

FALL 2011

Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE

Growing Strong

COLLEGE NURSING PROGRAM HAS GROWN INTO ONE OF THE LARGEST OF ITS KIND IN THE COUNTRY

INSIDE:

- ▶ Three College Bachelor Degree Programs Named As "Best Buys" in Higher Education
- ▶ College Launches New Graduate Area of Study in School Business Administration
- ▶ Latest Noncredit Programs Now Available

On
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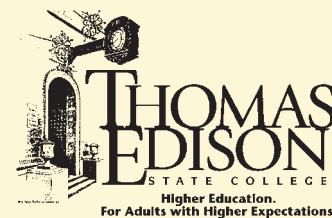
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Cover Story: 8

Soledad G. Dela Merced, MSN, RN, CCRN '11





Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,

Benjamin Franklin said, “Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.”

This issue of *Invention* is focused on the different types of growth that illustrate what Franklin is talking about.

In this issue, we take a look at the incredible growth our W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing has experienced since the College began its nursing program in 1983. We meet Soledad G. Dela Merced and learn how Thomas Edison State College enabled her to earn a Master of Science in Nursing without sacrificing her career or busy schedule.

Also in this issue, award-winning author Karen Riley '99 discusses how Thomas Edison State College helped her change direction in her life and shares how she overcame sexual abuse as a child. Riley also talks about her latest book and its role in helping victims of sexual abuse.

We also meet Fran Shatone Brooks '98 and learn about the excellent work he is doing to bring books and education to young students in San Diego. Brooks also shares how video games he created are helping kids learn about finance and the stock market.

We are honored to be New Jersey's only college dedicated exclusively to adults and to serving self-directed adults with high-quality, flexible collegiate learning opportunities wherever they live or work.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Invention*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Pruitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "P".

Dr. George A. Pruitt
President

Three College Bachelor Degree Programs Named As “Best Buys” in Higher Education

Three of Thomas Edison State College’s bachelor degree programs have recently been ranked among the top best buys in the country, according to national surveys conducted by *GetEducated.com*.

The College’s Bachelor of Arts degree in Computer Science, Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership degree were each ranked as one of the top three best buys in the country for online regionally accredited degree programs.

National surveys conducted by *GetEducated.com* examined publicly posted tuition and fee rates at dozens of regionally accredited institutions that offer online bachelor degree programs. In the areas of computer science, criminal justice and management, Thomas Edison State College ranked third in the nation in terms of quality and affordability for its bachelor’s degree programs.

“Online learning allows nontraditional students to attend America’s best universities in terms of brand reputation and affordability,” says Vicky Phillips, founder of *GetEducated.com*. “Thomas Edison State College is an undisputed best buy for students nationwide looking for a quality online school with a top consumer ranking.”

According to the surveys:

▶ The average cost of earning an online bachelor’s degree in computer science from a regionally accredited

institution is approximately \$46,758; the average cost to earn the degree at Thomas Edison State College is \$22,586 for New Jersey residents and \$33,280 for non-New Jersey residents.

▶ The average cost of earning an online bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from a regionally accredited institution is approximately \$44,799; the average cost to earn the degree at Thomas Edison State College is \$24,845 for New Jersey residents and \$36,166 for non-New Jersey residents.

▶ The average cost of earning an online bachelor’s degree in management from a regionally accredited institution is approximately \$48,709; the average cost to earn the degree at Thomas Edison State College is \$22,585 for New Jersey residents and \$33,280 for non-New Jersey residents.

The survey results indicate that the cost of earning an online bachelor’s degree in computer science, criminal justice or management is well below the national average for online undergraduate degree programs in those areas at regionally accredited schools.

Depending on several factors, including the number of credits a student transfers into a program and the type of tuition plan, the cost of earning a degree at Thomas Edison State College may be even lower.



“We are honored to again be recognized as an intelligent investment in education,” said Dr. Susan Davenport, dean of the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences. “For nearly 40 years, we’ve been providing adults with high-quality educational programs designed around their needs. Today, maintaining that focus remains at the core of our mission.”

The College has consistently been recognized as a top best buy in the country for several degree programs, including the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration; Bachelor of Science in Human Services; Bachelor of Arts degree programs in Psychology, Social Sciences, Sociology and Political Science; Master of Science in Management; and Master of Science in Human Resources Management.

To view the complete rankings, visit www.geteducated.com.

NAACP Honors Dr. George A. Pruitt with Distinguished Educator Award

Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State College, has been nominated for the 2011 Distinguished Educator Award by the New Jersey State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The award recognizes stellar leadership achievement for educators who have accepted the call to serve as advocates for equal and high-quality public education. Pruitt received the award at the NAACP's Gala Awards Banquet on Sept. 10 in Parsippany, N.J.

"I am honored to receive the NAACP's 2011 Distinguished Educator Award," said Pruitt. "It is a privilege to be recognized by this renowned organization for my work in public higher education and with the students we serve."

