

APPENDIX

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

On behalf of Union County College President Margaret McMenemy, I am pleased to welcome you to Union County College.

My name is Dr. Maris Lown, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Union. Dr. McMenemy is attending a President's Council meeting and has asked me to speak on five affordability topics that are of immense importance to the amazing, hard-working students at Union County College.

The first topic is NJ STARS, the State's landmark program to provide free tuition to New Jersey's best and brightest students.

It's no secret that New Jersey ranks last in the nation in attracting its own high-school graduates to attend New Jersey colleges and universities. When the NJ STARS program was established in 2004, the scholarship to community colleges was offered to the top 20 percent of the State's high-school graduates. Subsequently, the eligibility was reduced to the top 15 percent. In Union County, that 5 percent variance is depriving an estimated 400 high school graduates each year from receiving this benefit. These students, who place academically between the 15 and 20 percent ranking, would be an ideal cohort for this program. Their high-school grades would indicate that they are good students but would not otherwise qualify for scholarships. The vast majority of these students would be grateful for the opportunity that this scholarship afforded them. Moreover, the State would retain a larger segment of the population of its home-grown students.

The second topic I believe worthy of your attention is the necessity of promoting dual-enrollment programs which enable high-school students to get a jump start on their college careers by taking credit-bearing classes at their local community colleges. The time and money that high-school students save by taking general-education classes at a community college is an investment well spent. The credits these students earn are portable and reduce the number of more costly courses that students will need to complete their baccalaureate at senior institutions. I urge the College Affordability Committee to continue to advocate the value of dual enrollment.

While dual enrollment links K-12 institutions to community colleges, a third key initiative to make college more affordable is articulation through dual admissions between community colleges and senior institutions. The Lampitt Law was landmark legislation to help ensure that students transferring between community colleges and senior institutions were able to get their money's worth. The next stage on the affordability chain would be for the Law to ensure that the transfer is seamless by sparing students in community colleges the unnecessary expense of applying to public universities to complete their degrees. By developing a system of dual admissions between the State's 19 community colleges and the State's nine public universities, students who graduate from a community college—and have achieved a respectable GPA—would benefit financially by receiving guaranteed admission to one of the senior publics. The other benefit, too, would be retention of our home-grown students through the baccalaureate degree. A program such as this would also give private universities an incentive to compete with

the public universities for these transfer students, such as by offering discounts to students who transfer via articulation agreements.

Fourth, the time has come for the State to recognize that the public would be better served if community colleges were authorized to issue baccalaureate degrees in highly specialized and costly fields of study like Nursing. Students graduating with an associate degree in Nursing achieve the same overall skillsets, through clinical studies, as those in baccalaureate programs. Further, community college Nursing students achieve a pass rate for the NCLEX examinations—the credentialing exam for Registered Nurses—that often surpasses that of Nursing students in senior institutions. The upper-level classes that students would need to complete a bachelor's are academic rather than clinical and are conducted in classrooms or online rather than in hospitals or care centers. Rather than charging premium tuition for Nursing students, community colleges could keep the costs affordable and reasonable.

The final affordability issue to bring to your attention is tuition itself. Since 2014, under President McMenemy's leadership, Union County College has ceased the deceptive practice of lopping hidden fees onto its tuition. In so doing, Union became the first college in the State to represent the cost of a college education fairly and transparently.

Tuition and fees are traditionally treated as separate entities in higher education. For example, colleges may boast of keeping its tuition flat but then increase the per-credit fees. As a result, the amount of money students have to pay for an education increases with a fee increase even if per-credit tuition is unchanged from year to year.

Through the leadership of President McMenemy and the College's Board of Trustees, Union County College adopted a policy that accurately represents the cost of an education for students. In other words, what students see advertised as the cost of per-credit tuition is the actual price they pay.

This is one of a number of initiatives that the College has implemented over the past two years in the spirit of transparency and to foster student success. Another example of how the College encourages on-time graduation and full-time attendance is what we call a "flat rate" for tuition. That is, students are not charged for taking more than 12 credits per semester—up to 18 credits. In addition, the College has stopped charging students with an automatic \$60 fee just to apply to graduate.

