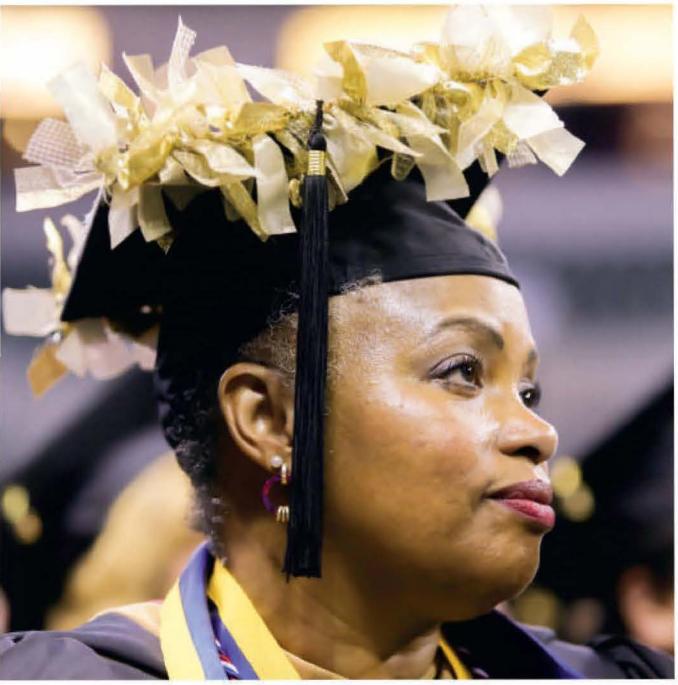
COMMENCEMENT EDITION

FALL 2019

Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY



invention

WHAT'S INSIDE

FALL 2019

THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY

tesu.edu

2

4

8

10

21

1 > Message from the President

ALUMNI PROFILES

2 > Anna Mohlenhoff, BSN '19

4 > Marcelo Dossantos, BA '10, MSM '14, MSHRM '16, MSHS '19

6 > Abdelkareem ElShareif, BA '19

8 > Gina Pierson, BSAST '16, MSIT '19

16 > Apryl Roach, BSBA '14, MSHRM '15, MBA '19

COMMENCEMENT

10 > Commencement

UNIVERSITY NEWS

18 > TESU Offers 3+1 Bachelor's Degrees to N.J. Community College Students

> The Pattern of Perfection Continues

19 > Watson Institute Hosts N.J. Economic Development Roundtable

> University to Offer New Doctoral Program

FOUNDATION NEWS

20 > Nuclear Regulatory Commission Awards Scholarship Grant

> Thomas Edison State University Receives $100K Signature Grant from The Provident Bank Foundation

21 > Meet Alumni Ambassador - Paul Singh, BSBA '15, MALS '19

ALUMNI

Inside Back Cover

Invention is published quarterly and is produced by the Office of Communications at Thomas Edison State University.

Merodie A. Hancock, PhD
PRESIDENT

Victoria Monaghan
MANAGING EDITOR

Erin Grugan
Kelly Saccomanno
Linda Soltis
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Christopher Miller
ART DIRECTOR

Correction: The Summer 2019 *Invention* magazine misidentified John E. Harmon Sr., founder, CEO and president of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, as John Kelly in a photo caption on Page 16.

Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,

Welcome to our first-ever issue of *Invention* magazine devoted entirely to Commencement. Each fall, hundreds of our graduating students join us here in Trenton, N.J., for a Commencement ceremony. This day is special to our graduates and to all of us who work here in so many ways. The joy that fills the arena, the sense of accomplishment and the excitement for a new and better future reminds me why we work so hard on behalf of our students and why education matters in each and every life.

We've chosen to profile a graduate of each of our five Academic Schools, to give you a sample of the lives we've changed and the paths our graduates have followed on the way to their success.

You will meet Anna Mohlenhoff, who graduated from the Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program in the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing. Mohlenhoff immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine, and not only acclimated, but thrived. By the time she enrolled in the Accelerated BSN program, she was raising two young boys and teaching Russian language and literature. The results of her degree were immediate. She was recently accepted into a coveted RN internship program at a highly regarded medical center.

Marcelo Dossantos was serving in the Army National Guard when he began looking for a way to distinguish himself from his colleagues. He turned to education for that solution. Now, Dossantos works as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) Plans officer at the Homeland Security Center for Excellence located in Lawrenceville, N.J., where he is putting his most recent academic achievement, his Master of Science in Homeland Security degree from the John S. Watson School of Public Service, into practice and making our world a safer place for all.

Abdelkareem ElShareif has put his life back on track after a period of homelessness. With his new BA degree in Computer Science from the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, ElShareif plans to transition from being an EMT into his dream job as a software engineer. He noted, "After all of my struggles, this sweet success feels abnormally surreal, but it's now my time to shine brighter than I ever did before."

Much of Gina Pierson's time in her new position at Atlantic Health System in Morristown, N.J., is spent performing engineering work on the company's information security infrastructure platforms while monitoring for suspicious activity. On a typical day, she leverages what she learned in her Master of Science in Information Technology program in the School of Applied Science and Technology to ensure her company fulfills its mission while keeping its IT infrastructure safe and sound.

And finally, there is Apryl Roach, who I know particularly well since she served as the student representative for the TESU Board of Trustees this past year. Roach took advantage of the School of Business and Management's Bachelor's to Master's Program, earning her MBA this year.

For every success story told on these pages, there are hundreds more. These students will take their stories, their knowledge and their new sense of accomplishment into the workforce to make each and every industry they touch a better place. I hope you are as inspired as I am by their journeys.

Merodie A. Hancock, PhD
President

CLOSE TO HOME

Anna Mohlenhoff, BSN '19

Anna Mohlenhoff's life is defined by an extensive journey that led her to an accelerated nursing program. That program would inextricably link her to her new country and community.

Anna Mohlenhoff, a 2019 graduate of the University's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) Program, vividly recalls being evacuated from her Kiev, Ukraine, elementary school three days after the Chernobyl disaster had occurred a mere 60 miles away. Two years later, she lost her brother to Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was 23.

"My greatest inspiration has always been my older brother who served as an army soldier and a military nurse for the former Soviet Union," Mohlenhoff said. "He was diagnosed with cancer and passed away two years after his return from deployment in 1986."

In 2001, a 4,700-mile journey ensued for Mohlenhoff who immigrated to the U.S. from the Ukraine, steadfastly determined to acclimate to her new country. She not only acclimated, she thrived. Starting a family of her own in 2004, she later enrolled at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and graduated in 2012 with her bachelor's degree in biological science. By the time she enrolled in W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing's Accelerated BSN program in 2018, she was already raising two young boys and had 12 years of teaching Russian language and literature to parochial school students under her belt. The results of her degree were immediate.

She was recently accepted into a coveted RN internship program at a highly regarded medical center.