Pruitt serves as the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation (SEEDCO), New York; chairman of the Board of Directors of Capital City Partnership, Inc., Trenton, N.J.; and is a member of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASCU), Trenton.

Pruitt has been president of Thomas Edison State College since 1982 and is the past chairman of the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, Trenton, N.J.; a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, United States Department of Education.

He has consulted widely in business and government as well as within the higher education community and has served in an advisory capacity to four secretaries of education under three presidents of both parties.



*Dr. George Pruitt, president of
Thomas Edison State College*

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. The mission of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

Dr. Pruitt Named to National Commission on Higher Education Attainment

Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State College, has been named as a vice chair to a national Commission on Higher Education Attainment, whose goal is to develop a plan to improve retention and attainment at colleges and universities throughout the country.

"I am honored to have been selected to serve on this important commission," said Pruitt. "Higher education builds the human capital of our country. If we want to compete in the 21st century, improving access, retention and achievement must be a key priority."

The commission has been created by six presidential educational associations, which nominated the 24-member group. It includes presidents and chancellors from 18 public and private colleges and universities from across the country, including community colleges, research and land-grant institutions, state colleges and universities and independent institutions.

The commission is being chaired by E. Gordon Gee, president of The Ohio State University. The commission also has three vice chairs: Pruitt, the only president from a New Jersey institution named to the commission; Andrew K. Benton, president of Pepperdine University in California; and Gail O. Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College in New York.

Latest Noncredit Programs Now Available

The John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies has recently launched new online noncredit certificates and courses focusing on electronic health records, nonprofit management, general building codes, legal nurse consulting, elder law and healthcare law, which are each built around the unique needs of adult learners.

New Professional Certificates

ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

The Certified Electronic Health Records Specialist certificate is a 12-month program that provides students with no previous background in electronic health records with the techniques and rationales for using cutting-edge techniques in real-world situations. The program enables students to establish a foothold in the allied health field. Upon successful completion of the program, students will be prepared for an entry-level position in a medical office setting and to sit for the NHA national certification exam to become a Certified Electronic Health Record Specialist (CEHRS).

COUNTERTERRORISM INTELLIGENCE

The Counterterrorism Intelligence certificate is designed for police, government and private security practitioners who are engaged in securing our communities and private sector organizations from terrorist threats. The six-course program focuses on the nature of terrorism, the fundamentals of the terrorist threat and the intelligence process that includes the planning, collection, analysis, retention, dissemination and re-evaluation of relevant information. The program also introduces students to policy considerations, including the legal constraints on intelligence operations in a free society with a specific focus on the PATRIOT Act and the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

New Noncredit Courses

LEADERSHIP THROUGH GOVERNANCE – THE ROLE OF NONPROFIT BOARDS

This six-week course examines the nature of nonprofit boards and the value that they provide to the organizations that they lead and provides an understanding of the many roles played by various parts of the organization and

how the board fits into this structure. Students will learn about the differences between responsibilities and functions, especially as tension between the two impacts the effectiveness of the organizational management model in place. This course is relevant for individuals who are beginning their board term as well those in nonprofit management roles.

GENERAL BUILDING CODE

This eight-week course addresses the use and understanding of International Building Code with special emphasis on the New Jersey building code. The scope of the course encompasses the essential components of the building code and how they are applied to commercial construction. Students learn how to use the code book to find applicable codes and avoid construction code violations likely to be cited by building inspectors. The course content is equally applicable to building inspectors, anyone planning to take the General Contractor Licensing Exam, contractors, construction firms and home builders.

To register or to find out more about these and other noncredit programs, visit www.tesc.edu/noncredit.



Watson School Dean Named American Council on Education Fellow

Dr. Joseph Youngblood II, vice provost and dean of the John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies at Thomas Edison State College, has been selected to participate in a nationally recognized training program designed to strengthen capacity and build leadership in American higher education.

Youngblood will serve as a member of the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program for 2011-2012. Established in 1965, this unique program aims to identify and prepare promising senior faculty and administrators for responsible positions in college and university administration. Youngblood is one of the 50 Fellows nominated by the presidents or chancellors of their institutions that was selected this year in a national competition.

"I am honored to have this unique and exciting opportunity for personal and professional development while also making valuable contributions and building institutional capacity at Thomas Edison State College and my host institution, The College of New Jersey," Youngblood said.

Noted as the only national, individualized, long-term professional development program in higher education, the ACE Fellows Program condenses years of on-the-job experience and skills development into a single semester or year. Of the more than 1,700 participants in the first 46 years of the program, more than 300 have become chief executive officers while an

additional 1,100 have attained senior leadership positions.

An educator and administrator with a background in law, public policy, research and developmental psychology, Youngblood will be mentored by a team of experienced senior administrators at The College of New Jersey during the year-long program. This extended learning experience enables Fellows to observe firsthand how another institution and its senior leadership manages the institution and handles challenges and change.

