

**Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief Proposal)**  
**Thomas Edison State College**  
**Master of Arts in Educational Leadership (MAEdL) Program<sup>1</sup>**  
**Audit Dates: May 10-12, 2009**

*The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.*

**Authorship and approval of the *Inquiry Brief Proposal*:**

The *Inquiry Brief Proposal* was written by a committee of nine (listed on the title page of the *IBP*) which included Susan Davenport, Dean of the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, Cynthia Strain, Assistant Dean, and Roland Pare, Coordinator of the MAEdL Program. The proposal was approved by the Curriculum Committee of the Heavin School on January 14, 2009, and by the program mentors (the faculty teaching the program) on February 9, 2009.

**Introduction:**

Thomas Edison State College was established by the State of New Jersey in 1972 to provide flexible higher education learning opportunities to adult learners. While TESC is headquartered in Trenton, NJ, its courses are offered through distance education; of its 18,697 enrolled students, the majority of undergraduates (67%) and a substantial proportion of graduate students (43%) live outside of New Jersey. The TESC teaching faculty, called "mentors," are all independent contractors working on a semester-by-semester basis and are drawn from across the nation.

The Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program is housed in TESC's Heavin School of Arts and Sciences and is offered entirely through an online format to graduate students preparing for service as school leaders. Developed in cooperation with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, and aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's Standards for School Leaders, the Program was launched in October 2007 with five students; forty-five students were enrolled as of October 2008. Program completers qualify for the New Jersey Principal's Endorsement as well as for the New Jersey Supervisor's certificate; a Supervisor's-certification-only option has been proposed for individuals who hold a masters degree and wish to complete the four courses required for that certificate. Twelve mentors currently teach the online courses in the Program, and additional guidance is provided to students by on-site mentors who will be added as initial student groups reach the internship stage of the program.

**Program claims:**

The MAEdL Program was designed around the ISLLC standards to provide students with a sequential online curriculum that grounds students in research and in theory, provides ongoing assessment and evaluation, and prepares

graduates to be instructional leaders whose evidence-based decision-making fosters the success of all learners. The Program's six claims, based in the ISSLC standards, which have also been adopted as the New Jersey Professional Standards for School Leaders, are that graduates are able to promote the success of all students by:

1. Developing a shared vision of learning supported by all stakeholders,
2. Sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and to staff professional growth,
3. Managing the school so that an effective learning environment is maintained,
4. Collaborating with internal and external school communities to meet local needs,
5. Acting with integrity and fairness in their work, and
6. Situating their work in the larger social, political, and legal context.

### **Evidence supporting the claims**

The *Inquiry Brief Proposal* outlines a plan for gathering and analyzing evidence in support of the six claims that will rely on 6 lines of evidence. Because the program was built 'from the ground up' based on the ISSLC/NJPSSL standards, much evidence will be drawn from course assignments and grades and from the School Leaders Licensure Assessment. Additional evidence from surveys and analysis of internship performance will also be gathered and organized around those standards. Evidence for each of the claims will be provided by:

- Course-embedded data including specific assignments within courses and course grades from specific courses;
- Component and composite scores on the ETS-administered School Leaders Licensure Assessment;
- Pre- and post- surveys of program students/graduates;
- Artifacts from and ratings of student portfolios produced in conjunction with the required 300-hour internship;
- Ratings of student performance in the internship;
- Follow-up surveys of stakeholders, including employers of graduates.

A program assessment plan has been presented to program mentors and the Heavin School's Curriculum Committee. The validity claims for most measures are grounded in their common connection to the ISSLC standards. Reliability of measures continues to be examined as initial data collection and analysis proceed; reliability of faculty ratings of course materials will be investigated as will the relationships among various measures of particular claims.

### **Internal audit:**

A diagram and detailed description of the Quality Control System for the MAEdL program, along with a plan to audit that system, were developed by the TEAC

Accreditation Committee and approved by the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee in October of 2008. A subcommittee of the TEAC committee conducted a two-day audit of the system based on a sample of a quarter of the forty-seven students admitted to the program and half of the ten mentors then employed. The audit subcommittee probed student recruitment, admissions, and progress documentation, curriculum and course approval and implementation, mentor qualifications and assignment, fiscal and administrative support, and student services and feedback.

The audit uncovered one minor inconsistency, but generally found the quality control system to be functioning as designed. The internal audit resulted in a number of recommendations for improvements in documentation, clarification of policy, and planning for data use in program improvement.

**Statement regarding commitment and capacity:**

The TEAC accreditation committee concluded that the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences of Thomas Edison State College is committed to the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership Program and that there is sufficient capacity to offer a quality program.

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<sup>1</sup> **The program's focus is educational leadership, and New Jersey, following its own policies and practices, may grant administrative certification to the program's graduates.**