"I knew that I would eventually reignite my passion for healthcare," said the April 2019 graduate of the program. "I was fortunate to find a nursing program that only required a 1-year commitment and was close to my home in Plainsboro, N.J."

The Accelerated BSN program is a 12-month, full-time program designed for adult learners who have already earned a non-nursing bachelor's degree and who are now interested in becoming registered nurses. The program enrolls two cohorts of nursing students per year in April and October and prepares graduates for the National Council Licensure Exam for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). Students divide their time between classes, onground clinical experiences and online course work.

Anna Mohlenhoff, RN

In spite of the sudden academic deep dive and compressed timeframe, Mohlenhoff, a recipient of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Scholarship, said the program immediately prepared her for the rigors of the profession while solidifying her personal commitment to the community.

"I chose the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing because of its location and its relationship with area hospitals, home healthcare services and community organizations in and around Trenton, N.J. From a public health standpoint, I learned the needs of those living in the community and immediately was able to help structure their nursing care, post-treatment and preventative care plans," she said.

According to Mohlenhoff, the hybrid structure and pace exposes students to a valuable cycle of patient simulations, lectures and clinical practice experiences. "The balance of my time was spent reviewing lecture notes, composing papers, researching for assignments and interacting on our online discussion board. The structure gave me the ability to manage academics around my kids' schedules. In spite of the density, I still had the opportunity to spend a few hours each day with my children and did my online work while they were at school or sleeping. The program is known for its quality and focus on research- and evidence-based findings to direct clinical practice, which is a huge advantage for nurses entering the profession."

Mohlenhoff and her two sons, Anton and Andrew.

> "THE STRUCTURE (OF THE COURSE WORK) GAVE ME THE ABILITY TO MANAGE ACADEMICS AROUND MY KIDS' SCHEDULES. IN SPITE OF THE DENSITY, I STILL HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND A FEW HOURS EACH DAY WITH MY CHILDREN AND DID MY ONLINE WORK WHILE THEY WERE AT SCHOOL OR SLEEPING."
>
> Anna Mohlenhoff

After completing her studies, she noted that she felt prepared to take the NCLEX-RN exam and confidently practice nursing care in either a clinical or homecare setting. "Without question it was rigorous, but with the support and reassurance of the nurse educators in the program, it became feasible for me to finish," she said.

The program's track record for NCLEX-RN pass rates likely played a role in her success. Mohlenhoff was a member of the fifth Accelerated BSN cohort to earn a 100 percent pass rate on the exam since the program's launch in 2011.

As a result of her passion and commitment to the profession and the guidance of the program's nurse educators, she's landed a position close to home. "I will begin a 3-month RN residency program shortly at Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center, in New Jersey," she said. "I'll be cycling through different units, learning and applying my knowledge as I go. Because we were trained in different aspects of the nursing profession as students, my options are open."

She anticipates that her fluency in the Ukrainian and Russian languages and familiarity with the culture will also be a bonus. "My clinical progression confirmed the importance for healthcare providers to understand and address multicultural differences in our patients during all phases of their assessment, treatment and recovery," Mohlenhoff said.

Her efforts have already rubbed off on her oldest son, Andrew, who has apparently inherited his mother's passion for helping others. "My endless hours of studying and listening to audio or video lectures as I slowly emerged into my profession motivated my son to become a lifeguard at our local community pool. Now it is two of us who are saving lives."

To learn more about the Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program, visit *www.tesu.edu/bsna*.

OPENING

Marcelo Dossantos, BA '10, MSM '14, MSHRM '16, MSHS '19

Studying from remote areas of the world, a Homeland Security degree leads to new assignments.

Marcelo Dossantos didn't speak a word of English when he sat down in an American classroom for the first time at the age of 9. Life at that time was about assimilating and blending in.

As an immigrant from Brazil, Dossantos overcame the language and cultural barriers he encountered to integrate into his new surroundings – he blended in.

As an adult, however, Dossantos found himself wanting to stand out.

He was serving as a second lieutenant in the Army National Guard when he began looking for a way to distinguish himself from his colleagues who all received the same training and wore the same uniform as he did. He turned to education for that solution.

"Training in the military is very centralized and standardized. The way to set yourself apart from your peers is to continue to grow as a leader and present yourself as a steward of the profession," Dossantos explained. "In order for me to succeed, I was going to have to go above and beyond the minimum required military education benchmarks and stand out to be considered for key assignments."

While working for the New Jersey Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command, he learned about Thomas Edison State University from his supervisor, who had recently received his Master of Science in Management degree from the University.

"My boss stressed the importance of education not only for self-development, but also as a tool for professional development. I was looking to accomplish both of those things, so I did a bit of research on the TESU website," Dossantos recalled. "I realized the online learning model would be the perfect means to accomplish my educational and professional goals. It opened the door for the opportunity for me to distinguish myself."

Since then, he has earned several degrees from TESU, most recently earning his Master of Science in Homeland Security in 2019. He also was inducted into the Sword and Shield National Honor Society, which is dedicated to the disciplines of homeland security, intelligence, emergency management and protective security.

> "MY DEGREES HAVE ALSO GIVEN ME THE CREDIBILITY AND MARKETABILITY FOR POSITIONS OF GREATER RESPONSIBILITY."
>
> Marcelo Dossantos

Through the distance learning model at TESU, Dossantos was able to accomplish all of this without missing a moment of his career, though it wasn't always easy.

"The University provides the means for people like me to complete their education without detracting from their profession," Dossantos said. "There is no 'close of business' time in the military. In my situation, my career is demanding and requires countless hours of training, traveling, planning and even deployments. I specifically remember being in Afghanistan writing a discussion forum reply for a class and being interrupted by an alarm, indicating that rockets were being fired into our base camp."