"Joe's acceptance into the program reflects highly on his potential as an educational leader," said Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State College. "We nominated Joe for the program and are proud that he was selected as a Fellow. The ACE Fellows Program is the most effective, comprehensive leadership development program in American higher education today and it is an honor to have one of our senior professionals selected to participate."

The ACE Fellows Program enables participants to immerse themselves in the culture, policies and decision-making processes of another institution. Fellows also attend three retreats on higher education issues organized by ACE, research extensively in the field and engage in other activities to advance their knowledge about the challenges and opportunities confronting higher education today.

Youngblood joined Thomas Edison State College in 2003. He holds a PhD



Dr. Joseph Youngblood II, vice provost and dean of the John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies.

from the University of Pennsylvania; a JD and MA from the University of Iowa's College of Law in Iowa City, Iowa; and a BS with high honors from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Fla.

Youngblood is a member of the Board of Directors of The Foundation for Child Development in New York; St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton; the 100 Black Men of New Jersey, Inc.; and the National Bar Association. He is the author of several articles and reports and has made scholarly presentations in the United States and internationally.

College Prepares for Launch of Refreshed Website

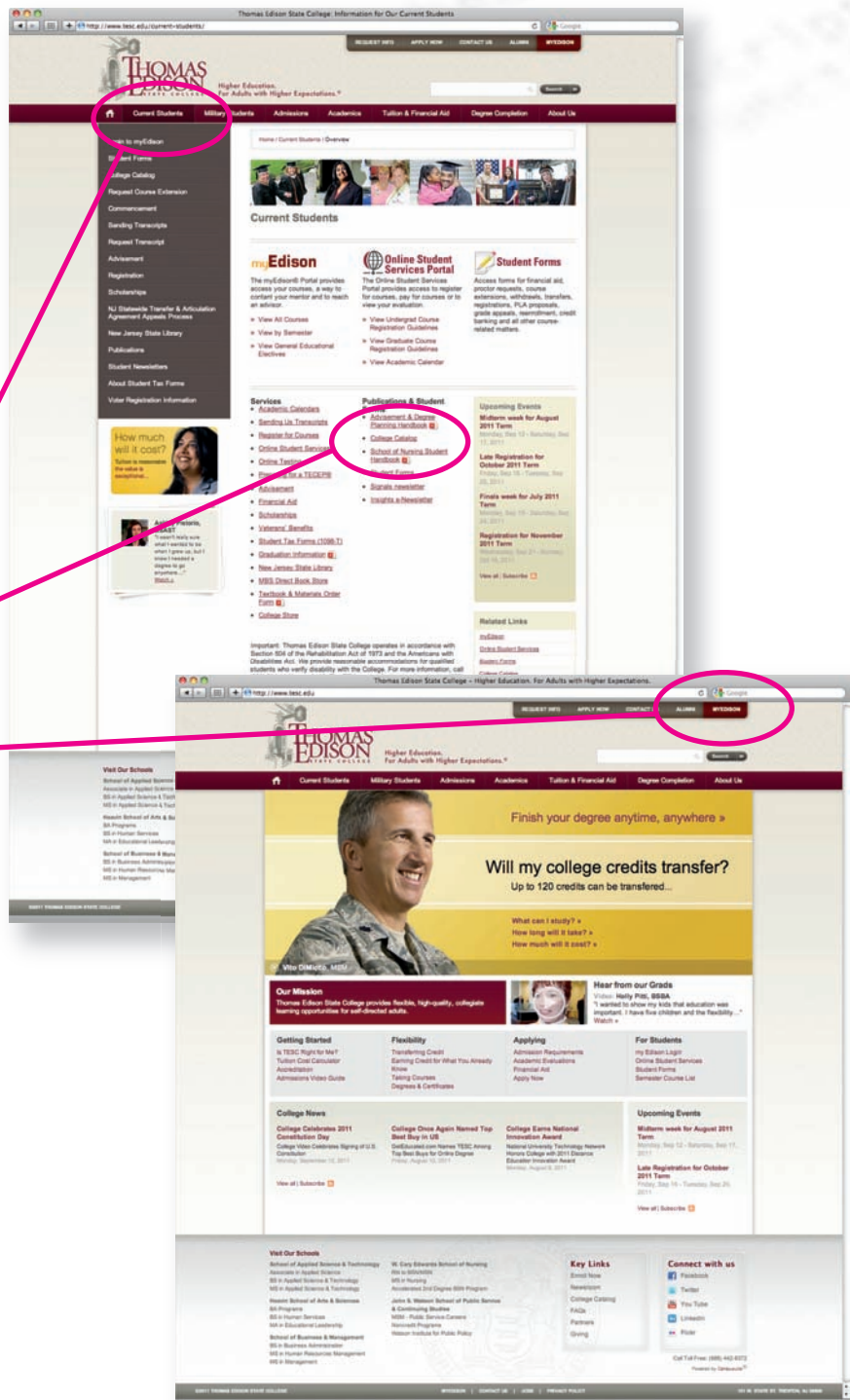
Changes based on Student feedback

This fall, Thomas Edison State College is unveiling a refreshed design of its website, www.tesc.edu. The refreshed design is based on student feedback collected during the College's latest usability testing by students.

