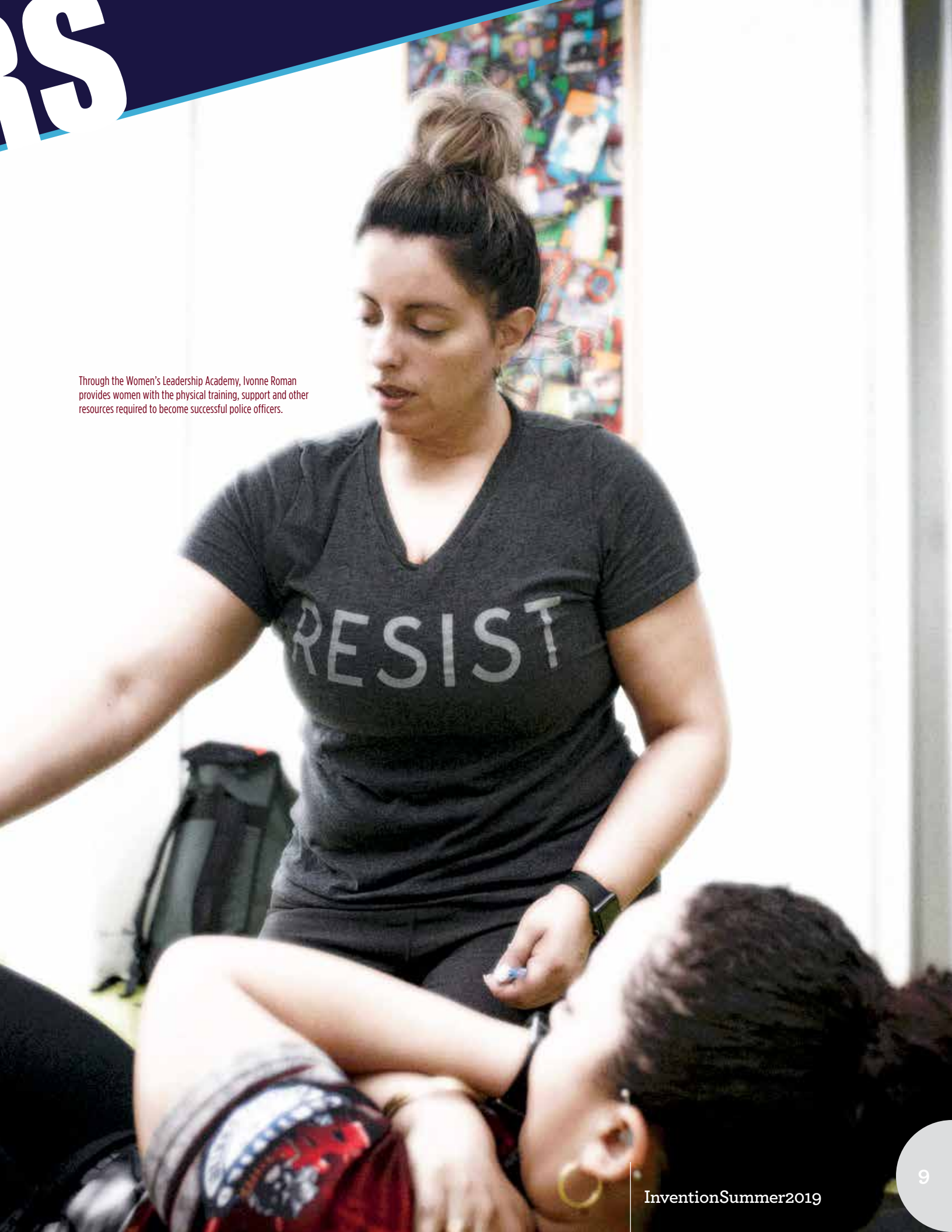
Roman was an aspiring journalist pursuing an associate degree at Essex County Community College in 1995 when her roommate suggested they try to become police officers.

More than 24 years have passed since that conversation, and throughout Roman's policing career she ascended through the ranks becoming the department's first female deputy chief and the city of Newark's first Latina chief of police. But those promotions might not have been possible had she not found a way to pursue her education while walking the beat.



SS

Through the Women's Leadership Academy, Ivonne Roman provides women with the physical training, support and other resources required to become successful police officers.



