

APPENDIX

**Statement by
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President of Georgian Court University
In Support Of the Educational Opportunity Fund
May 14, 2007**

I am happy to offer remarks in support of the Educational Opportunity Fund from the perspective of a President of one of the first institutions in the state of New Jersey to embrace this transformative program for the education of disadvantaged students. We began our program at Georgian Court in 1968 with 34 other institutions of higher education. We enrolled 10 students that year among the 1500 student cohort throughout the state. EOF aimed at providing higher education for students from families and communities disadvantaged by low income and the lack of access to quality educational preparation necessary to attend college.

The need for this program in the 60's was evident in the wake of the unrest in the late sixties particularly in the cities. The need, however, is still there. The number of residents with a college degree in the city of Newark is 1 in 10 while in nearby Summit the number is 9 out of 10. The lack of role models and incentives to seek higher education in some neighborhoods and communities even today requires that a program like EOF continues.

The success of this program is rooted in the dedication and commitment of the campus staff at each participating campus that provide a rigorous summer "boot camp", ongoing advising, tutoring and social and emotional support for these at risk students to be successful. Helping to orient students to college life and developing good study skills is a key aim of the critical pre-college summer program. The support services provided to the student throughout their college career builds confidence in the student and provides trusted advisors for them as they embark on their own careers.

The mix of counseling, academic advising, tutoring, peer mentoring, graduate school preparation and support for student engagement in campus life provide the direct services that make the difference in the success of students. National data confirms that college students who have a mentor or some organization to connect with during college tend to persist and become successful. EOF is that critical addition for the students who enter college often without good preparation for college work and lacking the personal disciplines needed to be successful in higher education.

The statewide program now enrolls approximately 13,000 within which the independent institutions like Georgian Court enroll about 1800 students representing 14% of the students. The 13 independent institutions contribute institutional financial aid to the EOF students that amounts to 12.3 million dollars. At Georgian Court our average grant was 5,800. This direct aid to the student does not include the additional funds institutions contribute to the operation of the program above what the institutions receive from the EOF fund itself.

The EOF program sponsors a high number of the minority students throughout the state and enrolls about 12% of the first time full time freshman at state colleges and universities across all sectors. Despite the increase in numbers of students and the consistent success of the program funding for the program has remained flat for a number of years.

I add to my remarks today a request for increased funding for program support. The counseling, tutoring and the summer program are critical to the success of students but the numbers are limited by funding.

At my own institution our EOF Director, Ms Celia Younger, indicated she had additional students that could be enrolled but the limit due to program funding made that impossible. I believe an increase of 2-3 million would be a wise investment in the educational future of some deserving students.

As a president of an independent university sponsored by my religious community, I am especially proud of the accomplishments of our EOF students. Georgian Court was founded in 1908 by the Sisters of Mercy to provide higher education to women 13 years before women had the right to vote. Women were denied the advantage of higher education as most colleges would not admit women yet; our belief that educated women would make a difference in society encouraged our commitment to this task. Likewise, today in this 21st century, the right of students from all communities and neighborhoods to quality education is critical. The education of those with potential enhances not only the student but enhances our society.

Many of our students have assumed leadership positions at the university, last year about a third or more of our students achieved a 3.00 or higher GPA, and our graduating students have gone on to become teachers, business and industry managers as well as some pursuing graduate work. These students will make a difference in their communities. I know many of them continue to contribute to their work places as well as giving back in community service. While in our institutions, EOF students are encouraged to not only pursue an education but to become involved in campus activities and to participate in service to their communities.

I had the great pleasure of attending the EOF Conference this past March in Atlantic City to witness first hand the statewide accomplishments of the EOF students studying at the various state, county and independent institutions. This program is one deserving of continuing and possibly increased state support as it prepares to celebrate 40 years of growing and expanding success.

TESTIMONY to ASSEMBLY REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Glenn B. Lang, Ed.D, Executive Director
New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund
MAY 4, 2007

I want to thank the committee for this opportunity to inform you about the status of the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund, commonly known as the EOF program. EOF was sponsored by Assemblyman Kean, enacted by the legislature, and signed by Governor Hughes in 1968. The original goal of the program was to open the doors of higher education in New Jersey to residents who had historically been denied the opportunity to pursue a postsecondary education at the state's public and private colleges and universities.