Key changes to the website that were recommended by students include:

- ▶ Internal page navigation links have been moved from the right side of the screen to the left side
- ▶ Current Students page has been redesigned to provide links to more student resources
- ▶ Online *College Catalog* has been reorganized to help students locate information easier
- ▶ A link to myEdison® has been added to the top of the homepage
- ▶ Mega menus have been added to the website, enabling students, alumni and other visitors see what content is in each main section of the website

A video reviewing the changes to the refreshed website, especially as it pertains to the Current Students section and homepage, will be sent to students prior to the site going live. In addition, the College will again be conducting student usability testing this year to evaluate the website and continue improving its performance and how well it serves students.



W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing Student Earns Scholarships

MSN student garners attention in the rehabilitation field

Adele McCloskey, RN, BSN, CRRN, a certified rehabilitation nurse, is one step closer to her Master of Science in Nursing degree thanks to her hard work and an infusion of scholarship money. McCloskey, who earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in 2011 from the College, is the recipient of a \$1,000 scholarship from the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses' (ARN) Southern New Jersey Chapter and a \$500 scholarship from Bayada Nurses of Moorestown, N.J. McCloskey said the proceeds have helped to defray the costs of her tuition and textbooks.

"My experience at Thomas Edison State College has been consistently positive," noted McCloskey. "The College's learning platform is extremely flexible and the idea of not having to travel to class is really a plus for me. The online discussion board sessions, the mentoring and the assignments all play a part in the success of the program. Every course that I have taken has helped me grow both professionally and personally. I learn from my readings, my classmates



Adele McCloskey '11, RN, BSN, CRRN

and my assignments, and, for me – though the online course work has its challenges – transformation occurs on a weekly basis."

McCloskey is director of Special Services for Horizon NJ Health in Trenton, N.J., where she is responsible for ensuring effective, efficient quality care and member safety.

To find out more about programs at the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing, visit www.tesc.edu/nursing.

College Launches New Graduate Area of Study in School Business Administration

Thomas Edison State College has launched a new graduate area of study designed to prepare the next generation of school business administrators.

The School of Business and Management, in partnership with the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, have developed the Master of Science in Management degree program in School Business Administration. The program enables working adults to earn a master's degree that focuses on organizational leadership and integrates



Dr. Susan P. Gilbert, dean of the School of Business and Management

management theory and practice as they apply to school business administration.

"The program is ideal for school business administrators interested in earning a master's degree or enhancing their management and business skills," said Dr. Susan P. Gilbert, dean of the School of

Business and Management. "It is also a good fit for working adults interested in professional advancement in the school business administration field."

The 36-credit program is offered completely online and encompasses the academic and professional areas of business and management as applied to school settings.

"Most of the graduate programs in school business administration currently in the market are predominately focused on education leadership," said Dr. Adrian Zappala, assistant dean for Educational Leadership. "Our program is unique because it is a degree that prepares students to solve business problems commonly faced by school administrators."

For more information, visit www.tesc.edu/gradstudies.

Growing Strong



COLLEGE NURSING PROGRAM HAS
GROWN INTO ONE OF THE LARGEST
OF ITS KIND IN THE COUNTRY





Soledad G. Dela Merced '11

“One of the reasons I chose Thomas Edison State College is because it gave me the opportunity to advance my career in nursing from the convenience of my own home...”

Like most nurses, Soledad G. Dela Merced is a very busy person. As a nurse in the intensive care unit of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's (UMDNJ) University Hospital in Newark, N.J., Merced cares for patients in the most serious conditions. She is also an active member of her community and a dedicated wife and mother.

In addition, Merced wanted to become a nurse educator but could not sacrifice time away from her career, her family and community commitments.

“One of the reasons I chose Thomas Edison State College is because it

gave me the opportunity to advance my career in nursing from the convenience of my own home,” said Merced, who received the 2011 Clinical Excellence Award from the Philippine Nurse Association of New Jersey earlier this year.

Flexibility is crucial for working nurses, like Merced, who are interested in advancing their education and one of several key factors in the stunning growth of the College's nursing program, according to Dr. Susan M. O'Brien, dean of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing.



Dr. Susan M. O'Brien, dean of the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing

In the past four years, undergraduate and graduate nursing enrollments have grown by 158 percent, from 933 in 2008 to 2,405 in 2011. Today, the College has the largest nursing program in New Jersey and one of the largest online RN to BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) programs in the country.

“One reason we have grown so much is because we have such a well-respected brand,” said Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State College. “The word-of-mouth in the nursing profession about our

program has been tremendous.”