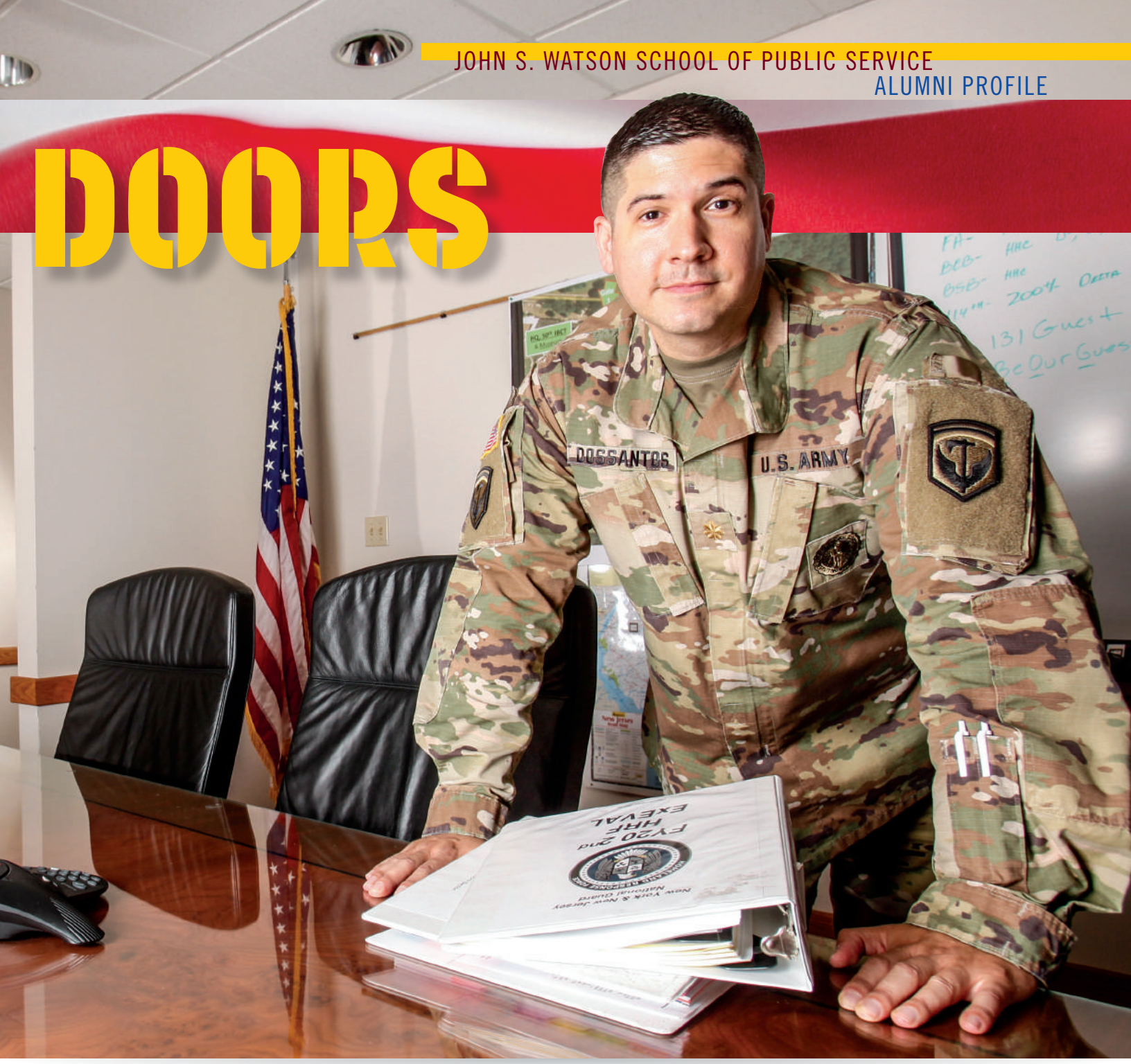
That discussion forum post was one of many as he worked toward completing his three graduate degrees. Despite the hardships, Dossantos says he hopes his story of working on his education from remote areas of the world inspires others to accomplish their educational goals, because he has seen the rewards firsthand.

"Studying at TESU opened doors to new assignments and diversified my knowledge base throughout the years. My degrees have directly affected and improved my performance as a major in the New Jersey Army National Guard. My degrees have also given me the credibility and marketability for positions of greater responsibility," Dossantos explained. "I lead by example and, in order to be an effective leader, I have to walk the walk and talk the talk. Having quantifiable experience and a devotion to lifelong learning does just that."

Now, Dossantos works as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) Plans officer at the Homeland Security Center for Excellence located in Lawrenceville, N.J., where he is putting his most recent academic achievement, his MS in Homeland Security, into practice.

"This degree is special because it directly aligns with my profession. Homeland security and homeland defense are functions I am not only interested in, but also work toward advancing every day that I put on my uniform. Homeland

DOORS



Marcelo Dossantos

security is a dynamic field that requires advanced problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to be successful. This degree coupled academics with my professional knowledge and, because of this, I was able to grow and be more effective in both aspects," Dossantos said.

He plans to continue studying and earn his doctorate in the near future. He hopes his story encourages other veterans, military and civilian adult learners to reach their educational goals, no matter their circumstances.

There are two people in particular that Dossantos wants to inspire: his daughters, 5-year-old Lia, and Sydney, who was born in July. He says almost all of his spare time is dedicated to raising them with his wife, Lacy, at their home in South Bound Brook, N.J.

"I want to teach them that hard work and drive will take them anywhere they want to go. My education has helped me set the bar high and provided me with the tools necessary for success. I want to be a good example for them," he said. "I hope to instill in them that discipline, hard work and self-improvement doesn't stop after you graduate. Lifelong learning is a continuous process that can open up infinite possibilities."

For more information about the John S. Watson School of Public Services, visit *tesu.edu/watson*.

BACK FROM THE BRINK

Abdelkareem ElShareif, BA '19

Abdelkareem ElShareif plans to transition from being an EMT into his dream job as a software engineer.

Abdelkareem ElShareif knows the depths of despair all too well. Five years ago, homeless and living in his car without a single dollar to his name, finishing his college education took a back seat to survival. But he never really gave up on that dream.

"There was a point in time in my life when I genuinely believed that I'd be unable to complete my college degree; I was homeless, jobless and had also taken a hiatus from school due to life circumstances," ElShareif explained. "I'll never forget the hot tears that raced down my face every time I wondered if I truly had a future; I felt defeated by life's obstacles. It was during this bleak time that I met my amazing wife and, with her loving support, I was able to collect myself once more. I had successfully secured two full-time jobs, saved up as much money as possible to secure an apartment, and got married."

With his life back on track, ElShareif was able to reflect on his past and evaluate his future.

"I remember constantly thinking about my future and how it would turn out," he recalled. "I also remember the many trying and humbling moments of homelessness. It is those small, yet defining moments that provide never-before-seen perspectives of your own life and circumstances. One of the most vivid moments I can recall is when I was contemplating my return to college. I was a student at Rutgers University for a few semesters before having to leave. I remember wondering if I'd even be able to have an opportunity to pursue an education again. It was at that moment, I felt like all the doors that lead to opportunity were slammed shut and sealed. I was overcome with an overwhelming sensation of claustrophobia, and I had genuinely believed that my life would barely amount to anything. Before that moment, I didn't realize how much education truly meant to me."

ElShareif decided to re-embark on his educational journey when he discovered Thomas Edison State University and the institution's flexible online course schedules. After 14 months of taking back-to-back courses while working multiple jobs, he successfully obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Computer Science.

"I'm looking forward to beginning my dream career of software engineering in the coming months," he enthused. "After all of my struggles, the closeness to this sweet success feels surreal, but it's now my time to shine brighter than I ever have before."

