The Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum prepares multicultural professional educators and leaders to work in a variety of community settings. The department offers graduate programs in Educational Leadership, Bilingual-Bicultural Education, World Languages Education and Curriculum Studies.

Our students enhance their careers by combining their passion for education, experience in the field and leadership potential. Our graduates whether bilingual/bicultural specialists, world language teachers, curriculum specialists, teacher leaders, deans of students, assistant principals, principals or superintendents are all transformative leaders. The preparation we offer practitioners demonstrates our commitment to critical pedagogy and more.

Our commitment to excellence in education and expanding educational opportunity is demonstrated through our course work, which integrates both theory and practice, preparing our graduates for meaningful real-world application of the knowledge and skill they gain through our program.

We address best practices and cutting-edge research in education, and we also empower our graduates to be leaders and educators who bring about social change and social justice.

-Sonia Soltero, Professor and Chair, Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum

The College of Education’s Doctoral Program has experienced notable growth. In December 2013, the doctoral program administrative organization was moved under the Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum (LLC).

The new administrative structure was created in an effort to streamline systems, and improve processes with regards to resources, course planning, admissions, advising, and curricular innovation for faculty and students, as the majority of Doctoral students are Educational Leadership or Curriculum Studies students. The Early Childhood Education Program is housed in the Department of Teacher Education, but finds support in the LLC Department with restructured leadership.

The program’s new leadership includes LLC Department Chair, Dr. Sonia Soltero, who oversees the program in consultation with Professor Andrea Kaufman (Educational Leadership Program Director), Dr. Joby Gardner (Curriculum Studies Program Director), Dr. Mojdeh Bayat (Early Childhood Education Program Director) and Dr. Amira Proweller, Chair of the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Research.

The Education Doctoral Program welcomed new Program Assistant, Karlee Johnson, in December. Johnson’s role is important within the newly restructured Doctoral Program, as she provides administrative support to program leadership, informational resources for prospective and current students and works closely with students throughout the duration of their studies and dissertation.

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Faculty Profile

Dr. Barbara Rieckhoff, Associate Professor

Barbara Rieckhoff, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum. She specializes in educational leadership and teaches in the Principal Preparation Program.

Dr. Rieckhoff served as principal in public and Catholic schools for a number of years, which has contributed to her research involving shared leadership and principal mentoring.

Dr. Rieckhoff’s recent work within the department has been in response to changes made at the state level involving the elimination of the Type 75 certificate, an advanced administrative certificate required for K-12 leadership positions. “We’ve been working on several different initiatives to market our new Principal Preparation Licensure program,” says Dr. Rieckhoff. “We have a public school strand and a Catholic school strand, so we are marketing to different audiences throughout the city and suburbs. Our candidates come from public, private, Catholic and charter schools. We are fortunate to have representation from a variety of schools within our classes, adding to the richness of the dialogue and informing our students. They come to know and understand each other’s settings and contexts better, and ultimately discover they have many things in common as future school leaders.”

Dr. Rieckhoff also works with the Catholic Leadership Council, comprised of five high-needs Catholic high schools, to identify and develop professional development to meet the needs of the teachers and administrators. She also coordinates a fall and winter Catholic School Leadership Conference each year. The recent all-day event was hosted here at DePaul, with 75 teachers in attendance.

Dr. Rieckhoff’s research interests explore how principals share leadership in public and Catholic schools, and principal coaching and mentoring. “I’m interested in helping principals understand how they can share leadership and the impact this will have on their schools,” says Rieckhoff. “It can make a difference not only in their workloads, but also in their ability to reach students.”

She enjoys collaborating with the Irwin W. Steans Center to offer service learning courses. This quarter, a Master’s level Curriculum Studies course has students completing fieldwork on site at six area schools. The students are reviewing and analyzing curriculum materials for the schools and are practicing some of their leadership training while incorporating DePaul’s mission of social justice.

