

SPANNING THE DIVIDE

When an intrepid student and a supportive community unite, all things are possible.

Kathryn Hendershot, A.S. '24, endured food, housing and health insecurity, but she was determined that nothing would stand in the way of earning her degree.

"It was nerve-wracking at times to come up with the difference between federal student aid and the remaining balance in my student account," said Hendershot, who is now enrolled in the B.A. in

English program at TESU.

"I am disabled with a limited income, so I did not want student loans to jeopardize my financial future. I have experienced multiple delays and detours during my degree progression and have even been on the brink of homelessness. In spite of all that, I feel my situation speaks to even larger obstacles faced by those who

are similarly disadvantaged but remain focused on earning a college degree."

Since the onset of the COVID pandemic, Hendershot has relied on state disability payments, often having to choose between paying her rent on time, affording groceries or enrolling in her next course. Despite this cyclical dilemma, she said that relief has come



via TESU scholarship support. In 2024, she was awarded a Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000 and TESU Foundation Student Relief Funding for \$250. In 2023, she received a further \$2,000 through the University's Gertrude L. Hirsch Charitable Trust scholarship.

"I am profoundly grateful for the scholarship support because I am often forced to choose between putting gas in my car, food in my stomach or purchasing study materials for my next course. Simply put, I would not have been able to continue my education without scholarship support," she stated. "I am grateful that TESU made concessions for me and allowed me to enroll while carrying an outstanding balance. Also, if it were not for the course mentors being so understanding and inspiring, I could not have achieved as much as I have."

She said the University's reputation, cost-effectiveness and online course structure provided additional advantages.

"The local public universities and community colleges near my home in Centreville, Va., have some of the region's highest tuition rates. Comparatively, TESU is much more cost-effective. Not only did the value attract me, but also its reputation, regional and professional accreditation and array of course offerings," she said. "The University has pioneered many aspects of online course delivery and understands the value of high-quality instruction."

Hendershot found her online exchanges with mentors and fellow students valuable as she progressed in her studies.

"TESU has a great system in which students learn the course material individually and then receive valuable feedback from other students and course mentors during the online discussion forum exchanges," she said. "The course materials, student resources and online interactions supported and guided our projects. The process can be rigorous, but the critical thinking required encourages students to engage in the concepts and apply creative analysis and solutions in assignments."

To celebrate earning her associate degree during the University's 2024 Commencement, Hendershot chose to display TESU's spirit colors – but not in a regular fashion. She contacted

the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, which oversees the iconic Lower Trenton Bridge connecting Trenton, N.J., with Morrisville, Pa. She requested that its customary lighting be changed to TESU university colors to commemorate the occasion. A couple of administrative calls later, the prominent "Trenton Makes the World Takes" lettering was illuminated by TESU's signature burgundy, blue and gold spirit colors on the evenings before and after the Commencement ceremony.

"The 'Trenton Makes the World Takes' messaging is a refrain many of us share, and we're very proud of it," said Hendershot, who hails from neighboring Bucks County, Pa. "That signage captivated me in my youth. When we traveled to the New Jersey Transit Station in Trenton years ago, my dad would explain that the phrase alluded to the town's heritage as a worldwide supplier of pottery, glass, textiles, iron and rubber during the 19th century."

Using TESU's student support mechanisms to her advantage, Hendershot also sought the help of TESU's Office of Career Development to fine-tune her resume midway through her degree program.

"I am proud of my polished, updated resume and cannot wait to add my academic accomplishments. Because I had such a stellar experience, I recommend that my friends contact the staff in that office for help with their resumes," Hendershot said.

To learn more about the academic programs in the Heavin School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education, visit tesu.edu/heavin



"SIMPLY PUT, I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE MY EDUCATION WITHOUT SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT."

KATHRYN HENDERSHOT, A.S. '24