O'Brien said the program's growth can also be attributed to internal and external factors that are both critical to offering programs for working nurses.

“Our focus on offering flexible programs, generous transfer credit policies and cost effective tuition has been very important,” she said. “Some external factors are really encouraging nurses to return to school and earn their BSN and we have proven to be a great fit for them.”

One of the leading external factors is the drive for many hospitals to be certified by the Magnet Recognition Program®, an initiative developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center that recognizes healthcare organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence and innovations in professional nursing practice and requires hospitals to have two-thirds of their nursing staff possess a bachelor's degree or higher.

Several studies indicate that increased education of nurses is

related to better patient outcomes, which have led many health systems and advocacy groups to encourage nurses to achieve a baccalaureate-level education.

“Many hospitals now prefer to hire BSN graduates and the way our partnerships work with large health systems in New Jersey has encouraged growth in our program,” said O'Brien. “We enjoy working collaboratively with our partners to increase nurse education in order to improve patient outcomes and the safety of patients. The nursing profession has improved because many more nurses have achieved the BSN, and we are very proud of that.”

The College has several nursing partnerships with New Jersey hospitals, including Capital Health, Kennedy Health, Virtua Health, St. Francis Medical Center and Meridian Health.

The field of nursing faces unique challenges related to both the job market and preparing nurses to enter the field.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of registered nurses is expected to grow by 22 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations.

In addition, the 2010 report, *The Future of Nursing*, by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), states that nurses in the 21st century will need multiple competencies to deliver high-quality care, such as technical skills and understanding healthcare policy, evidence-based research and information technology. To meet these demands, the report recommends several educational targets for the nursing workforce, including an increase in the number of nurses with a bachelor's degree.

But a challenge to reaching that goal is a shortage of nurse educators to prepare the next generation of RNs and nurse leaders. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), U.S. nursing schools turned away more than 67,000 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate



The first class of the College's Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program: Front row from left to right: Benny Omiunu, Sandra Desinor, Brittany Arrington, Natalia Ibarra, Carla Guijarro and Lisa Dellon. Second row from left to right: Janel Mest, Sandra McKinley, Rachel Boka, Vanessa Maddox, Elizabeth Hart, Kimberly Malko and Sharah Rose. Top row from left to right: Gerald Bertekap, Janice Fischetti, Carl Coleman, Amanda Pinelli, Winnie Reeves, Bryana Carrea and Khadijah Jean-Mary.

nursing programs in 2010, mostly due to faculty shortages.

“The development of our Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) Nurse Educator program in 2006 was based on need,” recalled

Looking back at the growth of the nursing program over the past few years, O’Brien said one of her life-time ambitions was to help every nurse earn a BSN.

“When I was approached for this

position at Thomas Edison State College and saw the progressive policies that could be used for nurses, I knew this was my opportunity,” she said. “Sometimes, it takes a lifetime to achieve a goal.”

To learn more about nursing programs at Thomas Edison State College, visit www.tesc.edu/nursing.

“My mentors were highly educated and very knowledgeable. We had a lot of interactions, which helped guide us through the assignments.”

O’Brien. “Our country needs nurses who have a baccalaureate education and today, we do not have enough faculty throughout the country to educate nurses at the BSN level.”

Today, the College’s MSN Nurse Educator program has more than 300 students.

Merced, who completed the MSN Nurse Educator program in 2011, is now a nurse educator with the UMDNJ School of Nursing. She said the program was her first experience at online learning.

“The College guided me and supported me along the way to cross the barriers of technology,” she said. “My mentors were highly educated and very knowledgeable. We had a lot of interactions, which helped guide us through the assignments.”

Following the success of the MSN Nurse Educator program, the College launched MSN programs in Nursing Administration and Nursing Informatics in 2011. Also in 2011, it started the Accelerated 2nd Degree BSN Program, an intense, one-year BSN program for candidates who already possess a non-nursing bachelor’s degree.



Family support: Merced is joined (from left) by husband, Bernardo, daughter, Golda, and son, Brill, at Commencement



GAME CHANGER

SHON BROOKS '98 PLAYS FOR KEEPS WHEN IT COMES TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Even though he is a successful entrepreneur, Fran Shatone Brooks always has time to play games.

A premier financial planner and founder and chief executive officer of Brooks Financial & Entertainment Consultants, Brooks has parlayed his successful profession into ventures that promote education, entertainment and empowerment for the next generation.

For Brooks, who is known as Shon professionally, success is more about helping others than about helping himself. In fact, that very attitude has helped his career thrive.

For starters, Brooks has developed two 3D games aimed at helping young students better understand finance and the stock market.

The first one, a console game called *Save One Bank*[™], introduces students to the ins and outs of the world of

banking through an adventurous, hero versus villain action theme. The second game, *Stock Picker*[™], is an online game that covers the fast-paced, and often misunderstood, world of the stock market and Wall Street, and the impact it has on the economy. Students can use play money to compete with different classrooms around the country in picking and investing in the most viable stocks.