One of Dr. Rieckhoff’s recent accomplishments includes the publication of the manuscript The Development of Faith Leadership in Novice Principals in The Journal of Catholic Education. The manuscript explores how faith leadership develops in principals as they balance the spiritual role with the many other roles they have. She is also working in collaboration with LLC Department Associate Professor, Fr. Anthony Dosen, C.M., Ph. D, on a book for Catholic school leaders, contributing chapters on marketing and enrollment and operational vitality.

When she’s not busy teaching or doing research, Dr. Rieckhoff enjoys spending time with her family and volunteering with her dog, Sophie, a Golden Retriever therapy dog. Trained and licensed by Therapy Dogs International, this program connects dogs with places where therapy dogs are needed. Sophie is a regular in the K-9 Reading Buddies of the North Shore, where kids read to her at the public library. This not-for-profit group supports literacy development for kids who are struggling or may need some encouragement to read.

Staff Profile

Ines Garcia, Student Assistant

Ines Garcia, Student Assistant, is finishing up her senior year this quarter. A Michigan native, Garcia decided to come to DePaul to experience all of the opportunities city life in Chicago has to offer. Her interests lie heavily in language and education, which is what originally prompted her to apply for the position of Student Assistant for the LLC Department.

“My major is World Language Education with a Spanish concentration, and my minors are Bilingual-Bicultural Education (BBE) English as a Second Language (ESL) and Arabic,” says Garcia. “Originally I was an Arabic major, but I began to think about the future and what I could actually do with a language major, so that’s when I began looking into education. I love children and I love to challenge myself.”

One of Garcia’s most rewarding experiences in her academic career was studying abroad in Cuba for four months. While there, Garcia says she greatly improved her Spanish and learned about the importance representing the diversity of the USA while abroad. She recommends studying abroad to anyone who desires to have a career that is relevant to language and culture.

“I think it’s important to study abroad as an undergrad to challenge your preconceived notions about the world,” says Garcia. “Teachers need to have a strong sense of self and the ability to adapt to any situation.”

Garcia draws a lot of inspiration from different international locations and leaders. One of her most important inspirations is Jose Mujica, President of Uruguay.

“He is unique among all presidents and chooses to give 90% of his income to charity and live a simple lifestyle”, says Garcia. “This is a very admirable decision that most people would view as a sacrifice. I would love to barbecue with President Mujica and talk about life and listen to all of the advice he has for young people today.”

Garcia also hopes that her future profession involves travelling to new countries and exploring their culture and language.

“In five to ten years I see myself finishing graduate school,” says Garcia. “I see myself in a professional situation that allows me to travel and learn as much as possible from the people in all the cultures I encounter. I also hope for them to learn as much from me.”

Having worked in the LLC Department for the past two and a half years, Garcia has built connections with several faculty and College of Education staff. One of her fondest memories outside of the academics involves singing with DePaul Women’s Acapella, a musical group, and dancing with Ritmo Dembow, DePaul’s modern Latin Dance Group.

“I will definitely miss DePaul and the LLC faculty and COE staff,” says Garcia. “I have loved working here for the last few years and will miss the generosity and kindness of everyone.”
New Curriculum Studies Course: Teachers as Leaders

CS 470: Teachers as Leaders is a Curriculum Studies course, and part of the new Teacher Leader Endorsement Program in the Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum (LLC). The course seeks to assist teachers in becoming leaders for positive change in schools and districts, and also provides an overview of major theoretical models in research on teaching and teacher leadership as a way to expose students to multiple perspectives on their professional roles and responsibilities.

A project-and-research-based course, CS 470 is connected to local and national trends about instructional leadership as central to school and district leadership. The course also connects to current discussions and controversy around teacher and professional autonomy versus standardization of curriculum and assessments.