I close by thanking this Commission for choosing to hold this important hearing at Union County College. Thank you for protecting and serving our students.

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Hello. I would first like to take this moment to thank the New Jersey Council of County Colleges and the College Affordability Commission in choosing Union to hold this event.

My name is McDaniel Jeantus. I major in Liberal Arts, and I am also the President of The Student Government Association here at Union.

I'm honored to speak in front of the council today because I believe in its mission: transforming community colleges by strengthening high quality transfer programs – through partnerships between county colleges, and four-year institutions.

However, it continues alarms me how in one of the world's most advanced and rich nations, young people are suffering because of the lack of affordability in higher education.

I'm sure we have all come across the Huffington Post's article detailing how college tuition and fees have increased 12 fold, or 1,120%, since 1978. 1,120%.

This is why in my senior year of high school, despite graduating with a 3.6 GPA, taking 5 advanced placement courses, playing three varsity sports, doing summer programs at Princeton and Georgetown, and having a summer internship with a local nonprofit that raised funds for my town's school district, I decided and opted away from some of the big-name universities my classmates took student loans out for, to become a part of the inaugural cohort of the American Honors Program here at Union.

To play on the words "death-penalty," I'm a firm believer that pursuing equality higher education shouldn't condemn a student to a *financial death sentence*. So going along with American Honors and its partner agreements with American, Amherst, Duke, George Washington, Georgetown, Lafayette, Louisiana State, Ohio State, Rutgers, Swarthmore, Arizona, and UCLA, felt like the best decision for my family and I.

Gratefully, I know only of community colleges that are providing these types of options for passionate students, like myself. I am the son of immigrant parents and I'm not trying to impair my pursuit of knowledge and employability with a serious financial obligation.

This is why I urge the council to continue ensuring that community colleges are the cornerstone of college affordability. To do so, we need to ensure the following:

We are transparent with costs, no added fees in addition to the tuition, unless particular course merits such, such as science labs.

Also, please champion a flat rate completion. We should encourage our students who are working to transfer to a four-year institution to finish in two years or less. I believe there's no better way of encouragement than articulating to students, "Hey, after 12 credits, the next 6 are on us."

As community colleges we need to stay committed to transforming our community one student at a time. To do this, we need all County Colleges

to do away with fees, and adopt the flat rate completion to let students know they can get their associate degree in two years or less, and that their college is there to help along the way.

This is why it's just as imperative to continue building more partnerships between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities, to let students know that they're not only helped along the way, but in their future endeavors as well.

I'm asking the Council to please note my suggestions. Community colleges are truly a backbone to counties all over the nation, and especially in this state; providing a platform for everyday people to use education as a stepping-stone to better not only their lives for themselves, but their families as well. Community colleges are our nation's best hope for an affordable future in higher education.

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Caroline Hardgrove
Junior
Drew University

The importance of college had always been stressed to me as a child. Everyone around me would say, "if you want to be successful in this day and age, you need to get a college degree". Those words stuck with me, and I always planned on going to college. However, when I transitioned from a child to a young adult, the likelihood of me getting that necessary degree looked slimmer and slimmer.

I come from a large family; there is seven of us. I am the youngest five children. Money for us, like many families, was always tight. When it came time for me to start thinking about college, I could hear the panic in my parents' voices. I became panicked as well, and immediately discouraged. Junior year of high school is a time when you explore your options for your future: college visits, guidance counselor meetings, etc. I remember sitting in the cafeteria at lunch and listening to my friends talk about their "reach schools". For them, "reach schools" were schools that they wanted to go to, but didn't think they could get in because their grades weren't high enough. I was always a good student, and grades weren't my issue. To me, "reach schools" meant the school that I didn't think I could afford.