OPENING DOORS

In early 2000, Roman was a sergeant working rotating, unpredictable shifts, but had a strong desire to obtain her degree. “I tried traditional classes, but I was missing too many of them because of my work schedule,” Roman recalled. “I needed a school that offered flexible learning options. I knew education would be the path to move up the ranks.”

Through that need, Roman found Thomas Edison State University (TESU).

“Distance learning was the only way I was able to earn my degree while meeting the demands of my work schedule,” she explained. “Many police department jobs don’t require a degree, but higher ranking officers in cities often have a master’s degree. Without TESU, I wouldn’t have been able to reach that status.”

“DISTANCE LEARNING WAS THE ONLY WAY I WAS ABLE TO EARN MY DEGREE WHILE MEETING THE DEMANDS OF MY WORK SCHEDULE.”

Ivonne Roman

Roman graduated from TESU with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications in 2004. That accomplishment ignited a passion for education that led to a Master of Arts degree in public affairs from Rutgers University-Camden, where she is currently pursuing her doctorate.

Throughout her more than 20 years on the force and using the tools and methodologies she learned in class, Roman noticed patterns in policing that she finds concerning. Addressing those concerns became her focus.



"Most law enforcement policies and strategies are utilized simply because it is the way things were always done, not necessarily because there is evidence to support that they work," she explained. "There is a large body of research evidence that isn't reaching law enforcement practitioners, and the research agendas themselves are often set without input from police officials, leading to research and results that are of interest to academia, but may be of little practical use to police departments."

This fueled Roman's drive to promote evidence-based policing, in an effort to examine changing the way police decide on the policies that determine how they handle different situations in their communities and within their departments.

One of these policies has spawned a personal passion for Roman: the use of a static physical qualification test for candidates in numerous police academies. This test assesses candidates' abilities in running, push-ups and sit-ups, and has the same baseline requirements regardless of the gender of the candidate. The test itself varies drastically from force to force.

This is just one factor pointing to an overall gender disparity within the law enforcement profession, Roman maintains. According to the latest data available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, women accounted for just 12 percent of all full-time local police officers and only 3 percent of local police chiefs in 2013. Through her research, Roman found the physical test used in many agencies was contributing to that imbalance, with more women being kept from succeeding at the academy and qualifying for the police force based solely on the physical assessment.

"There are nearly 18,000 police agencies across the country using varying fitness standards," she explained. "I am simply advocating for an assessment that is validated through research and

is designed to measure fitness without producing a gender disparity."

While Roman hopes for that change to come sooner rather than later, for now, she is doing what she can to work with the system in place. In partnership with the Newark Police Superior Officers' Association, she founded The Women's

"BEING ABLE TO GIVE MY TALK, MEET WITH ADVOCACY GROUPS, ACTIVISTS, ACADEMICS AND PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS CAN ONLY HELP MAGNIFY THE MESSAGE AND EDUCATE OTHERS. IT TRULY WAS A TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ME."

Ivonne Roman

Leadership Academy, whose mission is to provide women with the physical training, support and other resources required to become successful police officers and ultimately address the gender inequity.

A new assessment, implemented in 2017, has led to an increase in failure rates for females. As a result, Roman's Saturday mornings are now spent at a recreation center in Newark, training women who are eager to meet or exceed the requirements specifically measured in the academy's physical fitness exam.

"Many of these women have failed academies before, but come back to train and try again because they have a calling to the profession," Roman explained. "These women are all motivated, they just need the right tools to succeed."

Since becoming aware of the issue, Roman has not only spent her time helping women directly, but is also working to raise awareness in hopes of initiating change in the test that contributes so immensely to the gender disparity. This work is the basis for her doctoral degree and underscores Roman's passion for learning and for her profession.

Earlier this year, she was selected to share her knowledge as a TED Talk fellow at TED2019 in Vancouver, Canada. On April 16, Roman walked onto a large stage at a packed Vancouver Convention Center to present a TED2019 Conference talk dedicated to the recruitment and retention of women in policing.

"People were very surprised to learn about the great variation in fitness standards being used by police agencies across the country," Roman said. "TED provided an amazing platform for me to raise awareness about the issues and, hopefully, spark interest in reviewing policies like these and their impact."