“With our nation facing a flagging

Shon Brooks' boat is sponsored by Action Sports

Alumni Profile

economy, record deficits, rising unemployment and other economic concerns — situations our kids will likely inherit when they are older — what better time than now to begin teaching students, from elementary to high school, and even college, the importance of knowing how to manage finances,” said Brooks, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree from Thomas Edison State College in 1998 as well as an Associate in Science in Management degree in 1995.

Brooks is working with San Diego School Districts to release these patented and trademarked interactive games to district schools. His future plans also include marketing the games to other school districts nationally and to the international market.

Additionally, Brooks has donated more than 3,000 books, magazines, calculators and posters to the San Diego Unified School District to encourage financial literacy for youths.

Born in San Diego, Calif., Brooks graduated from Sweetwater High School in nearby National City. Always a high-achieving student, he was allowed to skip from the 9th to the 11th grade, because of his academic ability.

“Even in high school I always had a keen interest in math, business and management in addition to more creative pursuits such as television, theatrical plays and film,” he said.

His goal was to combine these elements into a viable enterprise to help others. That dream became reality more than a decade ago when he created Brooks Entertainment Inc., D.B.A. Brooks Financial & Entertainment Consultants, specializing in developing financial, estate and wealth preservation planning strategies for

actors, actresses, broadcasters, musicians, athletes and other celebrities. He also serves as a trusted advisor to others, including lottery winners, on how to make their financial resources yield the best returns.

His firm publishes the *Brooks Financial News*, a monthly online newsletter designed to keep Brooks Financial clients and others updated on the latest in money management.

“Success is not measured only by the monetary rewards you derive from your profession; it is also measured by how you give back to help others in the community.”

Brooks credits Thomas Edison State College with giving him the tools to prosper.

“The College taught me how to finish what I started,” he said. “I also learned responsibility and how to remain competitive in an innovating new world. These are the core principles I apply every day in my business.”

A true supporter of continuing education, Brooks created the curriculum for two areas of certification for financial planning advisors, which are used by the American Society of Pension Professionals and Actuaries (formerly known as NTSAA Educational Institute). The two certifications are the Certified Retirement Specialist (CRS) and Master Certified Retirement Specialist (MCRS). He also created the exam questions for the certification’s Course 1 Study Guide, *The Basics of 403(b) Plans*.

“Higher learning never ends,” Brooks said. “So many people believe that once you have received the invitation (to Commencement), you have arrived. That’s only the beginning. The true

test of any degree program is if you can apply what you have learned and turn it into something successful. College is preparation for the real thing!”

Brooks has used his success in the financial world as a stepping stone to additional career endeavors to help others, especially through various media pursuits.

He is the creator, writer, producer and

host of the award-winning half-hour TV talk show titled *S.O.B.*[™], which motivates and empowers youth toward positive directions in life. The show is currently being promoted on the NFL (National Football League) Network, ESPN, and Monday Night Football through Cox Media, which also interconnects in selected markets on AT&T and Direct TV.

Brooks noted that he is thankful to his father, Lee Oscar Brooks, MBA, for discovering Thomas Edison State College.

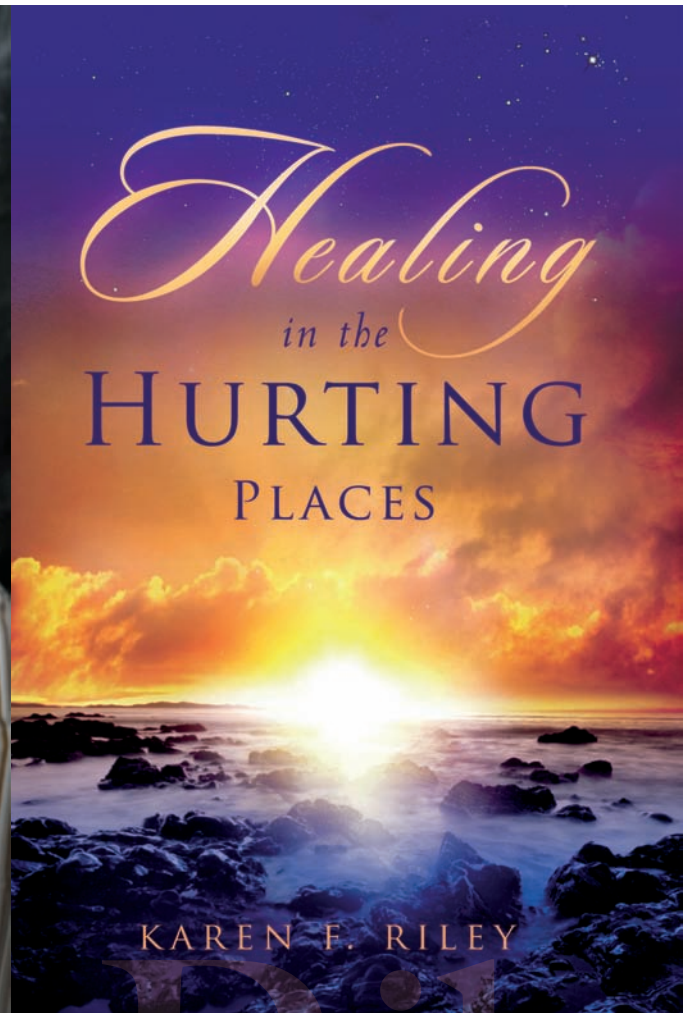
“My Thomas Edison State College degree and my experience at the College helped instill in me the motivation to become the best that I can be in the world of finance as well as the idea that success is not measured only by the monetary rewards you derive from your profession; it is also measured by how you give back to help others in the community.”

