

# SIGNALS

THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE

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## A Healthy Partnership

**RNS ARE RECOGNIZING THE WAYS THAT HIGHER EDUCATION COULD ALTER THE FACE AND FUTURE OF THEIR PROFESSION**



Gary Fassler, RN, BSN '08, is a realist.

Long hours and physical demands are common on the labor and delivery floor where the Thomas Edison State College MSN student makes his rounds. "I obtained my bachelor of science in nursing degree at 54, and knew from the start that my active, on the floor nursing career would not go on forever," said Fassler, who is employed at Capital Health's Mercer Campus in Trenton, N.J.

A more enduring reality for Fassler and RNs like him is the impact their educational objectives will have on the shifting demographics of nursing.

Maureen Clark-Gallagher, divisional director of Clinical Education/School of Nursing for Capital Health, is watching those demographics with some concern. "The average age of a nurse is now approaching 45, and we foresee a critical shortage of qualified nurses once the current wave hits retirement," she noted.

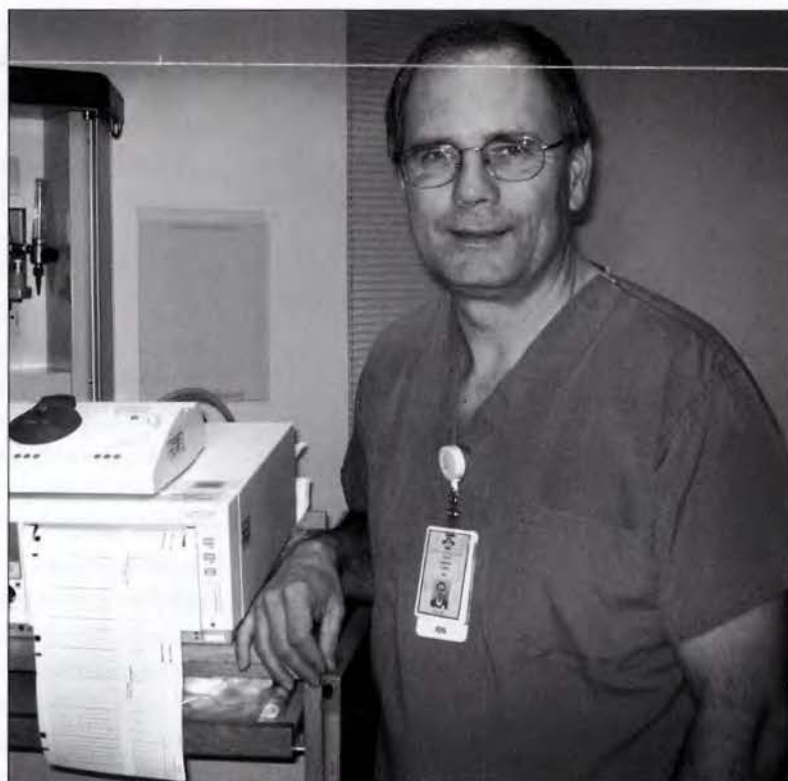
With many accredited nursing programs turning away thousands of qualified applicants due to enrollment limitations, the resulting demographic reflects a dual dilemma: a shortage of nurse manager/educators to support a population of RNs for whom bachelor-level study is becoming inaccessible.

One remedy comes in the form of a partnership Capital Health launched in 2005 with Thomas Edison State College's School of Nursing.

The collaboration maximizes the hospital's tuition assistance program for RNs and offers their registered nurse employees the opportunity to advance their education – from BSN through MSN degree and certificate completion – while taking advantage of the College's online flexibility.

"The nature of our work is highly compatible with the School of

Nursing's mission," said Clark-Gallagher. "Nursing is a 24/7 enterprise and so is the College. The hospital's Career Path program, under which the partnership falls, fits well with Capital Health's strategic plan. Professionally, BSN and MSN-bound nurses often emerge as leaders in their field, serving on our hospital committees, research councils and as healthcare advocates in their own communities."



*Garry Fassler, RN, BSN, Capital Health*

Fassler noted that his approach to caring for patients has changed since enrolling in courses. "My approach to our patients and their families is more individualized and culturally sensitive," he said. "In sharing the online course space with nurses from around the coun-

*Continued inside*



## A Healthy Partnership (continued from cover)

try and the world, I get a glimpse of how nurses across cultures and backgrounds deal with the challenges in our practice."

The online interactions fueled his eagerness to help nurses newer to the field of obstetrics, and he plans to leverage his Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree to obtain a position as a nurse educator.

Theresa Rawlings, BSN '07, also a full-time nurse in Capital Health's Newborn Nursery and a 13-year veteran at the hospital, extolled the portability of the College's program in her never-miss-a-beat lifestyle. "My family waits at the end of every busy shift and I was grateful for the flexibility in my course work and the tuition benefits."