After the conference, Roman returned to Newark with an even stronger dedication to her work and with a new sense of optimism about what she has been able to accomplish so far.

"I've been working in a small bubble for a while now, looking for an avenue to access a broader audience. The issues are not isolated to Newark, or even New Jersey," Roman elaborated. "Being able to give my talk, meet with advocacy groups, activists, academics and philanthropic organizations can only help magnify the message and educate others. It truly was a transformational experience for me."

Accelerated Nursing Program Students Shift Careers into High Gear



W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing students and grads got one step closer to their potential career paths during the inaugural TESU Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program Recruitment Day at George A. Pruitt Hall on April 9. Nearly 60 Accelerated BSN students and recent graduates from the program submitted resumes and networked with nurse recruitment representatives from Atlantic Health System, Capital Health, PowerBack Rehabilitation, Regional Cancer Care Associates, RWJBarnabas Health, Hackensack Meridian Health and High Focus Centers as well as recruiters from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army Nurse Corps. Representatives spoke with attendees about employment opportunities, job parameters and the advantages of joining their organizations.

University Celebrates Accelerated Nursing Program Graduates

PINNING CEREMONY MARKS RITE OF PASSAGE FOR NURSING STUDENTS

The W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing honored graduates of its April 2018-2019 Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program with a pinning ceremony at George A. Pruitt Hall.

The pinning signifies a ceremonial entrance into the profession for graduates who are now eligible to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). The April cohort, one of two Accelerated BSN cohorts administered yearly by the School, represented 14 students who entered the program with non-nursing undergraduate degrees and successfully completed 60 credits within the program's concentrated 12-month timeframe.

During the ceremony, program graduate Colleen Geib of Jersey City, N.J., received the Dr. Christine M. Rosner Clinical Excellence Award presented by the School's Interim Dean Dr. Ana Maria Catanzaro. Members of the graduating class who demonstrated superior academic achievement, integrity and professional leadership potential were inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society.

"Remember to advocate relentlessly and care wholeheartedly, and remember to always smile at the people we care for," counseled student speaker Anthonyette A. Karyczak of Highland Park, N.J., during her address to fellow graduates.

Launched in 2011, the Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program features online and campus-based courses as well as simulation lab experiences provided by Thomas Edison State University.

Clinical experiences are held at Capital Health facilities in Hopewell Township and Trenton, N.J., as well as various community-based agencies in the Mercer County area.

To learn more about this and other academic programs available through the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing, visit www.tesu.edu/nursing.



Graduates of Thomas Edison State University's Spring 2019 Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program are (front row, from left to right): Qudsiya Hussain, Aqsa Rana, Colleen Geib, Gionna Pica, Isaurys De Jesus, Julia Criscuolo, Erica Hrudowsky, Alejandra Ramirez and Shivali Patel; and (back row, from left to right): Anna Mohlenhoff, Anthonyette Karyczak, Elizabeth Van Curen, Hannah McGrath and Megan Haskins.

N.J. Department of Community Affairs Awards Watson Institute \$155,000 Grant

FUNDING WILL ENABLE THE INSTITUTE TO LEAD A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF URBAN ENTERPRISE ZONES

The N.J. Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has awarded The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy a \$155,000 grant to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the DCA's Urban Enterprise Zone program (UEZ).

A zone in which policies and programs that encourage economic growth are implemented, a UEZ designation provides financial incentives for local businesses within that zone. These incentives can drive capital improvements, business expansion and employment and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

The research, analysis and assessment that The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy (Watson Institute) will be conducting under the auspices of the grant will measure whether the UEZ program is a viable tool for encouraging economic development within the state and provide recommendations on the future design and administration of the program.



Barbara George Johnson, executive director of The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy and Tracy Fredericks, executive director of the Urban Enterprise Zone Program at the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

lead for the initiative. "The Watson Institute has always been dedicated to providing research expertise, technical assistance and analysis surrounding

activity and spur employment within the boundaries of each zone. Businesses within each UEZ receive a variety of benefits including reduced sales tax, financial assistance, subsidized unemployment insurance and tax credit options. Trenton was awarded its UEZ designation in 1985. According to the City of Trenton, N.J., website, the program has successfully served more than 800 businesses that have invested millions of dollars in the construction and rehabilitation of new office, commercial and retail space, sports complexes and other improvements to the city's landscape and, by extension, the lives of its residents.

