



Staff Newsletter of Thomas Edison State College • December 2011

## College Scores High Marks on Survey

*Ninety-Four Percent of Current Students Surveyed Say They Would Chose Thomas Edison State College Again*

Thomas Edison State College partnered with Stamats, Inc. recently to conduct a comprehensive market research study. The results were impressive, with the College getting an unusually "huge" response rate and high marks in nearly every category.

At the November Lunch and Learn, hosted by **Marie R. Power-Barnes**, associate vice president for Marketing at Thomas Edison State College, and Dr. Brenda Harms, associate vice president at Stamats, Inc., the findings were presented.

"As part of our overall marketing strategy, the College conducts extensive research approximately every five years, which includes applicants, enrolled students, competitors and geodemographic analysis," said Power-Barnes. "These benchmark studies, coupled with smaller studies conducted on a more frequent basis, help to inform the College of trends and changes in our marketplace and identify the needs

and preferences of our applicants and enrolled students. The results of the research assist units throughout the College in serving our prospective and enrolled students with relevant academic programs, services and informed marketing strategies and tactics."

Conducted in spring 2011, the survey focused on providing the College with quantitative data to understand enrolled student motivations in continuing their education; identifying current perceptions of the service received at the College; and determining the importance students place on selected college-choice factors and how they perceive the College on these factors. Distributed to more than 13,000 enrolled students, the response rate of 16.5 percent was more than double the typical response rate of 5 to 8 percent, according to Harms. A total of 2206 enrolled students completed the survey, including 1413 undergraduate students, 233 graduate students and 560 military students.

Some key findings were that while most respondents are currently completing a bachelor's degree, more than half aspire to achieve a master's degree or higher; they most often describe the College in terms of its course format (flexible, online, convenient) and price (affordable, reasonable tuition); and chose Thomas Edison State College over competitors because of its online curriculum, distance learning format, acceptance of credits (transfer, prior learning, exams), tuition and the flexible schedul-



ing. Students gave "very good" ratings to academic quality, and 75 percent said they would recommend the College to others. According to Harms, there was very positive feedback from students with nearly half giving the College the highest rating.

Respondents were enthusiastic about possible enhancements including accelerated course options (six- to eight-week time frame), and semester-based tuition plan and flexible payment options. The option that lacked widespread enthusiasm was to offer more blended or hybrid courses that combine online and face-to-face experiences, reinforcing that they were interested in more online course options. Respondents' main motivations to pursue an education now were to advance careers, maintain job security and to increase their value in the workplace. The bottom line is that students are very goal oriented in the reasons for their continued education and expect pay offs after the degree is completed.

*"Our students clearly value the quality education they receive at Thomas Edison State College."*

~ Marie R. Power-Barnes  
Associate Vice President  
Office of Marketing

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## Focus On: Marc Singer

The mantra, "Thomas Edison State College awards credit for college-level knowledge," is basic enough. But ask any staff member who actually plays a role in the assessment of learning outside of academia, and they will confirm that some things are more easily said than done.

**Marc Singer** can attest to the weight of the enterprise. "We experience different cycles of busy and busier," noted the vice provost in the Collegiate Credit Assessment Center (CCAC), which encompasses the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program, the Office of Testing, the venerable National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning and the recently launched Center for Academic Program Reviews.

"We work with the deans on an ongoing basis to ensure that our offerings are mapped to their Schools' learning outcomes and the Center for Directed Independent Adult Learning on projects, test design and, most recently, on a new portfolio development course. We also collaborate with the Office of Military and Veteran Education and Learner Services staff in making sure students have the information and access they need and plan the annual National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning event with the Office of Communications. The College's advisors and evaluators do their part in keeping us supplied with referrals for organizations whose training programs may garner college-level credit equivalencies."

Singer, who was been with the College since September 2010, and his staff are continuously devising ways to improve the PLA process for adult learners. "In the coming year, we'll be rolling out a revamped PLA model," he explained. "Under the new model, students will enroll in a portfolio development course, and, depending on what they identify as prior college-level learning, they'll proceed onto one of two tracks that will streamline

the entire process. We'll also be integrating TECEP® exams into PLA completion." Singer also announced that **Dr. Regina Riccioni**, a former assistant dean and director of the Douglass Project for Rutgers Women in Math, Science and Engineering at the New Brunswick campus, has been appointed director of the new Center for Academic Program Reviews. Under Riccioni's direction, the Center will focus on creating degree pathways for working adults by forming partnerships with organizations interested in having their training and educational programs evaluated for credit equivalency.