> **"AFTER ALL MY STRUGGLES...THIS SWEET SUCCESS FEELS SURREAL, BUT IT'S NOW MY TIME TO SHINE BRIGHTER THAN I EVER HAVE BEFORE"**
>
> Abdelkareem ElShareif

ElShareif, who is currently a supervisor and dispatcher with Care Plus Medical Services, explained that he has an emergency medical technician (EMT) certification that he utilized to secure jobs. Proud that he has worked his way up the career ladder over the last seven years, gaining experience at various companies, including his current position of overseeing a group of 18-24 staff members, ElShareif is confident that he will soon find his dream job in the technology field.

"I am very proud that I've been given the opportunity to progress this far in my current career. It makes me proud every day that I provide a valuable service to our patients as well as to our contracted facilities.

I decided to pursue a BA degree in Computer Science because I've always loved technology. I'm constantly reading technology articles and doing one thing or another on a computer. I particularly remember my first computer science class where I programmed a "Hello World!" alert in Java for the first time. That was one of the most exciting educational experiences of my life, and I still continue to enjoy coding today."

ElShareif explained that many of the current job postings for software engineer, and its variations, list a bachelor's degree as a requirement, preferably in computer science. He is confident that since he has no formal work experience in the field, his TESU degree will give him an entrée in the profession.

"The most valuable lesson that my computer science courses taught me is that it isn't about knowing the answer to a problem. It's about knowing the pros and cons of each way to solve a problem, and which method would be best applicable. In essence, the degree taught me how to approach problem solving in many different ways that would aide me in gaining the necessary skills to achieve my dream job."

ElShareif lives in Passaic, N.J., with his wife, Dunia Ali. In his spare time, he builds projects for his programming portfolio, explaining, "I'll use that to showcase my programming skills to future employers."

Crediting his wife for helping him to turn his life around, ElShareif noted, "There were times when I felt like the weight I was carrying would crush me. Those times, my wife has provided emotional support and encouragement when there was no one else there for me. My wife believed in me even when I was homeless, jobless and penniless. I can never thank her enough for her patience, loyalty, strong-willed belief, perseverance and commitment. I have worked hard before, and I will continue to work as hard as I can for us and our future together. I refuse to let her or myself down."

For more information about the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, visit *tesu.edu/heavin*.

THREAT HUNTER

Gina Pierson, BSAST '16, MSIT '19

ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

For Gina Pierson, the connected world has its benefits and its burdens.

As an information security engineer tasked with maintaining the integrity of her employer's IT assets, Gina Pierson is ever watchful for suspicious activity occurring in the environment she oversees. "One of my challenges is to be able to analyze and discern malicious activity from legitimate activity or an innocent system misconfiguration," said Pierson, a 2016 Bachelor of Science in Applied Science and Technology (BSAST) degree in Technical Studies and a 2019 Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) degree in Information Assurance program graduate.

Much of Pierson's time in her new position at Atlantic Health System in Morristown, N.J., is spent performing engineering work on the company's information security infrastructure platforms while monitoring for suspicious activity. On a typical day, this may include responding to client requests and helping her company's business partners maintain their objectives in a way that does not expose the organization's IT infrastructure to risk.

Her relationship with Thomas Edison State University (TESU) began when she was a civilian employee with the U.S. Army. "A representative from TESU came on site one day to speak to us about the school's academic programs and its alternative pathways for adult learners," she recalled.

The exchange resonated with Pierson who was already proving her aptitude as an information systems security administrator after being placed in an upward mobility workforce program by her employer. She later formalized her cybersecurity training by earning her ISC2 Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) certification. "Though I'm not a military veteran, there were some military strategies that I became acquainted with such as 'Observe, Orient, Decide and Act (OODA)' that are used for threat hunting tactics in cybersecurity today.

While she was advancing in her field and accruing professional credentials, Pierson was still trying to find a way back to higher education. "There were not a lot of 4-year colleges in my area that offered that level of convenience along with a reputable computer science program," she said. "TESU gave me the opportunity to pursue my BSAST degree at my convenience while continuing to work full time."

In spite of her focused career progression, Pierson's academic path was not a linear one. "My bachelor's degree took me a long time to complete while I overcame obstacles in the course of my own life," she noted. "When I began the program in the mid-90s there were no options to pursue a cybersecurity degree at the baccalaureate level. However, the benefit of my technical studies emphasis was that it was applicable to many of my professional projects."

> "THERE WERE NOT A LOT OF 4-YEAR COLLEGES IN MY AREA THAT OFFERED THAT LEVEL OF CONVENIENCE ALONG WITH A REPUTABLE COMPUTER SCIENCE PROGRAM . TESU GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE MY BSAST DEGREE AT MY CONVENIENCE WHILE CONTINUING TO WORK FULL TIME."
>
> Gina Pierson

As she progressed to and through the University's MSIT program, she found that it tapped into her growing knowledgebase and leadership acumen.

"It helped me to validate my skills and bring them together into a professional credential. I was also able to delve deeper into research about current cybersecurity threats that I might not have been exposed to in my day-to-day work. My courses also gave me a 'situational awareness' about what to look out for and threats to pursue."

Pierson will agree that even a full-time commitment may not be adequate when you're circumventing cybersecurity threats. "Most threat actors don't follow a Monday through Friday 9 to 5 schedule and neither do most IT professionals. Our priority is to protect our organizations' information assets. The concern always centers on whether the controls we have implemented are adequate; and, if someone were to breach those controls, what level of risk does it impose on the organization and how quickly can we detect the activity and eradicate the threat?"

"We admire Gina Pierson's accomplishments," said Dr. John O. Aje, dean of the School of Applied Science and Technology. "She sets an example among cybersecurity and information security professionals who thrive by leveraging their technical prowess, work experience and certifications to excel in our programs and propel their careers. We're doubly gratified that our workforce-responsive master's program positions Gina in a rewarding field with an expected job growth that will exceed 27 percent through the year 2026."

Off the clock, Pierson enjoys volunteering in her community, most notably with First Night Morris County, a self-funded nonprofit charitable organization that seeks to foster the public's appreciation of visual and performing arts. She also remains connected to TESU as an alumni ambassador, most recently volunteering during an Admissions Open House.

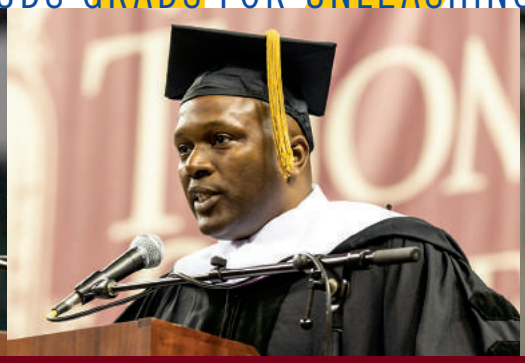
"I believe in giving back to the institutions and communities that have enriched my life and helped me succeed. Another reason I remain connected is, I am a strong believer in the mission of the University, which is to provide an affordable education for adult learners wherever and however they want to achieve it."