"THE WATSON INSTITUTE HAS ALWAYS BEEN DEDICATED TO PROVIDING RESEARCH EXPERTISE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ANALYSIS SURROUNDING THE PERSISTENT PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THOSE LIVING AND WORKING IN THOSE DISTRICTS. THE GRANT WILL ALLOW US TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS IN THIS VALUABLE ENDEAVOR."

Barbara George Johnson

"The DCA has entrusted the Watson Institute to conduct this report, given our nearly three decades of conducting research and analysis on urban policy. In response to the opportunity, we will focus our capabilities on a comprehensive assessment of the critical factors that impact enterprise zones," said Barbara George Johnson, executive director of The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy, who serves as a project

the persistent public policy challenges of local governments, businesses and community organizations with the objective of improving the quality of life for those living and working in those districts. The grant will allow us to redouble our efforts in this valuable endeavor."

The New Jersey Legislature created the Urban Enterprise Zone Program in 1983 to help stimulate economic

"I look forward to receiving the study findings from the accomplished team at The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy," said Tracy Fredericks, executive director of the Urban Enterprise Zone Program at the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. "We are optimistic that the results will provide appropriate data and a clearer picture that will help legislators decide on the direction the program should take in the future."

Pushing Onward: Silena Shuta

ROBERT SYDNEY NEEDHAM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

For some, a scholarship removes a barrier to degree completion, for others, it's a lifeline.

"Education has been a driving force in my life and a steadfast beacon of hope," said Silena Shuta, a 2018 Robert Sydney Needham Memorial Scholarship recipient at Thomas Edison State University (TESU).

Shuta's newfound optimism belies a tormented past.

At age 15, Shuta escaped a physically abusive home environment by being placed in the foster care system. The sanctuary she said she found there was short lived, however, when a family court judge ruled that she be relocated. "The pattern of physical abuse just continued," she said. "When it became too much to bear, I moved to my boyfriend's home, only to realize that I had traded in another abusive relationship for something far worse."

In 1995, Shuta became an 18-year old single mother to her son, Danny. With the two of them facing the world, she realized that her high school diploma would no longer suffice on its own. "As I held my baby, I knew I had to do something to change our course."

With life, work and motherhood contravening, it would take Shuta another 21 years to earn her associate degree.

"In 2016, we reached a milestone together," she said. "My son graduated with a BA in criminal justice from Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, N.J., and I graduated with my associate degree from Union County College, N.J., and an enduring love for the social sciences. It was a momentous occasion. We commemorated it with a celebration - mother and son, side by side, diplomas in hand and love all around."

Today, Shuta is the director of the Victim/Witness Advocacy Unit at the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office and enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology program at TESU. But she won't stop there. Her next objective is earning a master's degree in public administration. "TESU has given me the education in the course formats I needed and helped me solidify my title and position in my career. The course flexibility was like no other school I explored and it allowed me to complete



Silena Shuta, BA student

Shuta routinely facilitates workshops and conferences related to domestic violence, crime victims' rights, child advocacy, victimology, vicarious trauma and child protection. She collaborates regularly with local and state agencies regarding the safety of victims, witnesses, children and families.

"The education I've received is the building block to a better life, and Danny and I are proof of that. It was the only way I could have ever escaped the abusive situations in my life. The scholarship I received from the Thomas Edison State University Foundation ensures that my degree plan stays on track, places bachelor's degree completion within my reach and removes some of the financial concerns associated with continuing my education."

The Robert Sydney Needham Memorial Scholarship at Thomas Edison State University Foundation was first awarded in 2010 through a grant from the Robert Sydney Needham Foundation and has been renewed annually. The scholarship is awarded to a full-time, currently enrolled, student who is actively involved in community service and demonstrates financial need.

To learn more about available scholarship programs at the University, visit www.tesu.edu/scholarships or email scholarship@tesu.edu.

