

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Dan Armstrong, SKA Associates
(847) 749-9675 | dan@skaassociates.com

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Five new members join NJ Council for the Humanities board

All share a professional focus to expand access to the humanities

(Camden, NJ) – Five new members have been elected the Board of Trustees of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH). The new members, Dr. Denise Coulter, Theresa Jacks, Dr. Jonathan Mercantini, Dr. Rayman Solomon, and Lynne Toye began their terms at the Board’s meeting on October 14.

At the same meeting, Board member Dr. Greg Waters was named chair, following the very successful three-year term of predecessor Dan Fatton. Waters’ term as chair will begin November 1.

“The five new members come from diverse backgrounds, bringing expertise in history, education, nonprofit management, law, business, and arts and culture. But despite their differences, all five of them share a passion for the humanities and a commitment to expanding access to public humanities opportunities,” said NJCH Executive Director Carin Berkowitz, PhD. “Their leadership will be invaluable in helping us achieve many of the goals laid out in our strategic plan.”

Coulter is dean of liberal and professional studies and professor of English at Atlantic Cape Community College in Mays Landing. As a community college administrator and educator, Coulter has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to democratizing access to the humanities. Earlier this year at ACCC, she spearheaded the installation of an NJCH-sponsored exhibition of the Smithsonian’s “Voices and Votes: Democracy in America,” as well as a slate of related programming. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Georgian Court University, master’s from Rutgers, and a doctorate in education from Rowan University and is a lifelong New Jersey resident. She will bring expertise in helping the Council meet its strategic goal to expand access to the humanities through enhanced partnerships with New Jersey’s community colleges.

Theresa Jacks is acting president and CEO of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers. In that role, she leads all areas of an organization focused on strengthening the capacity of independent, corporate, family and community foundations, as well as public grantmakers, throughout the Garden State. Prior to joining CNJG, she served as Executive Director of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust and worked in state government for nearly 20

years. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Rowan University and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University. Jacks is interested in helping NJCH elevate the kinds of questions about history, culture, and democratic institutions that she says have fascinated her since childhood.

Mercantini is acting dean of the College of Liberal Arts and associate professor of history at Kean University. While he is not a native of New Jersey, his parents were, and he is proud to support and advance the Humanities in the Garden State. Prior to joining the Board, he was part of the Council's Public Speakers Bureau, giving talks on the Era of the American Revolution in New Jersey and the history of the Negro Leagues, two of his favorite history topics. He earned his bachelor's in history from the University of Richmond and his master's and Ph.D. in American history from Emory University. He is especially excited to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the humanities in the 21st Century.

Solomon is a University Professor and Dean Emeritus of the Rutgers Law School. He served as Dean of the Camden location of the Law School from 1998-2014 and was the Camden Campus Provost for 18 months. His academic field is 20th Century American legal history, and he has written on the history of federal courts and the legal profession. He clerked for the Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and was a Research Fellow at the American Bar Foundation. A veteran of the U.S. Navy who served in the Vietnam War, Solomon holds a bachelor's from Wesleyan University and a J.D. and Ph.D. in American legal history from the University of Chicago. He is delighted to serve on the Board of the Humanities Council as he believes, especially at this period in our country's history, it is more important than ever that the citizens of our state understand the values that are revealed through the exploration of the humanities.

Toye is the inaugural Executive Director of the New Jersey Arts and Culture Renewal Fund. The Fund is a public-private collaboration supported by corporate and private foundations, individual donors, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. In her role, Toye oversees grantmaking to arts and culture organizations across the state of New Jersey. Her professional experience includes leadership roles in nonprofit administration and higher education. She holds degrees from the University of Virginia and the Wharton School of Business. Toye is a proud resident of New Jersey and enjoys hiking, poetry, jazz, and art. In her spare time you may find her exploring in the woods, attending a gallery opening, enjoying a music festival, or at her easel painting in her home studio. She is excited to join the board of the Council to lend her experience and passion for cultural expression to the mission of the organization.