The growth of EOF coincided with the great expansion of higher education in New Jersey. Originally, the Fund's goals were limited, simply to that of access -- increasing the number of low income and underrepresented minorities at our colleges and universities. Over the years, as we grew in experience and expectations of students, EOF's mission has expanded from simply helping students enroll in college, but to persist with academic excellence through graduation, emerging as tomorrow's leaders in professional and public leadership positions throughout the state. The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund is the New Jersey's only comprehensive state-supported initiative that specifically targets and prepares individuals from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to earn associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees

The true genius of The Educational Opportunity Fund Act of 1968 is that it has withstood the test of time in responding to the urgent needs of New Jersey students from all walks of life in our rapidly changing society and environment. Thirty-nine years after EOF's inception a college degree is more necessary than ever to realize a middle-class standard of living in New Jersey. It provides an economic ladder for a low-income motivated student in an Abbott school district, as well as a single TANF recipient in Ocean County who will be the first in his or her family to graduate from high school and go to college.

During the fall of 2006 the program enrolled 12, 300 students across all sectors of NJ higher education. The 'average' EOF student comes from a family of 3 -4 with an annual gross income of approximately \$25,000. To appreciate that better, compare that to New Jersey's median family income, which exceeds \$70,000. Approximately half of all EOF students come from district factor group A and B public school. By policy and practice, the population of EOF students enrolled at NJ colleges and universities are among the neediest. In addition to being low-income, they must also come from a background of educational disadvantage. By this, we mean that the majority of EOF students' K-12 experiences have been in environments least conducive to preparation for higher education as evidenced by low standardized test scores, but not necessarily low grades or low class rank.

It is important to note that long before the United States Supreme Court required colleges and universities to abandon race-based admissions practices in favor of individual review of applications, the EOF by regulation and by practice always employed a process of holistic assessment of prospective students by judging their potential for success not only through standardized test scores but also by conducting personal interviews to determine a student's

commitment and motivation and by observing their actual performance during the Pre-freshman summer program.

EOF is distinguished from other student assistance and access programs by the scope of its mission and the comprehensiveness of its program design. It links access, academic enrichment and support, leadership development, and financial assistance. EOF programs feature elements that have been cited in national studies as crucial for the success of disadvantaged students. These elements include *linking student financial assistance to intensive academic support services*, a structured freshman-year experience, and an emphasis on academic success, extensive student service contacts by dedicated staff, and a corps of EOF professionals with strong institutional attachments. EOF campus programs work directly with students, involve family members, and collaborate with faculty and other individuals on campus who assist students through the transition into higher education and through-out their college years.. The programs have each designed a pre-freshman summer experience for their EOF first-time students that encompasses an array of academic services and educational enrichment to help EOF students develop the academic and coping skills, the motivation and academic self-confidence, and the direction and focus that is necessary for collegiate success.

This brings me to an important point that I believe highlights what makes EOF different from many programs – the dedication of the staff (?). I would like to extend an invitation to each members of this Committee to visit one of our campus programs this summer. There will be thousands of students enrolled in EOF (?) pre-freshman summer programs across New Jersey, taking classes throughout the day and study sessions that run until late in the evening.. Beside each student will be EOF staff putting in the 50 – 60 hours a week necessary to run our programs. This dedication to students continues throughout the academic year!

EOF makes accountability a high priority. The EOF program is data-driven and has a strong accountability component. The program uses outcome data (commonly called Program Performance Criteria or PPC) to follow student and program progress and to keep its public EOF Board of Directors, and the Commission on Higher Education, appraised regarding the overall performance and outcomes of the program. The data are used to drive system-wide improvements in retention and significant improvements in graduation rates in the state colleges and universities. The PPC have also been used to help guide funding decisions.

Unfortunately, there are no comparative retention and graduation data available in this state, other states, or nationally upon which to set realistic benchmarks. The state supported opportunity programs in New York and Pennsylvania (which, like EOF, use both economic and educational disadvantage as the program entry criteria) do not publish retention and graduation data, nor do the Federal TRIO programs.

One of the goals set for in the state's Long Range Plan for Higher Education is to narrow the achievement gap evidenced when comparing the outcomes of low-income and minority students to other students in higher education. While not all low-income and minority students are enrolled through EOF, improvements in EOF outcomes do contribute to the overall goal. EOF has been tracking progress from the freshman cohort that entered during 1992 fall up to the fall 1999 cohorts. Over this period, EOF students and EOF programs are steadily closing the achievement gap at much higher rates than what has been called for in the Long Range Plan! In

the state colleges and universities, the EOF 6-year cohort graduation rate has improved by 50% between the fall 1992 and fall 1999 cohorts resulting in a 25% increase in the EI for that sector. In the public research universities sector, the EOF 6-year cohort graduation rate has improved by 23% over the same period and the EI increased by 11% between the fall 1994 and 1999 cohorts. In the independent colleges and universities, the EI has equaled or surpassed the sector average since we have been tracking progress.