Through the College, Singer sees a vital opportunity for adults to acquire the credentials they need to move up in their lives. "It's not just the credential that matters," said Singer, "it is the skill set that those credentials represent. We encourage people to be life-long learners, and that's meaningful to me. It took me 11 years to get my bachelor's degree so I have some personal experience with this and I like being able to help others achieve what they want for themselves."

Prior to coming to the College, Singer worked for The College Board in their CLEP program area and in general education initiatives across testing programs. Prior to that, he worked at Educational Testing Service (ETS) as one of the leads on the Advanced Placement U.S. History and Human Geography exams. Preceding ETS, Singer taught history and humanities courses at colleges in New Jersey and North Carolina and worked on public history projects for museums and television.

Singer earned his BA from Oberlin College; an MA in American Studies from the University of Alabama; and is a doctoral candidate in American Civilization at NYU. He resides in Princeton, N.J., with his fiancée, Jane. The couple has four sons, a dog and a chameleon.



Marc Singer, Vice Provost  
Collegiate Credit  
Assessment Center

## Images from the State of the College Address



Dr. George A. Pruitt with Rose Breining, who was recognized for 35 years of service.



Dr. George A. Pruitt with the 30-year service awardees (from left) Betty Williams, William J. Seaton, Nia Abuwi and Denise Weber.



Dr. George A. Pruitt is presented with a flag from the College's deployed military students by staff members (from left) Charlene Martucci, Diane Stratton, Kathleen Griffin and Jennifer Stark.

## Current Student Survey

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"Thomas Edison State College also received good marks on its reputation and for providing high quality education; overall, students are satisfied with Thomas Edison State College on many levels," Harms said.

Power-Barnes noted, "Our students clearly value the education they receive at Thomas Edison State College. We were delighted that 94 percent said that based on their experiences to date, they would attend Thomas Edison State College again. That number is extremely significant, and speaks volumes to our students' support and satisfaction with their experience here at the College."

## Call for Papers!

The National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning 2012: *Tradition and Innovation in a Competitive Environment*, is now accepting papers to be presented at the event. For further information, please contact **Marc Singer** at ext. 3230 or via e-mail at [msinger@tesc.edu](mailto:msinger@tesc.edu).

## Happy Birthday Marines!



A cake cutting ceremony honoring the 236th birthday of the United States Marine Corps and Veteran's Day took place in Prudence Hall on Nov. 10. The staff guest of honor was **Carla Colburn**, program advisor, Office of Learner Services, who served for three years in the U.S. Navy as a cryptologic technician maintenance petty officer (CTM3) stationed in Pensacola, Fla., and Okinawa, Japan. Colburn is pictured with ceremony hosts **Dave Anderson**, assistant vice president for Learner Services (Colonel, USMC - Ret.) and **Dr. Ray Young**, vice president for Learner Services (Lieutenant Colonel, USMC - Ret.).

## Staff Activities

**Dr. Adrian Zappala**, assistant dean, Educational Leadership, Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, attended the 2011 Kappa Delta Pi (International Honor Society in Education) Convocation on behalf of our chapter in Indianapolis, Ind., Nov. 2-6. Thomas Edison State College has an active chapter of Kappa Delta Pi for students in any of its three graduate Educational Leadership programs. While there, Zappala delivered a presentation entitled "21st Century Educational Leadership - Facing Today's Issues."



Dr. Adrian Zappala

**Robin Walton**, director of Community and Government Affairs, has been appointed to Robert Wood Johnson Health Care Corporation's Board of Directors. Term begins January 2012.



Marie R. Power-Barnes

**Marie R. Power-Barnes**, associate vice president, Office of Marketing, attended the American Marketing Association 2011 Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education in Chicago, Nov. 6-10.

**Dr. Susan Gilbert**, dean of the School of Business and Management, attended the Middle States Annual Meeting of Deans of Colleges of Business Administration in October, and participated in a panel presentation on "Online, Hybrid, or Neither" - a discussion of whether or not to enter the distance education market.

**Nina Keats**, RN, BSN, CSN, graduate program specialist, W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing, attended the 41st Biennial Convention of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing from Oct. 29-Nov. 2, 2011. Keats is the Upsilon Rho Chapter vice president, and attended as a voting delegate representing the chapter. The focus of the convention was "People and Knowledge: Connecting for Global Health."