To save money and follow in the steps of my most of my older siblings, I graduated high school and enrolled in County College of Morris. A weight was lifted off my shoulder, because this was a school that I could pay for on my own. My parents were relieved, and all was good. However, after completing my Associates Degree two years later, that familiar anxiety started creeping up again. I was in the same exact place. I needed to find a University to go to and finish up my degree, but how could I possibly afford it?

I was in the honor society, Phi Theta Kappa, at CCM, and we would attend weekly meetings. One meeting, an adorably happy and kind woman walked through the door by the name of Sunita Bhargava. She said she was from Drew University, and wanted to tell us about some of the things Drew offered to transfer students. I had heard of Drew, and I knew how expensive it was. I will reluctantly admit that I tried to tune her out as best as I could. I didn't want to hear about an amazing school that was impossible for me to afford. I didn't want to be disappointed again. Toward the end of her presentation, she began talking about financial aid and scholarships that Drew offers. At this point, I listened in to see what she had to say. The first thing she told me was that Drew offered \$26,000 to PTK members who had 3.8 GPA's or higher. That was me. Then she goes on to say that Drew also offers \$5,000 just for being in the honor society. Also, me. She then talked about how much grant money Drew usually gives. I added up all these numbers in my head as fast as I could and for the first time in a long time, I thought "wow, that's a school in my price range".

I never thought that I could afford a school like Drew. But, because of all they had to offer me, I proudly call myself a "Drewin". I am currently a Junior, and a Neuroscience major and I can't picture myself anywhere else. Because of Drew, I didn't have to settle for a school based on my inability to pay. I got to pick a school that challenges me, and I can be proud to call my own.

Good morning, my name is Khemani Gibson and I graduated from Drew University in 2014 with a B.A. in Pan-African Studies, History, and Spanish. While at Drew I had the opportunity to study abroad in South Africa with a three week program organized by Drew faculty and for a full semester in the Dominican Republic. On both trips I began to engage with questions raised in my classes at Drew concerning race, identity and politics. These questions always interested me because of my own identity as a black immigrant man raised in the United States. I did not know it at the time but I would continue to think about these questions into my junior year where I began to research at the role Jamaican immigrants played in the construction of the Panama Canal. This topic would be perfected while I wrote my senior thesis and informs my current research interests in my PhD program in History at New York University.

I started off my talk to you by detailing where I went to school and what I have been able to accomplish but I am not someone simply because I have Drew University on my diploma. Drew admissions officers saw the person I was before I arrived on campus and wanted me to be a part of the Drew community. My parents emigrated from Jamaica to the United States when I was still a baby to provide a better life for my brother and myself. They raised us as a working class family in Orange, NJ an Abbott school district, a place where many outsiders look at with scorn viewing it solely in terms of stereotypical images of crime and poverty shown in the local news. It is from this soil that I grew and matured into a teenager who began to engage with his community to create positive change. I explored my early love for history by participating in an oral history project where we documented the stories of Orange residents with the University of Orange, a local non-profit committed to urbanism and civic engagement.

Drew University saw the fire that was already in me and wanted to be a part of what I was doing. At the same time, I saw what Drew had to offer such as the opportunity to study abroad, the small faculty to student ratio, and the chance to be close enough to home in the event that I ever got home sick. All of these were good but what made the deal for me was the financial aid package I received. Part of the reason I applied mainly to schools in New Jersey was because I wanted access to the grant money set aside for state residents. I had seen how people from my high school were able to benefit from the Bloustein scholarship and the NJ Stars program and eagerly awaited my turn to access those and other funds to help me attend college. I knew while applying to college that the cost of attendance was likely to continue to grow so with the help of my high school guidance counselor, teachers, and local mentors I applied to many scholarships to fund my ambitions in the event that there was an unexpected change in the state's funding that was initially set aside. At Drew I was accepted in the Educational Opportunity Scholars program funded by the EOF grant from the state, which provided the mentoring and a second family for me in the midst of the Forest. I was also a recipient of the Civic Engagement Scholarship, which enabled me to improve on my community organizing skills to the point that I am now able to be a part of the leadership of the University of Orange.