According to Rawlings, however, the heart of the School of Nursing's attractiveness lies in its evidence-based curriculum.

"It has enhanced my ability to develop evidenced-based policies that improve patient care in my own unit," continued Rawlings, who began as a patient care aide for Capital Health in 1997 and later



Theresa Rawlings, RN, BSN, Capital Health

earned her associate of science degree through the hospital's diploma nursing program. "Ever since I was five years old, I wanted to be a nurse, and you have no idea how far away from my goal I felt at

times! Now, I am living my dream."

Currently serving as a Magnet representative in the hospital's Neonatal Newborn area, Rawlings' said that working under the Magnet Recognition Program<sup>1</sup> has afforded her many opportunities to effect

*"The curriculum provides information to our RNs that opens their eyes and extends their awareness beyond their own unit and hospital, to their entire state, country; and often, the global nursing community. These RNs are expanding their core competencies, enhancing their communication skills, embracing innovation and thinking like leaders."*

positive changes in her practice. "I have already developed an educational program on Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Scoring for the Newborn Nursery and NICU nursing staff. Capital Health has opened many doors for me, and I love my job caring for the newborn babies and their families and feel rewarded for all of the initiatives I have taken. That is why our logo, 'Minds Advancing Medicine,' fits us."

Dr. Susan M. O'Brien, dean of Thomas Edison State College's School of Nursing commented, "Capital Health should be commended for advancing the education of its nursing staff. As a dean, it is a pleasure to be associated with such forward-thinking nursing professionals."

Clark-Gallagher anticipates that Capital Health's Career Path program and the related partnership will fill expected vacancies on the clinical side and produce the next generation of nurse educators, managers and masters-prepared nurses who are cut from the same cloth as Fassler and Rawlings.

"The partnership is especially important to nurses like Gary and Theresa who – along with 172 other Capital Health nurses involved in the Thomas Edison State College program – work long hours, day and night,

while shouldering other responsibilities. The curriculum provides information to our RNs that opens their eyes and extends their awareness beyond their own unit and hospital, to their entire state, country and, often, the global nursing community.

These RNs are expanding their core competencies, enhancing their communication skills, embracing innovation and thinking like leaders."

To learn more about the College's School of Nursing programs, visit: [www.tesc.edu/nursing](http://www.tesc.edu/nursing). ■



Maureen Clark-Gallagher, divisional director of Clinical Education/School of Nursing for Capital Health

<sup>1</sup>The Magnet Recognition Program is a quality benchmark developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center to recognize a healthcare organization's excellence in nursing practice, innovation and use of successful strategies in patient care. Visit <http://nursecredentialing.org/Magnet.aspx> for more information.

## Teaching is an Art for MAEdL Student

*For student Gayle Gruber Hegerich, teaching is at the heart of everything she does.*

As a museum administrator, she once oversaw ancient artifacts and, as a photographer, she now creates visual masterpieces with her camera. However, student Gayle Gruber Hegerich's favorite artistic endeavor is sharing that gift as a teacher.

Helping children learn the importance and pleasure of being artistic is inspirational, according to Gruber Hegerich. "Art fosters the unconscious need to express oneself in a fast-paced society. Art education is imperative in order to transform America's youth into high-achieving, thinking, open-minded, creative young adults."

Gruber Hegerich teaches art at Lake Riviera Middle School in Brick, N.J., where she has been an educator for three years. She has also taught high school and elementary school students.



Gayle Gruber Hegerich and her Parents, Ronald and Diane Gruber, taken during the 2008 AENJ Award presentation.

As a teacher, Gruber Hegerich has learned a very important lesson: education is a lifelong endeavor.

"Earning my Master of Arts in Educational Leadership (MAEdL) degree from Thomas Edison State College will mean so much to me," she noted. "Not only will it help me to become an administrator, it will also help me to reach my goal of obtaining a second

master's. With this accomplished, I know I can achieve anything. I truly believe that an educator should never stop learning. Going back to school to earn this second degree has taught me so much, and helps me to continue to be a lifelong learner."

*"Students like Gayle are able to earn recognized credentials leading to career advancement in a manner that fits their busy lives and schedules."*

When she decided to pursue her second master's degree, Gruber Hegerich explained, she wanted to earn it from a reputable school that was recognized in the field of education.

"I did research and discovered Thomas Edison State College. I thought the MAEdL program was a perfect fit. Also, my partner teacher earned an undergraduate degree from Thomas Edison State College and recommended the school. I like that I can work from home and not be away from my family sitting in a classroom. It really fits with my family schedule."