For more information on the programs available through TESU's School of Applied Science and Technology, visit *tesu.edu/ast*. Visit the University's blog page: *blog.tesu.edu*, to read Pierson's May 2019 blog that focuses on what it's like to be a cybersecurity professional.

University Celebrates 47th Commencement

TESU President Applauds Grads for Unleashing Their Full Potential

Dr. Kemi Alli



Brig. Gen. Jemal J. Beale

Dr. Marilyn R. Pearson

Thomas Edison State University celebrated its 47th annual Commencement at the CURE Insurance Arena on Saturday, Sept. 28, where more than 440 graduates from 28 states as well as graduates from Germany and Pakistan traveled to Trenton, N.J., to participate in the ceremony.

Officiating her first Commencement as the newly appointed provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, Dr. Cynthia G. Baum opened the proceedings by welcoming the new graduates and their guests, and introduced Board of Trustees Chair Kemi Alli, MD, who introduced the Trustees, the Foundation Board of Directors and other distinguished members of the platform party.

Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president of the University, who presided over the ceremony, greeted the graduates by explaining the purpose of a state university, noting that it was founded to represent the broad interests of the public, and specifically New Jersey, in carrying out its mission. Then she told the Class of 2019, "but the heart of who we are, and who you now embody as our newest graduates, is found in our namesake, Thomas Edison, who is widely known as America's greatest inventor. However, he actually did not make his mark so much in truly inventing things as in his dogged determination to bring inventions to their full market potential. Whether you have earned your undergraduate, master's or doctoral degree for your professional or personal goals, or both – you, like Thomas Edison, are unleashing your full potential.

"During your journey, you were provided with academic learning opportunities that addressed the economic and community development needs of New Jersey, our country and our world," she added. "Thomas Edison once said, 'I have not failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.' In true Thomas Edison spirit, you continued to develop, showcase who you are and, in the end, found the 10,001st way to make it work. As a result, you have mastered the requisite knowledge to have your degree conferred at today's Commencement ceremony."

Colleen Geib, of Jersey City, N.J., a Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduate who earned her degree through the University's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program, gave the On Behalf of Graduates address. Geib,

Tracye Coleman, BSBA '14

Dr. Merodie A. Hancock

a third-generation U.S. Army veteran who also served in the Peace Corps, is a registered nurse working in the Emergency Department at Jersey City Medical Center.

"Success is measured differently for each person," Geib told her fellow graduates. "What may be a small accomplishment for one person can be a huge milestone for another. Someone once told me 'treat all your accomplishments the same, no matter how small they may seem.' We all tend to compare our successes to those of our friends, but remember, the goals you set for yourself can only be achieved through your own hard work and perseverance. Be proud of what you do. As Colin Powell once said – 'There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.' "

Geib ended with a quote from Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu, commonly known as Mother Teresa, which stresses the importance of living each day to the fullest.

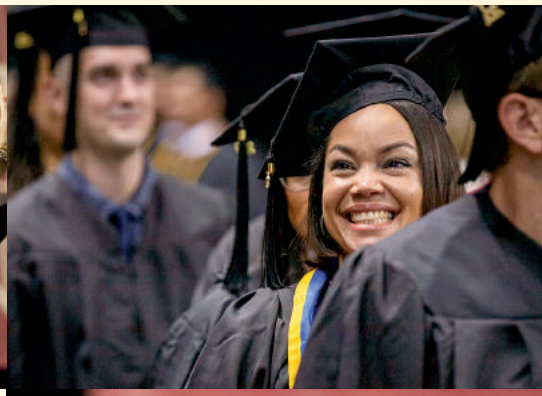
"Mother Teresa, my most inspiring leader, said, 'Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin,' " Geib challenged.

The University awarded an honorary degree to Dr. Marilyn R. Pearson, an enthusiastic advocate for Thomas Edison State University, who has given generously of her time in various leadership roles for 24 years. She served as Board of Trustee chair from

2007 to 2009 and as a member of the Public Affairs Committee, Finance Committee and the Nominations and Governance Committee for many years. She also served on the Thomas Edison State University Foundation Board of Directors.

"As I stood here 30 years ago, I was in such awe as children, and grown children, cheered for their parents: the adult learner, the cornerstone of our University. And as they crossed the stage, the thoughts that came to my mind were determination, endurance, persistence, tenacity, sacrifice, leaders and game changers. Those folks who said, 'I can and I will,'" Pearson told the graduates.

Brig. Gen. Jemal J. Beale, who was sworn in as The Adjutant General of New Jersey in April 2018, was also recognized with an honorary degree. Beale commands more than 8,400 soldiers and airmen of the New Jersey National Guard. He directs, controls and manages the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in the



execution of federal and state missions. In addition, he manages all state veterans' programs, commissions and facilities in New Jersey.

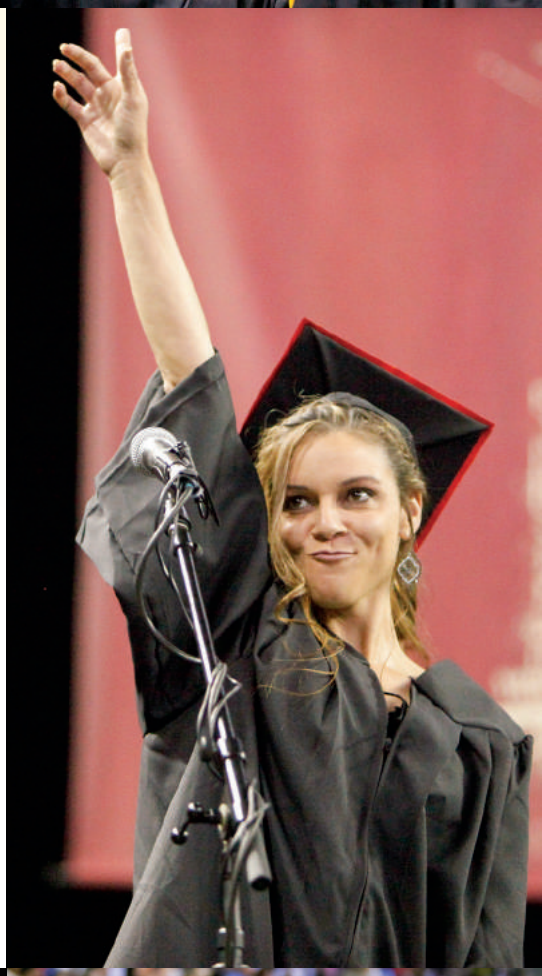
"Did you know, the 2019 graduating class, you are all very special, you are actually super heroes," Beale told the assembled graduates. "When I go out and speak to graduating classes, I normally, spiritually, try to imply that this is the beginning of your life. But this group is more of a Revelations Chapter than a Genesis Chapter. For those of you who don't know, Revelations is the last Book of the Bible, Genesis is the first."