**"TESU UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEGREE,
AND THEY CARED ABOUT MY FUTURE JUST AS MUCH AS I DID."**

Silena Shuta

When Danny was a year old, Shuta enrolled in an associate degree program at a local community college. "It was a tough road paved with sleepless nights and mostly empty pockets - but I just kept pushing onward," she noted. She simultaneously worked multiple jobs so that she could provide for him and give him access to the best education and lifestyle possible. Unfortunately, her own education would have to be sidelined in order to do so. "I chose to forgo my education so that I could provide for my growing son. But I promised myself I would return."

my education without stopping my life. TESU understands the importance of a degree, and they cared about my future just as much as I did."

"Since the start of my advocacy career with the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, I have gained a wealth of experience related to complex cases while advocating for victims in investigations that range from sexual assaults to homicides," she noted. "In light of my personal experiences, I've become dedicated to keeping others safe and my eventual master's degree will help further that goal."

Thomas C. Streckewald Golf Classic Raises Nearly \$83,000

The 25th Annual Thomas C. Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic, which took place at The Ridge at Back Brook in Ringoes, N.J., in May raised nearly \$83,000 for the Thomas Edison State University Foundation. This year, more than 100 golfers and guests participated in the event.

During the Reception and Awards Dinner, John Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs emphasized that the day represents much more than a round of golf. "Thomas Edison State University was built for working adults who want to invest in their lives through education," Thurber said. "Our flexibility makes it possible for adult students to do what they thought was impossible – to earn their degrees while working, raising a family and maybe even occasionally golfing. Your round of golf today supports our mission to change the lives of our students."

The Foundation commemorated this milestone year of the event by recognizing Tom Streckewald's wife, Cathie, and sons, Dan and Kevin, for their involvement and support of the Golf Classic since its inception in 1995. For the past 25 years, the Thomas C. Streckewald Endowment has provided a critical source of funding that has been invested in new programs to better serve TESU students.

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

ALUMNI PROFILE



Pat Roque MSM '02

ROQUE EMBODIES THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENTS AND ALUMNI.

Special Guest and Alumni Speaker Pat Roque, MSM '02, with her husband Alex Roque, MSM '02.

Pat Roque, MSM '02, was invited to be the 2019 Golf Classic's guest and alumni speaker. Roque embodies the true spirit of the University's students and alumni. As busy adults, she and her husband, Alex, chose to enhance their lives and careers through higher education. They completed the Master of Science in Management Program together in 2002.

Roque has had an award-winning, yet nontraditional career. Dubbed "The Rock Star Transformation Coach," she is a sought-after executive coach, motivational speaker, business growth strategist and author. Roque is also a golf enthusiast and passionately educates people about how they can leverage the sport to improve their personal and professional lives. She is a board member of the Women's Golf Association of New Jersey and was recently named as an LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) Ambassador.

Roque spoke to the audience about her TESU experience and the meaningful impact it has had on her life. "I chose Thomas Edison for its flexible, high-quality programs offered at an exceptional value. I was able to complete my master's degree, alongside my husband, while we raised two children, and I have become a huge proponent of distance learning," Roque said. "I encourage everyone to think about how the University could help enhance your life, or the life of someone you know, through the outstanding educational opportunities it provides."



Top: Dr. Merodine A. Hancock, president, welcomes and thanks participants ahead of the shotgun start. Middle: The Streckewald Family with John Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs. From left to right: Dan Streckewald, John Thurber, Cathie Streckewald and Kevin Streckewald. Bottom: Golfers prepare to line up their putts on the second hole green.

University Partners With Local Chambers to Promote Education in the Business Sector

Access to higher education just became easier for members of three New Jersey chambers of commerce.

Recently, Thomas Edison State University signed educational partnerships with the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce. The alignments allow members of each chamber to enroll in the University's more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree programs with a tuition reduction.

With the agreement covering not only individual members, but also the employees of member corporations and their family members, thousands are now eligible to benefit from the cost discount.

Jessiah Styles, associate director for Strategic Partnerships at TESU, describes collaborating with chambers as a "win-win" for all involved.