Gruber Hegerich has a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in fine arts and a minor in art history from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and a Master of Arts degree with a concentration in gallery and retail art administration from State University of New York Fashion Institute of Technology (SUNY/FIT) in New York City.

In 2009, Gruber Hegerich accepted a Governor's Award in Arts Education (AENJ) and an award from VSA Arts of New Jersey an international nonprofit organization founded in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, which was created to form a society where all people with disabilities learn through participation in and the

enjoyment of the arts.

She was also a 2010 nominee for Lake Riviera Middle School's Teacher of the Year.

"We are heartened to learn of the impact our programs have on the professional and personal success of adult learners who have

chosen our programs because of the flexibility and academic rigor that they offer," said Dr. Adrian C. Zappala, assistant dean, of Educational Leadership in the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences. "Students like Gayle are able to earn recognized credentials leading to career advancement in a manner that fits their busy lives and schedules."

The MAEdL program was recently accredited by Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) for a period of five years through Dec. 11, 2014. The accreditation certifies that the College's Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program has provided evidence that the program adheres to TEAC's quality principles.

In addition to teaching, Gruber Hegerich continues to produce photographic art and owns Bliss Photography Studio. She has completed numerous commissioned pieces and is an exhibiting artist and participant in many juried shows, including shows at the Guild of Creative Art in Shrewsbury, N.J.

Gruber Hegerich lives in Holmdel, N.J., with husband Bill, who is also a teacher, and their two children, James and Brian.

For more information about Thomas Edison State College's online Educational Leadership graduate programs, please visit [www.tesc.edu/edleadership](http://www.tesc.edu/edleadership). To find out more about the program's TEAC accreditation, visit our newsroom [www.tesc.edu/news](http://www.tesc.edu/news). ■



## Mentor Profile: Jordan Goldberg

### *Jordan Goldberg is prepared to take your questions*

Through a succession of positions beginning with helpdesk support and, most recently, as a technical supervisor for a Fortune 100 chemical company, Thomas Edison State College mentor Jordan Goldberg understands the degrees of separation for students trying to grasp the fundamentals of network technology.

His professional background consists of more than 15 years of practical industry experience in computer operations – 10 of those focused on network infrastructure.

"I began my career as a network consultant for an IBM subsidiary," said the Network Technology (CMP-354) mentor in the College's School of Applied Science and Technology. "Later, I transitioned into server administration and evolved into network engineering. Eventually I became a technical project leader and, most recently, the supervisor of Core IT Services. My supervision encompasses data center operations, Microsoft Windows midrange servers as well as the telecommunications design and support for 35 buildings and multiple business units for my current employer."

As a Thomas Edison State College mentor, Goldberg assists students in understanding the fundamental concepts of designing and implementing network environments – in scales both large and small.

He also empathizes with adult learners.

"I remember working full time – and sometimes, two jobs at a time – while earning my degree. I understand the sacrifices that every student makes in order to achieve this milestone," noted Goldberg.

The students enrolled in the Network Technology course represent different levels of technical exposure. Some have been working in the field for years and possess several professional certifications; others are hobbyists who provide technical support to a circle of family and friends.

Goldberg finds eager learners on all of those levels.

"It is what makes the online dialogue so interesting. Students respond to the topics in the course from various perspectives. I keep an eye on the introductions students post at the beginning of every term to determine how best to tailor my instructional methods to their needs."

Goldberg earned his bachelor's degree in information systems with a minor in business administration and, subsequently, a master's degree in information systems with a certificate in competitive intelligence from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pa.

He has served as an adjunct professor at various colleges and universities specializing in areas of information technology, hardware, software, network operating systems and telecommunications.

Though Goldberg now embraces online instruction, originally, he thought he could only be comfortable with face-to-face learning.

"I thought that I would never instruct online, and then I eventually progressed to a hybrid format where classes met the first and last week of the semester with interim weeks spent online. Eventually, I was teaching online 100 percent of the time. It does take some time to get adjusted to the online model, and the interaction is different than a physical classroom format; however, I can say now that I strongly believe the online format provides some solid advantages and is the future in education. Thomas Edison State College is an established leader in this format and has a structured approach and defined parameters for mentors in order to maintain a quality education for its students."

Goldberg believes that the inherent interaction of online courses succeeds in ways that other formats may not.

"I believe the key for success with online learning is time management," he noted. "I recommend to my students that they visit their course space often in order to stay on top of the discussions and assignments. I also urge those who have not taken an online course to not be intimidated. They will probably find that it is more conducive to learning to interact with other students in an online medium. You are not only learning the subject, but developing stronger written and communication skills that are vital in industry today."