Beale charged the graduates with a mission, saying, "I want to challenge you as you more forward to add leadership to all the things you learned here at Thomas Edison. Go out, lead from the front, do what you need to do, and be a winner."

A combat veteran of Afghanistan, Beale's previous assignments include director, Plans, Operations, Training & Safety; director, Logistics; commander, Recruiting & Retention Battalion; and commander, Border Police Mentor Team (OEF). Beale began his military career in 1987 as an enlisted soldier and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1990 after completing the Early Commissioning Program at Seton Hall University. He has served throughout the continental United States, Afghanistan, Albania, Germany and Italy.

More than 5,830 graduates and guests attended the ceremony. The University has awarded approximately 64,296 degrees to more than 58,392 graduates since it began providing distinctive undergraduate and graduate education for self-directed adults through flexible, high-quality collegiate learning and assessment opportunities in 1972. The Class of 2019 included 2,373 graduates.

To watch the 47th annual Commencement ceremony video, visit *www.tesu.edu/commencement*.



Colleen Geib, BSN '19 Response to the Graduates

Colleen Geib, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduate who earned her degree through Thomas Edison State University's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program, gave the On behalf of the Graduates address at the Universities 47th annual Commencement ceremony.

Geib, a third generation U.S. Army veteran who also served in the Peace Corps, noted that her career goal is to work as a nurse in a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital. "When I considered becoming a nurse, the opportunities to express compassion through action, care for patients with chronic diseases and honor veterans of our armed forces felt to me like a calling."

Understanding the military culture, having an ability to listen and respond without judgment and having respect for military service, are attributes that Geib believes will render her as an essential participant in improving care for those who have put themselves in harm's way.

"I would like to help improve the health of veterans by pursuing a doctoral-level nursing program that's committed to advancing veterans' healthcare," she explained. "I am interested in nursing research, which is at the heart of developing new evidence-based treatments, and interventions for the invisible wounds of war, such as post-traumatic stress disorder as well as the more visible injuries and conditions of battle. In the clinical arena, as a nurse, I plan to emphasize communication, one-on-one contact with patients and a sincere dedication to treating the whole person."

Recently, Geib was offered the rare opportunity to participate in the new 12-month nurse residency program at Jersey City Medical Center's (an RWJ Barnabas Health facility) emergency department.

"I was hand-picked by the hospital's director of Nursing Education to participate in the program – I'm overjoyed," Geib enthused. "There will only be 10 newly graduated nurses from various schools participating, and I am proud to represent TESU. I feel as though this once in a lifetime opportunity will help me build a strong foundation while strengthening my clinical and leadership skills – qualities all needed to work with our vets someday."

Geib, who lives in Jersey City, N.J., is the recipient of the 2018 Bristol–Myers Squibb Scholarship and the 2019 Dr. Christine M. Rosner Clinical Excellence Award. Noting that she has always been passionate about healthy living, education and caring for others, she spends her spare time planning, organizing and leading age-appropriate nutrition and fitness classes for children and parents of Jackson Road Elementary School in Columbia, Md., and volunteering at Running Brook Elementary School in Columbia approximately four to six times each school year for various fundraisers and school events.

"My daily tenets are to always treat people with dignity and respect, and always do the right thing," she concluded.

Graduates...
By the Numbers

2,373
Degrees & Certificates Awarded

1,082 Females | **1,291** Males

Graduates from every county in N.J.

35.5 AVERAGE AGE OF GRADS

OLDEST GRAD **79**

Apryl Roach was originally advised that she was unprepared for college curriculum. Three decades and two master's degrees later, she turned that uncertainty into triumph.

BREAKING THE BARRIER

ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

Apryl Roach, BSBA '14, MSHRM '15, MBA '19

For Apryl Roach, vindication is a dish best eaten cold. After years of being thwarted by a lack of confidence and competing responsibilities, she earned her third Thomas Edison State University degree this year, a Master in Business Administration (MBA). This accomplishment follows a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree and a Graduate Certificate in Human Resources Management in 2014, and a Master of Science in Human Resources Management (MSHRM) degree in 2015, all from TESU's School of Business and Management.

"My academic journey began in the late 90s when the economy took an unfavorable turn and my position was eliminated due to downsizing. Even though I had already spent 20 years in the workforce, without the completion of a degree, I couldn't even apply for the job openings I wanted," Roach recalls.

Knowing that a degree would improve her odds, she began taking courses at Middlesex County Community College and would later be inducted as a member of its Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society while completing her Associate of Science in Business Administration (ASBA) with academic honors.

As a single parent, her focus remained on raising her daughter and trying to build a career. As academic pursuits became increasingly disrupted by school sports, PTA meetings and her volunteer commitments, Roach said she found herself at a critical juncture. "Once my daughter enrolled in college, I said 'I need to finish this, I have no excuse now.' " The race was on. She transferred her associate degree credits to TESU and doubled up on courses each term in order to complete her BSBA.

The impact of earning that degree was immediate.

"My bachelor's degree was conferred on a Friday in late December 2013 and, literally, the following Monday, I was invited to interview for a potential position. I was offered a position in management where I am today. If it wasn't for my degree, that glass ceiling would have still existed for me," said Roach, who has served as an administrative manager and acting director of a New Jersey municipal authority.

Her Master of Science in Human Resources Management degree was given a healthy head start by her enrollment in TESU's Bachelor's to Master's Program. Through the program, she was able to earn 12 credits that she applied to both her bachelor's and master's degree at the undergraduate tuition rate. Roach said the exposure also helped familiarize her with the rigors of graduate-level study. "Although my current position did not require a master's degree, I did not want to find myself confronted with an employment opportunity that I could not pursue because I didn't possess the right credentials. The beauty in being a lifelong learner at Thomas Edison State University is that the classroom was wherever I was, and I was blessed by being surrounded by educators that were very supportive."

With her momentum now fueled by a bachelor's degree and her induction in the Sigma Beta Delta International Honor Society, both she and her daughter, Danielle, registered for graduate-level courses at TESU during the same timeframe. Roach then continued her studies to complete the MBA program while serving as the student representative on TESU's Board of Trustees. The convergence resulted in a memorable moment for both mother and daughter. In 2018, while on the Commencement dais with her fellow trustees, she had the opportunity to assist in the formal acknowledgment of her daughter's MSHRM degree.

"It's been an amazing, validating experience as a student, graduate and board member. My perspective has always been valued, and I've had the opportunity to share President Dr. Merodie A. Hancock's vision for the University along with the positive changes and opportunities that continue to unfold. It's gratifying to play a part in that legacy." This year, Roach attended her third TESU Commencement to receive her MBA with honors.

In addition to her full-time position, Roach is already putting her master's degrees to use as an adjunct professor for Rider University and The College of New Jersey where she is introducing students to the fundamentals of human resource management.

"For anyone who thinks they can't possibly do the same, I'm here to tell you, 'yes you can!' I thank TESU for surrounding me with professors, academic advisers and executive leadership that were committed to me as a lifelong learner. I now counsel others that it's never too late to make a difference in your life," Roach said.