Now I understand the importance of this commission and I have seen many friends succumb to the rising cost of colleges whether they attend a public or private institution. I know how powerful a college education can be especially in this day when many jobs require a degree beyond high school yet the cost of attendance and the fear of being straddled by student loan debt turns many off and makes them believe college is only for the elite. I know my story is compelling and though I may have been able to finish college with less than \$2000 dollars in student debt, I am the exception and not the rule to the crisis that many students and families across the nation are facing in regards to attending college. I can only tell you that I was not only intellectually stimulated at Drew with its strong focus on the liberal arts but I became more aware of the power I have to create change in the world. Because of this I am committed to bridging the gap between the academy and urban communities as these two things are crucial to my identity and I feel that people from both areas can learn a lot from each other. At the same time I encourage state and university officials on all ends to consider what plans they can implement to not only encourage individuals to attend college but to see what can be done to make it accessible to everyone who truly wants it.

College Affordability Study Commission Testimony

My name is Rashidah Muhammad. I am a 23 year old junior at Bloomfield College through the Educational Opportunity Fund. My major is English: Writing and my minor is Theater. I graduated from Montclair High School in June of 2010 with a 1.7 grade point average. During my high school years, I was unmotivated and although I wanted to go to college, it was not a huge concern of mine at the time. Growing up, both of my parents always spoke to my siblings and I about the importance of getting a good education and going to college but unfortunately, since neither one of them attended college, they were unaware of the necessary steps and tools that it took to get there.

I will never forget how I became a part of the EOF family at Bloomfield College. After receiving a rejection letter from every single college that I applied to, I began to think that I just wasn't smart enough or good enough for college. One day, towards the end of my senior year, Montclair High School held a college fair in the library and my guidance counselor printed out my unofficial transcripts and recommended that I go. As I walked into the library, I noticed many of the schools that I had been rejected to there as well as Bloomfield College. As I walked past the table where the recruiter for Bloomfield College sat, he smiled and signaled me to have a seat. He looked over my transcripts and then asked me if I had heard of a program called EOF; I had not. He explained the program as well as the mission to me and I instantly felt like this was the perfect opportunity for me. I was a student with a disgustingly low 1.7 g.p.a. as well as a product of parents who would have never been able to afford for me to go to college. I filled out all of the necessary paperwork and within a week, I was called in to admissions where I was notified that I had been accepted to Bloomfield College through the Educational Opportunity Fund. This acceptance gave me hope and made me feel like my future was important and necessary.

Two days after graduating high school, I moved into the dorms at Bloomfield College, where I would begin my 6 week summer program. During these 6 weeks I was able to get acclimated to the college life. I was able to build relationships before school began with other students who were both like me as well as very different. I was able to develop a support system with not only the facilitators but also the juniors and seniors who gave up six weeks of their summer to be our counselors and ensure that we got the most out of our experience. I was taught

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the importance of time management, focusing, and putting my all into my work. I was able to take classes that built me up on the inside and made me want to succeed. I was able to go on trips that broadened my horizon in ways that I never imagined.

The trip that I remember the most, was my first ever Broadway play to see August Wilson's "Fences" starring Denzel Washington. The message that I took from Fences was that we all build up fences to protect ourselves from hurt and pain but in many of these cases we also are fencing ourselves in from growing and developing. This message and wonderful symbolism motivated me to tear down any fences that I may have had up in hopes of reaching my highest potential.

Throughout my freshman year as an EOF student at Bloomfield College, I was required to attend workshops and seminars which were designed to help us and they did just that. We were also required to meet with our counselors a certain amount of times each month to ensure that we were keeping up with our workload and responsibilities. Failure was not an option and all of us knew this!

Unfortunately, after completing my first year, I had to take a semester off of school which turned into two years once I found a job and got comfortable with the money and new found freedom. When I was finally ready to go back to school, I felt like I had no options as I did not think that EOF would accept me back into their program. One day, while speaking with a friend of mine who I met through the EOF summer program, she convinced me to get in contact with Bloomfield College to see if I would be able to return. To my surprise, I was able to return to school through the EOF program. This was the second chance that I needed.