When Goldberg is not overseeing his employer's network services and computer operations teams or reviewing students' assignment submissions, he has been improving his own digital photography skills. What remains of his time is spent attending Broadway shows or working on home improvement projects. He also is the proud owner of two Teacup Yorkshire Terriers named Ashley and Emmy.

To view all program offerings at the School of Applied Science and Technology, visit [www.tesc.edu/758.php](http://www.tesc.edu/758.php). ■



Jordan Goldberg, mentor, Network Technology course, School of Applied Science and Technology

## Student Profile: Linda Gerristead

### *Testing, Testing, One, Two...*

#### LINDA GERRISTEAD IS COMPLETING HER BACHELOR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS – HER WAY

What stands out in Linda Gerristead's mind as her academic goals shift from dream to reality is how much faster the second half of her bachelor's degree is progressing compared to the first.

"What initially brought me to Thomas Edison State College were the ads I heard on the radio while I was commuting. They were a persistent reminder that my college degree was within reach," noted the 2008 Associate in Arts degree recipient. "I began taking courses in 1972 and transferred to the College in October 2006."

The walk across the stage of the Trenton War Memorial to receive her associate degree bolstered her resolve.

"I can't tell you how much participating in the Commencement Ceremony meant to me. Once I got a taste of that walk, I felt I had to take it to the next level. Also, the chance to meet fellow students that I had previously only known online was wonderful."

challenging, but earning a passing grade gave her the incentive to keep going.

"These forms of assessment work especially well for people who are self-learners. The model really works for me because sitting in a classroom at this point of my life would be tedious, and I find that I am past written assignments. I simply want to learn the material my way."

Gerristead, now a BA degree in natural sciences/mathematics student, is completing her program requirements at a brisk pace. As she prepares for her finals – now occurring at the rate of one every four weeks – she is happily watching her Academic Evaluation's "Credits to be Completed" section plummet to the single digits. More frequently, her tools of choice are



Linda Gerristead, a BA degree in natural sciences/mathematics student

course work might feel most comfortable in an online course because of the interaction and support available. She found Guided Study to be a better choice for self-starters who were amenable to written assignments and require minimal interaction during the term. "It depends on what type of learner you are and the depth you are looking for in a particular course. I took Introduction to Children's Literature (LIT-221) via a 12-week Guided Study course and enjoyed it immensely. I apply what I learned in that course practically every day."

Her sites are now set on becoming a middle school science teacher.

"I am a substitute teacher in my hometown where many of the school administrators already know me from my days as an active parent of three growing children. It is very enjoyable to me to share my real world experience with middle school students, many of whom have an interest in my area of expertise," noted Gerristead, who brings more than 30 years of clinical lab experience – the last 10 as an independent consultant for the cosmetics industry – to the table.

Gerristead resides in High Bridge, N.J., with her husband, Bill, who she said has been enormously supportive throughout her academic journey. They have two sons currently living at home and a daughter who lives and works near Trenton, N.J.

Visit [www.tesc.edu/671.php](http://www.tesc.edu/671.php) to learn more ways you can earn undergraduate credit. ■

## TECEP® DANTES CLEP

*These forms of assessment work especially well for people who are self-learners. The model really works for me because sitting in a classroom at this point of my life would be tedious, and I find that I am past written assignments. I simply want to learn the material my way.*

In the beginning, Gerristead was ambivalent about the College's TECEP® exams, but decided to attempt a Psychology of Women (PSY-270) course anyway. "As a mature woman, I immediately felt that I had an affinity for the content," recalled Gerristead, who noted that the final exam was

TECEP®, DANTES, CLEP and Excelsior exams that gauge her aptitude in areas in which she is already familiar.

After also taking Guided Study and online courses, Gerristead feels that students who need reassurance while they complete their



# SIGNALS

THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE

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## Academic Calendar

### June 2010 Term

### July 2010 Term

### August 2010 Term

Registration Dates

April 17 - May, 9, 2010

May 15 - June 6, 2010

June 12 - July 11, 2010

Late Registration

May 10 - May 14, 2010

June 7 - June 11, 2010

July 12 - July 16, 2010

Course Transfer Period

April 17 - May 31, 2010

May 15 - June 30, 2010

June 12 - July 31, 2010

**Term Start Date**

June 1, 2010

July 1, 2010 \*

Aug. 1, 2010

Midterm Exam Week \*\*

July 12 - 18, 2010

Aug. 16 - 21, 2010

Sept. 13 - Sept. 18, 2010

Final Exam Week

Aug. 16 - 21, 2010

Sept. 20 - 25, 2010

Oct. 18 - 23, 2010

**Term Ends**

Aug. 21, 2010

Sept. 25, 2010 \*

Oct. 23, 2010

\* Dates apply to both graduate *and* undergraduate courses.

\*\* Select courses have a midterm examination. Refer to your course materials for details.