For more information on Brooks’ endeavors, visit <http://brooksfincianlandentertainmentconsultants.com/>.

Shon Brooks

Surviving ...AND THRIVING

NEW BOOK BY KAREN RILEY '99 HELPS
VICTIMS RECOVER FROM ABUSE



Karen Riley

Alumni Profile

If overcoming adversity makes you stronger, then Karen Riley must be Wonder Woman.

Sexually abused as a child, bullied as a teen and plagued by low self-esteem through most of her life, Riley persevered and survived to become an award-winning author, a successful business owner and an advocate for victims of sexual abuse.

"It has been said that sexual abuse is the only crime in which its victims are made to feel worse than the criminal," said Riley. "So I drove myself to excel – convinced that if I was successful, and if I could be someone that others would look up to and respect, then I would not be that dirty, abused, unloved child I saw in the mirror each day."

Riley was a gifted student who graduated second out of more than 500 students in her Brooklyn high school and earned academic scholarships to colleges. But by her

find hope – first, as part of her personal redemption and then by helping others.

"No college degree meant no advancement," said Riley, who learned about Thomas Edison State College when she was taking classes at Ocean County College in Toms River, N.J.

Riley, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree in 1999, transferred her community college credits to Thomas Edison State College and said she immediately discovered the College's unique programs were an excellent match for her.

"Thomas Edison State College not only gave me a degree, but also an opportunity to change direction in my life," she said. "Having a value placed on what I had accomplished professionally was liberating. I no longer had to regret the decision I made to go into the workplace instead

Her latest book brought Riley out of the woods and onto a more personal endeavor. Published in 2011, *Healing in the Hurting Places* tells Riley's personal story and provides resources for victims of sexual abuse and people who want to help victims but do not know how.

"I had never planned on sharing my story publicly, but 'Healing' is an inspirational story that emerged from my own recovery and is designed to enlighten and offer hope to those suffering from sexual abuse," said Riley. "I am a big believer in education. I feel that enlightening people about what abuse does can help them to recognize someone who is hurting and in need."

In addition to writing, Riley is a co-owner of KFR Communications, LLC, a graphic and website design company that specializes in branding identity which serves start-up companies, international organizations, nonprofits, churches, ministries, government agencies and schools.

Riley and her husband, Bill, have been married 31 years and live in New Egypt, N.J. They have three children: Lisa, 29; Laura, 26; and Christopher, 23. They also have a new granddaughter, Lilyana.

"My degree belongs to my family," noted Riley. "My family was very supportive of me while I was studying. I would like to think that it rubbed off on my children, as they have all become highly disciplined adults who are adept at juggling different aspects of their work, school and family lives while successfully maintaining a balance."

To find out more about Riley's personal and professional work, visit: www.karenfriley.net and www.kfrcommunications.com.

“Thomas Edison State College not only gave me a degree, but also an opportunity to change direction in my life.”

senior year, Riley was emotionally drained and turned her back on college.

"While I strived academically, I was a loner with poor social skills and was bullied horribly because of it," recalled Riley. "I wanted nothing more to do with classroom life and plunged immediately into the work force."

After working for 17 years in seven different fields, Riley said she reached a certain point where work experience no longer mattered. Ironically, it would be through education that she would

of college. I had a worth that translated to a piece of paper that would help me reach my dreams!"

In 2005, she published her first book, *Whispers in the Pines: The Secrets of Colliers Mills*. In 2009, Riley's second book, *Voices in the Pines: True Stories from the New Jersey Pine Barrens*, was published and earned an Independent Publisher Book Award (IPPY) in the best regional nonfiction category. She followed that book with *Images of America: The Pine Barrens of New Jersey*, published in 2010.

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Sheera M. Dashkow BSAST '07

Sheera M. Dashkow, who received her Thomas Edison State College degree in laboratory animal science, received her master's degree in laboratory animal science from Drexel University College of Medicine in 2009. She graduated with honors and received the academic achievement award for maintaining the highest GPA in the class of 2009. She has recently accepted a job with Temple University as the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee coordinator. She remains dedicated to animal welfare, and is highly respected in both the veterinary and research communities.