The continued success of EOF depends on the programs ability to provide continually improving and expanded services and assistance to an increasingly diverse and needy service population. Reports from programs indicate that conditions in many schools that's serve as the primary recruitment sources for EOF are not improving at a time that most colleges and universities are raising standards and becoming increasing competitive and costlier thus less affordable. At the same time the program has experienced long-term funding issues in accounts that provide direct services to students notability Supplemental Opportunity Grants (commonly known as Article IV) which are used to support the counseling/advisement, tutoring services component of the program (the colleges and universities fund the costs of the program administrators) suffered from level funding for 6 years from fiscal 1999 to 2003 and now potentially for another four years, fiscal 2004 through 2008. Evidence-based research and numerous national reports support the importance of aggressive outreach initiatives to help first-generation, low-income students make the transition to higher education. It also supports the critical role(s) of "intrusive" supportive services (including educational enrichment, student leadership development, holistic counseling services, developmental advisement, tutoring and supplemental instruction) on improving these students' chances of collegiate success. These elements form the core of each EOF campus program's outreach and service delivery model.

The EOF Board of Directors and Commission on Higher Education have tried for years to secure an increase in this account to help improve the quality of the campus programs, the number of students served, and to expand proven initiatives such as Dr. Khan's that will prepare EOF students for highly competitive and demanding Science, Technical, Engineering, and Mathematics-based majors. This year we requested a \$2 million increase in supplemental opportunity Program Grants (also known as Article IV) support for this area.

Closely related, the Board and Commission have sought increased support for the summer program. This program faces rapidly escalating costs each year due to increases in tuition, room, board, and books. In order to stay within allocated funds, campus programs have been forced to shorten the summer programs from seven weeks to four weeks, reduce the courses options, and serve approximately 700 fewer students. The summer program is a key element in the student retention strategy. Research has consistently identified the summer bridge and enrichment programs as critical components in the effort to assist first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minorities in their transition to higher education. The summer program also allows students to maintain course sequences and to graduate in shorter periods. In addition, remaining in a residential campus setting provides a safer and more positive alternative during the summer months. Between summer 2002 and 2006 there was a 40% increase in costs based on the average tuition and fees, charged it would have required an additional \$3.4 million above our actual summer expenditures to provide services to the same number of students funded in

2002. The Board and Commission have requested an additional \$1 million in additional support for Opportunity Grants (also known as Article III) support for the summer program.

Finally, meeting the challenge of financing a college education in New Jersey is becoming increasingly perilous. New Jersey is known as a high tuition, high aid state meaning we have what ranks among the highest levels of public colleges and university tuition in the nation. While we have generous need-based aid, programs they are not keeping pace with the rapidly escalating costs of college attendance, which not including books, supplies and other education-related needs can easily run up to \$20,000 at a state college or university this coming year. For example, the cell in the TAG table that serves the neediest students (which includes approximately 70% of all EOF students) has a one-year lag in tuition levels; the remainder of the TAG table has a three-year lag in funding. Increasingly, the vast majority of students do work outside of school, must take out maximum student loans, and if they have good credit take out what is known as private paper. In the case of the lowest income students, it means if you remain in college increasingly you will be a commuter and not live in a dormitory, or you may go without books. EOF recruiters report that the costs of college are viewed as increasingly prohibitive to students who come from families where the costs of one year of college by far exceeds their income; and the notion of having to take out loans makes the thought of higher education increasingly distant as they speak to many students and their families.

Today, a college education is more important than ever. Access to a college education has never been more important for individuals and for society. In today's knowledge-based economy, college graduates earn substantially higher incomes than do non-graduates. Moreover, we have become more aware of the vital links among educational attainment, workforce quality, and economic growth. New Jersey faces a major challenge: how to create an (higher) education system that accommodates a rapidly changing and growing population of young adults and makes college attainable, affordable, and a realistic option for more low-income and racial and ethnic minority students of all ages. With conditions becoming increasingly difficult in schools that serve large numbers of low-income and minority students, coupled with the increasing competitiveness and escalating costs of higher education college it is imperative that we redouble our efforts and commitments to those highly motivated citizens of New Jersey who only need the opportunity and support that programs like EOF provide.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.