CS 470 was offered for the first time during Winter 2014 term. Students welcomed the new course and the new Teacher Leader Program, both geared toward practicing teachers who want to fulfill a variety of leadership roles in schools, educational organizations, districts and communities. Both CS 470 and the new Teacher Leader Program aim to provide students with strong knowledge of leadership skills, strong exposure to professional literature, and multiple opportunities to work with colleagues to build instructional efficacy.

Curriculum Studies student Erin Porat said that CS 470, “influenced my role as an educator by illuminating the possibilities that educators can create when we come together. It’s easy to become discouraged, but real opportunity can be sparked by hope and realized through collective action.”

Dr. Jody Gardner, Director of the Curriculum Studies Program, described the genesis of the new class in conversations with colleagues in Curriculum Studies and Educational Leadership:

“We envisioned CS 470 as a class to help practicing educators try on and try out roles as curricular and instructional leaders. We wanted the class to provide both a solid overview of the field’s increasing attention to instructional leadership through professional collaboration and to provide practicing educators a forum and excuse to actually build models of instructional collaboration at their schools or places of work. We hoped that combining exposure to literature with collective experimentation and reflection might help us all recall our vision of effective teaching as collaborative, inquiry-driven, sustainable, humanizing and rooted in research by educators for educators.”

Specific topics addressed in CS 470 include improving instruction school-wide, fostering sustainability in teaching, team teaching and curriculum mapping. Students who take the course will ultimately be able to develop and improve on other skills such as mentoring, coaching and collaborative teaching.

Educational Leadership student and former UK teacher and administrator Judith Scholes was able to relate course concepts both to her work as an educator in the United Kingdom and to her current roles as parent and parent-school liaison here in the US. “This course particularly was a very good example of the benefits of collaborative discussion. Both Dr. Gardner and the course participants were incredibly supportive, positive and engaged in the course material and the discussion,” says Scholes.

The Teacher Leader Program, though in its early stages, is already creating a positive buzz among students, in part due to courses like CS 470: Teacher as Leaders.

More information about CS 470 and the Teacher Leader program can be found here: http://www.depaul.edu/university-catalog/degree-requirements/graduate/education/curriculum-studies-med/Pages/default.aspx

Education Doctoral Program Continued

Completion. Says Johnson, “I am thrilled to be a part of the Doctoral Program here in the College of Education, and I am excited to work with students, faculty, and staff to create an efficient, community-oriented program with our commitment to student success at its core.”

Offering additional support to the program are LLC Department Assistant, Jennifer Tatum, and Melissa Bradford, the Graduate Assistant, a current student in the Curriculum Studies Doctoral Program. Tatum provides additional administrative support to faculty and Doctoral Program staff and Bradford provides support for new and current students, and is instrumental in the planning of EdD events and communication.

Restructuring the Doctoral Program has led to many exciting new developments, which include more scheduled information sessions for prospective students, brown bag presentations with COE faculty, potential partnerships with local schools to develop on and off-site cohorts and a program newsletter. A partnership with DePaul’s Writing Center is also being developed and will give Doctoral students the opportunity to meet with writing center consultants for assistance with the research and writing stages of the dissertation process.

The restructuring also led to revamping of the Education Doctoral Student Association (EDSA) and the EdD blog. Recently the COE hosted the EDSA conference, an event that drew more than 40 participants and provided current and prospective students with a variety of panels and presentations to attend throughout the day.

Says Ashlee Canty, Curriculum Studies EdD Student, “I really enjoyed how the conference put into perspective the dissertation process. It made it seem attainable and demystified it. I liked the panel format.”

Several Doctoral students at the beginning, middle and end of their respective journeys shared their work with colleagues and faculty, and Dr. Horace Hall delivered an informative keynote presentation about the importance of scholar activism, which highlighted his own work using participatory action research methodology in a Chicago community.