Thom DeMeo BSHS '00

Thom DeMeo, who graduated from Thomas Edison State College with a BSHS in administration of justice in 2000 while serving as a New Jersey state trooper, was also able to complete his MA in human services training and development from Seton Hall University in 2008. Now retired, DeMeo writes that he and his family "are enjoying our lives in the country" in Sunbury, Ohio. In addition to being accomplished authors of the book *Our Blessing...Multiple Sclerosis*, DeMeo and his wife, Betina, are in the process of beginning a canine training facility in their new hometown. DeMeo noted, "It all began with Thomas Edison State College."



Simi Feigen BA '06

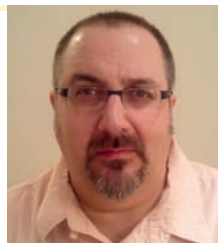
Simi Feigen recently graduated from California State University Bakersfield, earning a Master of Arts in Education degree with a focus on curriculum and instruction.

Christopher Ives BA '02

Christopher Ives earned a Master of Arts in Administrative Science degree from Fairleigh Dickinson College in May 2011. Starting his undergraduate degree at Virginia Tech, Ives finished it at Thomas Edison State College while serving active duty in the United States Coast Guard. He is now a local law enforcement officer studying for the next sergeant's exam.

Steven Johnson ASAST '10

Steven Johnson recently received the Engineering and Safety Center Group Achievement Award from NASA for his group's work on the Composite Crew Module. Johnson currently works for Shaw Engineering as a supervisor of Special Process at the Vogtle Nuclear Power Plant Construction Site for Units 3 and 4. Johnson is currently completing his BSAST with the College.



Richard J. Kosmoski AA '94, BA '96

Richard J. Kosmoski received his Master of Science degree in emergency services management from Columbia Southern University, graduating with a 3.92 GPA.

Jesse MacKenzie AA '07

Jesse MacKenzie completed a Professional Certificate in Injury-Preventive Keyboard Technique at Salem College in Winston-Salem, N.C., in December 2010. Working on her BA in piano at Salem College, MacKenzie noted, "I would like to thank Thomas Edison State College for helping me complete many of my general education credits, so that when I came to music school, I was able to concentrate on my music courses."

Thomas P. McFarland BA '09

Thomas P. McFarland graduated *cum laud* from Ashford University with a MEd in culturally responsive education on April 11, 2011.

Barbara Mitchell AA '79 AA '82

Barbara Mitchell, DCH, recently received Dan Poynter's Global eBook Award for her book, *When You Need a Timeout*, the busy girl's guide to real stress relief. The ebook, available on Amazon's Kindle, includes numerous exercises, diet tips and motivational examples based on true life stories. The book shows women how to recapture the joy of living and BAMVP "Be A More Vibrant Person" with relaxation techniques that undo years of damage caused by stress. Mitchell is a retired college administrator who has added "author" to her present activities.

Paul Edward Nowak AA '79

Chris Nowak AA '79

Brothers Paul Edward Nowak and Chris Nowak are the designers of *Uncle Chestnut's Table Gype*. A board game inspired by the works of writer G.K. Chesterton, *Uncle Chestnut's Table Gype* has been honored with the title of Mensa Select game by American Mensa, the high IQ society. Only five games receive the honor from Mensa each year for being "original, challenging and well designed."

Mike Reynolds BA '80

Dr. Mike Reynolds, who was appointed dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Florida State College in 2008, was recently named its dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Reynolds noted, "The college continues to grow, probably due to people going back to school because of job layoffs, and so my position has been split, effective July 1, 2011."



APPLAUSE APPLAUSE

Javier L. Taylor BA '00

Javier L. Taylor, who graduated from Thomas Edison State College with a BA in mathematics, was hired as the mathematics instructional specialist at the Western Arkansas Educational Cooperative in Branch, Ark., on July 1, 2011. Prior to this position, Taylor was the mathematics instructional specialist at Arkansas Tech University for four years. Since graduating from the College, Taylor has completed a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from the University of Arkansas at Monticello (2007) and has completed the first of a five-book series on integrating the Bible into secondary mathematics. The series is called "Connecting The Bible and Mathematics," and is available through *Amazon.com*.

Lynda Wells BSBA '03

Lynda Wells, who graduated with a BSBA in public administration, was appointed the municipal clerk of Long Beach Township, N.J., in December 2010. Wells noted, "My educational experience at Thomas Edison State College was exceptional. As a full-time employee and student, the College provided the flexibility I needed to reach my goals. Thanks for all you have done for me!"

Michele E. Yoder BSBA '03

Michele E. Yoder, continuing her education following her BSBA degree at Thomas Edison State College, earned an MBA from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 2005 and a PhD in strategic management from University of Wisconsin-Madison in May 2011. Yoder started a new position as a tenure-track assistant professor of Strategic Management in the College of Business at University of Michigan-Dearborn in September 2011.

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