**Dr. Mary Ellen Caro**, vice president for Enrollment Management and Learner Services, and **Sylvia G. Hamilton**, MBA, associate vice president of Enrollment Management and Strategic Partnerships, made a presentation at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers' (AACRAO) 21st Annual Strategic Enrollment Management Conference in San Diego, Calif. Their presentation was titled: "Delivering for UPS: Case Study of a Successful Corporate/College Partnership." The presentation highlighted the business challenges that led to the partnership, the linkage between job competencies and academic programs and the role of an academic institution in meeting the needs of business.

**John Thurber**, vice president for Public Affairs, was recently elected to a two-year term as vice chairman of the board of directors of the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Princeton Chamber seeks to advance the general welfare and prosperity of the Princeton Region. The College is a member of the Princeton Chamber and works closely with both the Princeton and Mercer Regional chambers to identify opportunities for partnerships and to advance the mission of the College.

**Dr. Nicky Sheats**, director, Center for the Urban Environment, The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy, attended the New Jersey Council for the Humanities Forum, "Environment, Equity & American History: Why Environmental Justice Matters," at the Trenton Marriott recently. The forum was also co-sponsored by the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance and Watson Institute.

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## Welcome New Staff



**Jessica Day** has been appointed admissions counselor in the Office of Admissions. Day is located on the 2nd floor of the Canal Banks Building and may be reached at extension 3030.



**Janelle Smith** has been appointed admissions counselor in the Office of Admissions. Smith is located on the 2nd floor of the Canal Banks Building and may be reached at extension 3057.

## Beast of the East Mud Run



Thomas Edison State College employees came together to participate in the "Beast of the East," a 10K mud run hosted by Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in early September. The College has been a proud sponsor for the past two years.

Pictured from the left: Christopher Sprague, College supporter; Jared Carter, systems coordinator, MIS; Michelle Leonard, Human Resources specialist; Danielle Taylor, College supporter; and Dave Hoftiezer, director of Admissions. Not pictured: Kim Scott, military base counselor; Terri Tallon-Hamill, executive assistant to the president; and Dana Hamill, College mentor, who also ran the course; and Kelli Parlante, associate director, Military and Veteran Education, who managed the Thomas Edison State College tent.

## Staff Activities

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### Division of Planning and Research staff members:

**Dr. Ann Marie Senior**, director, Office of Institutional Research and Outcomes Assessment, and **Robertson Bamfo Sr.**, research analyst, attended the New Jersey Association of Institutional Research (NJAIR) Steering Committee meeting at New Jersey City University in Jersey City, N.J. Senior is the outgoing member and Bamfo is the incoming NJAIR Steering Committee Member representing the Public School Sector.

**Ying Jiang**, senior research analyst, and Bamfo attended the Blackboard Analytics 2011 Annual Client Conference (formerly iStrategy) Conference in Timonium, Md. The conference provided a forum for participants to share their experience and best practices related to data-driven decision making with their peers. Senior and Jiang attended the 38th Annual Conference of the North East Association of Institutional Research (NEAIR) that was held in Boston, Mass. The theme this year was "Leading the

Charge for Institutional Renewal." Senior also attended the NEAIR Steering Committee meeting that was held at the end of the conference.

**Dr. Penelope Brouwer**, vice president for Planning and Research, and **Dr. Terri Tallon-Hamill**, executive assistant to the president, attended an interdisciplinary conference: *Jack the Ripper – Through a Wider Lens* at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Trustee Dr. Fred Abbate, who teaches at Drexel's Honor College, organized the program. Brouwer and Senior hosted a roundtable discussion regarding "Factors that drive adult learners to 'stop out' Why they leave and will they return" at the 2011 Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Annual Conference, in Chicago, Ill. Also attending the CAEL conference were **Marc Singer**, vice provost, Collegiate Credit Assessment Center; **Dr. Regina Riccioni**, director of the Center for Academic Program Reviews; **Carleen Bailly**, PLA specialist; **Peggy Allen**, program assistant, and **Antoinette Lewis**, assistant to Program Learning Assessment specialist. In addition,

**Dr. George A. Pruitt**, president, was honored during the annual awards luncheon with the Morris T. Keeton Award.

## Brightest Light!



**Charlene Martucci**, fiscal administrator, Office of Military and Veteran Education, was the November 2011 Brightest Light. Martucci was recognized for her pleasant attitude and professional dedication.



*Capital Campus* is produced by the Office of Communications at Thomas Edison State College. To submit a story idea for the newsletter or for more information, please contact Linda Soltis at extension 2065.