I promised myself that when I returned, I would do whatever it took to make sure that I succeeded. I am here today to tell you that when EOF gave me a second chance to come back and further my education, I did just that. I completed that year with all A's and one B, consequently making the Dean's List for the first time ever in life. I can't thank EOF enough for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself.

Without EOF, I would not have been given a chance to have a college experience at a four year institution. I would not have received the resources and support that I needed to grow and become the best me possible. If it weren't for EOF, I would not be where I am today.

Today, while working towards my degree, I am also spending a lot of my time helping other students like myself to become the best individuals that they can be, for no one other than themselves. I have created a program called Heuristically Me which assists children and young adults who are currently in school or thinking about returning to deepen their self-discovery, positive habits, and goals in order to get the most out of their current and future school years. This program is based off the word Heuristic which means to use experience to learn and improve as well as problem solving and trial and error methods. I did just that. I used my past experiences to work on becoming the best me and my goal is to promote that to all children and young adults.

The Educational Opportunity Fund at Bloomfield College made my success possible and I know for sure that without this opportunity, I would not be able to help others in the same ways that EOF helped me.

Thank You

Rashidah Muhammad

Heuristic: Involving or serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods; using experience to learn and improve.

HEURISTICALLY ME

September 13th, 20th, & 27th, 2015



Topics to Choose From

- **Positive Habits/Rules for Self**
- **Organization Tips**
- **Confidence Booster**
- **De-stressing during school hours and beyond**
- **Power of Asking Questions & Good Note Taking**
- **Excitement, Concerns & Fears Regarding Current Academic Term**

**CONTACT ME FOR MORE INFORMATION
OR TO SCHEDULE YOUR FIRST
HEURISTICALLY ME SESSION!**

Heuristically Me is a one on one workshop created for motivational purposes to assist children and young adults who are currently enrolled in school to deepen their self-discovery, habits, and goals in order to get the most out of their current and future school years.

Each session is unique as YOU ARE IN CONTROL of the topics that are covered in your session!

"Heuristically Me was developed with my younger self in mind. During my grade school years, I lacked the self-discovery and motivational skills that I needed to reach my full potential. If I was offered a chance to have someone who cared about the success and improvement of others to assist me in mapping out my very own success plan based on my past experiences and current goals, I can assure you that I would have been so much more invested in achieving the goals that I set forth for myself."

-Inspirationalist. Load Lightener. Student.

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BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FUND PROGRAM

Maretta Hodges

Immediate Past President, EOFPANJ, Director of the EOF Program at Bloomfield College
Testimony to the College Affordability Study Commission

September 16, 2015

Greetings,

First, I would like to begin by thanking the committee for this opportunity to discuss the status of the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Grant, also known as the EOF Program. My name is Maretta Hodges and I have the honor of serving as the Immediate Past President of the EOF Professional Association of New Jersey, Director of the EOF Program at Bloomfield College, and a 15 year seasoned faculty member at my local community college.