"We believe the chambers create a critical intersection between the adult learners we serve and corporate America," Styles explained. "The chambers benefit by providing added-value to each membership, and by having a ready pool of experts on education-related topics who can



The University's Office of Strategic Partnerships staff Jessiah Styles, Michele L. Huntley, Mildred Akumu Taylor and Dennis Devery, vice president of Enrollment Management gathered with Kristi Howell, CEO of the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce (center) to sign an educational partnership agreement.

contribute to critical issues facing the workforce. This, in turn, allows the University to remain at the forefront of the corporate landscape, with up-to-date personal insight from members, as labor markets continue changing and evolving."

Burlington County Regional Chamber President and CEO Kristi Howell echoed Styles' stance on the mutual benefits of the alliances.

"Education is a key factor for business in retaining a solid workforce with qualified employees," Howell said. "We

are pleased that this partnership will further our mission as an organization and provide an opportunity for world-class education for our members to earn qualifications that will aid their professional success."

The agreements signed in the spring are just the beginning of the initiative for the University to better serve the business community, as it continues to develop partnerships with more chambers of commerce and other entities from around the state.



John E. Harmon Sr., left, founder, president and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, and Jessiah Styles, associate director of Strategic Partnerships at the University, greet one another at the ceremonious signing of a partnership that will provide a tuition discount to enroll at the University for the chamber's members.



Dr. Dennis Devery, left, vice president of Enrollment Management at Thomas Edison State University, and John Kelly, vice president of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, participate in a ceremonious signing of a partnership that will provide a tuition discount to enroll at the University for the chamber's members.

class notes



Sarah Kay Bierle

BA '13

Sarah Kay Bierle's book, *Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864*, has just been released. Bierle, a managing editor for the Emerging Civil War blog, has spent time researching, writing, and

speaking about the American Civil War. Her book covers not only the military aspects of the battle, but also the history of individuals whose lives or military careers were changed because of the fight.

Russ Carfagno ASAST '97



Russ Carfagno recently completed his PhD in organizational leadership from Eastern University. He is currently the director of Commercial Technical Services at Johnson Controls and an adjunct professor at Central Penn College and Point University. Carfagno, who served six years in the Naval Submarine Services noted, "Without my start at TESU, I wouldn't

have been able to travel on this journey. Thank you for a great foundation and the opportunity to apply my Navy technical training to my degree."

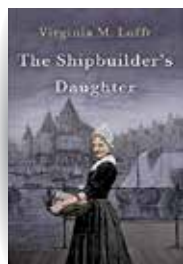
Gail Frizzell BA '01



Gail Frizzell just released her first book, *Special Needs: A Daughter's Disability, A Mother's Mission*. An advocate and writer in the field of developmental disabilities for 30 years, Frizzell has received multiple local and state awards recognizing her advocacy efforts including the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities Community Building

Award and the New Jersey Family Support Hall of Fame Diana Cuthbertson Award. Her blog - A Mother's Mission - is available on her website at www.GailFrizzell.com.

Virginia Lofft BA '02, MAPS '04



ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

Virginia Lofft's novel, *The Shipbuilder's Daughter*, which began as a master's project at TESU, is now in print and available from Amazon.com and B&N.com. Described as a voyage into the past that is very 21st century, the historical novel is about an independent woman set during the 17th century Dutch Golden Age.



Damian Oravez

BSBA '15

Damian Oravez earned his Master of Information Security degree at Champlain College in 2018. He was recently named manager of Information Security for the Philadelphia International Airport.



Alex C. Riley BA '11

Alex C. Riley has joined McAfee & Taft's litigation group. Riley graduated *summa cum laude* from Southern Illinois University School of Law, where he served as chief articles editor of the Southern Illinois University Law Journal. Before joining McAfee & Taft, Riley was an

attorney with a Springfield, Mo.-based litigation firm.



Dorian Vicente

MSN '14

Dorian Vicente was installed as president of New Jersey State School Nurses in May and will serve a two-year term.

ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

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

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

Alumni Facebook Group: www.tesu.edu/FacebookGroup

Student and Alumni LinkedIn Group: www.tesu.edu/LinkedInGroup

Alumnifire: tesu.alumnifire.com

Keep us posted!

Submit your news online at:
www.tesu.edu/classnotes

Updates can also be sent to:

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The Thomas Edison State University Foundation is pleased to share our 2018 Donor Impact Report. We are grateful for the many donors that boldly support our students in meaningful ways.



View the 2018 Donor Impact Report at:
tesufoundation.org/impact