About the conference and Dr. Hall’s keynote, Samuel Graham, Educational Leadership EdD student says, “The presenters all brought something I was able to walk away from and utilize and think about, whether it was their process or their topic. I appreciated Dr. Hall’s keynote as well as Joliet Junior College presenter Dr. Bradford for bringing us a community college perspective.”

New program offerings are also in the works. Beginning Fall 2014, Doctoral candidates from all three concentrations will be able to pursue Principal Licensure, Teacher Leader Endorsement, and Superintendent Endorsement options, which are Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) approved programs. These options have been combined with current offerings, in an attempt to give our graduates more collaborative options and greater opportunity once they graduate from the program.

Returning Early Childhood Education student Judith Stewart says, “I am thrilled to be back in an academic setting, especially at DePaul where culturalism and urbanism go hand in hand. I can appreciate the classroom discussions where there is sharing from various backgrounds and different views.”

There are exciting changes already happening and more in store for the future. The LLC Department, in support of the Doctoral Program, and in continued collaboration with the new leadership team are committed to a new day, and a new, opportunity-filled future for the program and for our students.

Upcoming Doctoral Program Event:

Doctoral Program Information Session
Monday, May 19, 2014
DePaul University Welcome Center, Lincoln Park Campus

For More information about the Doctoral Program, visit: http://education.depaul.edu/Programs/Departments/DoctoralProgram.asp

“CS 470 influenced my role as an educator by illuminating the possibilities that educators can create when we come together.”
- Erin Porat, former CS 470 student
Mario Perez, Coordinator & Teacher at the Newcomer Center

Mario Perez (MA ’05) is the coordinator for the Township High School District 214 Language Immersion Newcomer Center. Perez also teaches reading and social science classes at the center to high school students from all around the world.

The Newcomer Center, located in Arlington Heights, IL, serves high school students who have recently arrived to the United States and are beginning to learn the English language. Perez was one of the four founding members of the school, which opened its doors over a decade ago in 2002. Township High School District 214 was awarded a Bilingual Education Grant from the U.S. Department of Education which allowed for the Newcomer Center to be created.

“They school is the only one of its kind in Illinois,” Perez says. “Our students come from all over the world, and we provide them with a very small setting with a linguistic and cultural cushion to help ease the blow of acculturation to the US.”

Perez initially completed his undergraduate studies in Secondary Education (History & Social Science) in 2000 from the College of Education and afterwards completed his master’s degree through the Bilingual-Bicultural Education (BBE) program in 2005. Since his time at DePaul, Perez states that he has applied the theories and knowledge he learned while in the BBE program to improve the educational practices at the Newcomer Center.

“I have a lot of fond memories of the BBE program, Dr. Sonia Soltero’s class in particular,” says Perez. “She really made a lasting impression on my pedagogy and the skills I learned from her helps me become a better advocate for my students.”

The Bilingual-Bicultural Education master’s degree program offers educators the opportunity to support educational and social change for traditionally underserved students. Program graduates work as bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in urban and suburban public and private schools, dual language schools, and several other literacy programs.

The Newcomer Center’s unique approach to English Language Learning (ELL) high school students has received national and local recognition as a model program for other schools wishing to incorporate an ESL program into their curriculum.

“Our small program continues to grow and garner recognition,” Perez states. “When I’m not teaching at the Newcomer Center, I’m presenting our program at conferences and collaborating with other educators that are looking to start a Newcomer Center in their respective high school district.” Perez hopes to remain an integral part of the Newcomer Center that he helped start 13 years ago.

“I’m hoping one day to write a book about my experience at the Newcomer Center and reflect on my teaching career,” says Perez. “I know that Dr. Soltero would be happy about this considering she is always encouraging me to finally write something down.”

When he’s not managing the center, Perez enjoys spending quality time with his family. “I’ve also been busy raising my two children and we recently added a dog, Wrigley, a white Samoyed, to our family. The three of them keep me extremely active and are a great outlet.”

For more information about the Newcomer Center; visit http://nc.d214.org/default.aspx