Outside of her work life and academics, the New Jersey native enjoys gardening, cooking, participating in marathons for charity and traveling. In her community, she serves as vice president/president elect with HRMA Princeton, an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). She also serves as a board member of the New Jersey Lighthouse Society, going on missions with her church to serve and help build homes in developing countries. She has served for more than 21 years as a volunteer emergency medical technician (EMT) and member for the Board of Trustees for the Plainsboro (N.J.) Rescue Squad.

> "THE BEAUTY IN BEING A LIFELONG LEARNER AT THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY IS THAT THE CLASSROOM WAS WHEREVER I WAS, AND I WAS BLESSED BY BEING SURROUNDED BY EDUCATORS THAT WERE VERY SUPPORTIVE."
>
> Apryl Roach

For more information about the School of Business and Management, visit *tesu.edu/business*.

TESU Offers 3+1 Bachelor's Degrees to N.J. Community College Students

STUDENTS CAN COMPLETE THREE YEARS AT A NEW JERSEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND FINISH AT TESU

New Jersey community college students can now transfer up to 90 community college credits and then complete the remaining 30 credits required for graduation at Thomas Edison State University through a newly established TESU/NJ 3+1 Pathways Program.

The University has created three degree pathways leading to baccalaureate degrees for recent, current and future graduates of New Jersey community colleges. The move aligns with goals of the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to create more 3+1 programs as well as more college-educated New Jersey residents.

"We are excited to partner with New Jersey's community colleges in building affordable and timely degree completion options for students throughout New Jersey," said Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, Thomas Edison president.

Through this innovative program, students can remain at their community college for an additional 30 credits beyond the associate degree and pay for those credits at the community college rate. Thus, this new program promotes associate and baccalaureate degree completion while driving the New Jersey State Office of Higher Education goal of 65 percent degree attainment by 2025, with the added benefit of keeping students in New Jersey. This program is a three-way win for the students, the institutions and the state.

"We estimate that the average New Jersey community college student can now earn a baccalaureate degree for less than $24,000 through this program," explained Hancock. The 90 credit transfer allowance through this 3+1 program represents a 10-credit increase over TESU's traditional policy of accepting up to 80 community college credits from regionally accredited institutions.

"We are proud to partner with Thomas Edison on this new initiative creating a pathway for more students to earn their undergraduate degrees," said Brookdale President Dr. David Stout. "Our mission at Brookdale is to provide access to high-quality and affordable educational pathways. These three degree options at Thomas Edison fit that model and enable students to gain the necessary credentials to start or change careers without incurring significant debt."

Students will be able to choose among three TESU degree programs: the Bachelor of Arts degree with an area of study in Liberal Studies; the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree with an area of study in General Management; and the Bachelor of Science degree with an area of study in Technical Studies.

While TESU prides itself on recognizing college-level learning however and wherever it occurs in all of the University's programs, these three specific programs were chosen for the TESU/NJ 3+1 Pathways Program because they offer the most flexibility in transfer and breadth of academic focus.

To learn more, go to *www.tesu.edu/3plus1*.

The Pattern of Perfection Continues

ACCELERATED NURSING COHORT GARNERS 100 PERCENT PASS RATE ON LICENSING EXAM - AGAIN

Students graduating from Thomas Edison State University's most recent Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program are proudly maintaining the pattern of a 100 percent pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). The 2019 outcome marks the fifth graduating cohort to achieve the distinction since the program's launch in 2011.

"We are immensely proud of the graduates from the program," said Dr. Ana Maria Catanzaro, associate dean of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing. "The pass rate is a testament to the caliber of the program and our students' dedication. We also applaud the School's staff and undergraduate nurse educators who continue to be committed to their success."

The Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program is an intense, 12-month program designed for those who already possess a non-nursing bachelor's degree and are interested in becoming a registered nurse. It features online and campus-based courses and simulation lab experiences provided by Thomas Edison State University. Clinical experiences take place in community-based agencies and at Capital Health facilities in Mercer County, N.J.

Pass rate information is reported to the University by the New Jersey Board of Nursing and provided by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and reflects the results of all first-time NCLEX-RN test takers from the University who took the exam.

> **"THE PASS RATE IS A TESTAMENT TO THE CALIBER OF THE PROGRAM AND OUR STUDENTS' DEDICATION. WE ALSO APPLAUD THE SCHOOL'S STAFF AND UNDERGRADUATE NURSE EDUCATORS WHO CONTINUE TO BE COMMITTED TO THEIR SUCCESS."**
>
> Dr. Ana Maria Catanzaro

University To Offer New Doctoral Program

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA) CLASSES WILL START IN JANUARY

The University will launch its second doctoral program, a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) with courses that begin in January.

The program, with specializations in General Management, Organizational Leadership or Human Resource Management, can be completed with 48-credits, including an end-of-course Scholar-Practitioner Field Project final degree submission. All requirements can be met online. The doctoral program will be the second for the University, which currently also offers a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) with a specialization in Systems-Level Leadership.

The DBA degree is designed to enable business students and professionals to advance their careers toward becoming executive leaders, educators and consultants.

"This degree is at the core of what we do here at Thomas Edison," said President Merodie A. Hancock, PhD. "Professionals pursuing the DBA will be able to infuse their learning immediately into workplace situations: applying knowledge and leadership, and understanding the outcomes in real time. This applied scholarship and experiential learning are a powerful combination that will benefit today's working professionals who seek to advance their careers and become leaders in their fields."

Dr. Michael Williams, dean of the School of Business and Management, notes that the 21st century global market offers unprecedented career opportunities. But as the workplace evolves, the need for highly educated executives skilled in leadership is paramount.

"Professionals earning the DBA degree will be prepared to fill or create their next occupational role," Williams said. "The intentionality, discipline and capabilities necessary to earn the DBA are powerful professional differentiators enabling a competitive advantage."

Sometimes referred to as an "applied doctorate" or a "professional doctorate," the DBA degree can be completed part time and is appropriate for practicing professionals in a variety of occupations, especially industry, higher education administration and consulting.

"With the launch of the DBA, our qualified students can now seamlessly transition from baccalaureate- and graduate-level study to a doctoral degree," said Williams.

Dr. Michael Williams, Dean of the School of Business and Management

A generous grant from the Thomas Edison State University Foundation helped support the cost of developing low or no-cost course materials for the DBA to minimize what will need to be purchased by students in this program.

The University plans to admit up to 20 applicants in its initial cohort in order to remain focused on intensive, doctoral-level education and assure that students meet the program's rigorous requirements. Classes for the first cohort are scheduled to begin in January 2020.

Watson Institute Hosts N.J. Economic Development Roundtable

ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATE TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE'S URBAN CENTERS

The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy hosted the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) at George A. Pruitt Hall to discuss the NJEDA's new incentives and programs, and how it can assist cities and stimulate economic development in New Jersey's urban centers.