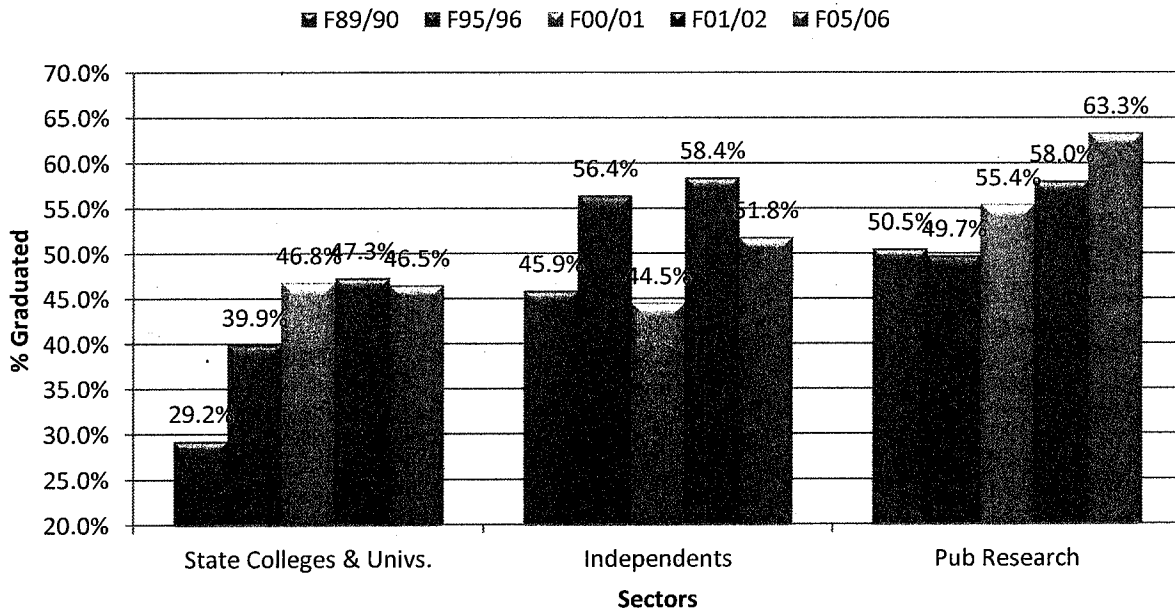
I stand before you as an accomplished college administrator who would not be here today had it not been for the assistance given to me by the Educational Opportunity Fund. Similar to others, I entered college from one of the Abbott School districts, motivated to succeed, but lacking the preparation needed to achieve college success. EOF showed how to achieve my dream of obtaining a secondary education and ultimately creating a better life for my entire family and me. I was so inspired by the messages of EOF, that I made working for this program my ultimate career goal.

As you discuss ways to keep college affordable, I urge you to expand your knowledge about EOF because this is a program that works. EOF is the state's only comprehensive program designed to provide access to New Jersey's colleges and universities for low-income, highly motivated students who exhibit the potential for success, but lack the quality educational preparation necessary to attend college. EOF proves that when given the opportunity, students from the poorest neighborhoods can succeed with the proper mentoring, tutoring and advisement.

EOF provides supplemental assistance to help cover additional costs that are not covered by the Federal Pell Grant or State's Tuition Aid Grant. Annually, nearly 13,000 students are impacted by EOF. Most EOF Students come from families whose income ranks in the bottom 25 percent in New Jersey. The median household income in 2013 was \$24,179 versus the \$70,165 of the state of NJ. Since 1968, the Fund has allowed for over 36,000 students to graduate and continues to give thousands more the hope that they too can attend a college or university in New Jersey while making their dreams reality. The true genius of EOF is that it withstands the test of time, by continuing to respond to the urgent needs facing New Jersey citizens from all walks of life.

In the next couple of years, the Higher Education Act of 1965 is expected to impose stricter policies to enforce accountability of students and colleges receiving federal aid, including the enforcement of a 55% graduation rate to supplement educational cost. As you can see, EOF has a long history of achieving and exceeding these goals by achieving as much as a 63.3% 6- year graduation rate in some institutions.

EOF 6-Yr Cohort Graduation Rates 2-year Fall Cohort Moving Averages



Additionally, I encourage your continued support of Independent institutions that provide EOF services to disadvantaged students because of our proven success rates. Since 1968, EOF Programs have assisted thousands of students as they compete at some of the most prestigious institutions in the country. Please know, without the assistance of private institutions, the Educational Opportunity Fund would be what it is today.

In closing, I say that obtaining a college education is more valuable than ever. With conditions becoming increasingly difficult for schools that serve low-income students, it is imperative that we continuously invest in highly motivated college students who will ultimately become NJ taxpayers.

Thank you,

Maretta L. Hodges