The Watson Institute provides ongoing support for the NJUMA on a wide range of issues and offers critical insights and essential analysis of policies, issues and opportunities facing New Jersey's cities and urban municipalities.

Pictured from left to right are Barbara George Johnson, executive director, The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy of Thomas Edison State University; The Honorable Albert Kelly, mayor, City of Bridgeton, and president of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association; and The Honorable Frank Gilliam, mayor, City of Atlantic City.

Thomas Edison State University Receives $100K Signature Grant from The Provident Bank Foundation

The Provident Bank Foundation (PBF) presented the University with a $100,000 Signature Grant for 2019 in the Education funding priority area.

TESU was selected to receive this Signature Grant for its distance-learning curriculum built on community engaged service learning and best practices. A first of its kind, the program promotes experiential learning for TESU's nontraditional and distance-learning adult students to support New Jersey nonprofit organizations in the form of 12-week Capstone projects.

Dr. Carlos Hernandez, chair of The Provident Bank Foundation Board and president emeritus of New Jersey City University (in foreground) joins Jane Kurek, executive director, The Provident Bank Foundation Board (on upper left) to present the Signature Grant check to Dr. Merodie A. Hancock, president, and John Thurber, vice president for Public Affairs at Thomas Edison State University.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Awards Scholarship Grant

A university degree has become far more feasible for students enrolled in the School of Applied Science and Technology programs as a result of more than $341,000 in scholarship support from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

The NRC announced in late July that it awarded the funding to the University to benefit qualifying students enrolled in nuclear science, radiation safety and related engineering and technology programs.

"We are immensely grateful that our institution has once again been selected for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Scholarship funding," said Dr. John O. Aje, dean of the School of Applied Science and Technology at the University. "Our programs have always been a good fit for industry employees who often already possess military training and professional licenses and certifications. Our ongoing collaboration with the NRC and this latest phase of scholarship funding will help us to continue to provide affordable degree completion options and access to quality academic programs for our students."

According to the NRC, funding under the scholarship program includes support for education in nuclear science and engineering with an objective to develop a workforce capable of supporting the design, construction, operation and regulation of nuclear facilities and the safe handling of nuclear materials.

> "OUR PROGRAMS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD FIT FOR INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES WHO OFTEN ALREADY POSSESS MILITARY TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS."
>
> Dr. John O. Aje

The NRC Scholarship was established in 2014, and since that time, the University has partnered with the commission to create degree templates aligned with the Nuclear Uniform Curriculum Program (NUCP), an industry-led partnership that is designed to prepare students to enter the nuclear power workforce. As part of this effort, the University has developed articulation agreements with community colleges throughout the country that are participating in the program.

Dr. Richard Coe, assistant dean in the School of Applied Science and Technology at TESU, said the support will help ensure that the University's nuclear energy-related programs continue to prepare its graduates to succeed and lead.

"This level of scholarship support is particularly important because most of our students have family commitments and are either working full time to transition into the nuclear energy field or are already working in the field for the U.S. military, commercial nuclear facilities or with national laboratories. The industry continues to work closely with higher education institutions, such as ours, to develop talent and a curriculum that will prepare the emerging workforce to develop, deliver and maintain safe, reliable energy sources for the future," said Coe.

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

THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI

MEET ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

Paul Singh, BSBA '15, MALS '19

ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

Paul Singh traveled a long way from his family home in Punjab, India, to earn a college degree in the U.S.

Paul Singh credits his family for making sacrifices that enabled him and his brother to make that goal a reality.

As a first-generation college student, he completed his bachelor's and master's degrees at Thomas Edison State University within three years. Singh is proud of his efforts to be able to provide for his family and fulfill the obligation he felt toward his parents and in achieving his own dream.

INSPIRED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, SINGH LOOKS TO LEAVE BEHIND A LEGACY OF HELPING OTHERS.

Before pursuing his studies, Singh worked in banking, retail, warehousing, accounting and even as a chauffeur before finally settling into his passion for higher education. Singh previously attended Middlesex County College (MCC) where he later worked in admissions. While there, he successfully encouraged colleagues to consider TESU for their own educational needs.

More recently, he assisted in reinforcing the educational partnership between MCC and TESU.

Inspired to make a difference, Singh looks to leave behind a legacy of helping others, giving back and not forgetting his roots. Knowing how education changed his life, he advocates for TESU and connects the institution with those that are seeking a change in their life. His support not only helps fellow graduates and students following in his footsteps, it also allows Singh to live out his passion of helping as many people as possible. Singh encourages his fellow alumni to support the institution by joining him as a volunteer in the Alumni Ambassador program.

Singh and his wife, Parneet, are the proud parents of son, Viraj, who was born this spring. A fitness guru, he also loves to travel as much as possible. The impact of completing his Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree this spring was immediate with a promotion from admissions counselor to assistant director of Admissions at Rowan University.

Be an Alumni Ambassador!

Support TESU by participating in the Alumni Ambassador program. Volunteers refer friends and family, share TESU news on social media, mentor prospective students and identify potential corporate partners.
For more information, visit *tesu.edu/ambassador*.

Keep Us Posted!

To connect with the Office of Alumni Affairs and fellow TESU alumni, join the conversation on social media:
Alumni Facebook Group: *tesu.edu/FacebookGroup*
Student and Alumni LinkedIn Group: *tesu.edu/LinkedInGroup*
Alumnifire: *tesu.edu/Alumnifire*

Thomas Edison State | @tesu_edu | @tesu_edu | Thomas Edison State University | blog.tesu.edu | Thomas Edison State

University Store

TESUshop.com is Thomas Edison State University's online store for TESU students, alumni, employees, mentors and TESU families. Declare your TESU pride with apparel and products bearing Thomas Edison State University's logo.

Thomas Edison State University
111 W. State St.
Trenton, NJ 08608

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
TRENTON, NJ
PERMIT #112

Scholarships Empower Our Students to **Boldly Change Lives...**

Join us on **GratiTuesday**, Nov. 26, 2019, and help as we build our scholarship program, supporting more deserving students!

Colleen Geib

BSN '19
Bristol-Myers Squibb Scholarship Recipient

Scholarships championed Colleen's calling to become a nurse - allowing her to express compassion through action and care for patients with empathy.

Anna Mohlenhoff

BSN '19
Bristol-Myers Squibb Scholarship Recipient

Scholarship support gave Anna the second chance she needed to achieve her lifelong commitment to medicine and healthcare.

Apryl Roach

BSSA '14, MSHRM '15, MBA '19
The Edith M. Stapperfenne Memorial Scholarship Recipient

When Apryl received news that her position at work was being eliminated due to budget cuts, she thought she would have to put her education on hold, but a scholarship from TESU helped her seamlessly continue her degree as planned.