The COE Office of Graduate Studies (OGS)

The summer and fall 2010 semesters were positive and productive. We graduated over 160 masters, 17 educational specialist, and 17 doctoral students. In addition, 10 doctoral students passed their candidacy examinations and moved to candidacy, and 7 doctoral candidates had their dissertation proposals approved and are now collecting data. Several of our recent graduates had articles published in top journals along with chapter and book publications.

We would like to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to the many COE graduate students who work full-time, yet manage to complete demanding graduate degrees, many with children and other family responsibilities. We are impressed with their dedication and commitment to their studies and recognize the added challenges of completing a degree while working. A high percentage of COE graduate students fall into this category, working in our local schools, community agencies, such as counseling centers and recreational facilities, and many right here at FIU. We acknowledge that their real-life professional and personal experiences often enhance their graduate studies and our classes. The very nature of our college is highly influenced by having them as a valued part of our community.

Throughout this newsletter, you will find accomplishments of some of our full-time working students and others. Dr. Patty Barbetta
Dr. Yinka Tella: A Long Way from Ibadan, Nigeria

Yinka, born in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1966, has always been a passionate advocate for equity and social justice. His passion was recognized when as a practicing journalist in Nigeria, he was awarded the 1993 Diamond Award for Media Excellence. During that same year, he was detained for a series of exclusive stories that exposed the insincerity of the Ibrahim Babangida military regime then pretending to be transiting Nigeria to democracy. One might not expect an individual such as Yinka to earn a doctorate in Higher Education from FIU, but that is exactly what he did!

Yinka’s educational career has been rich and diverse with an MS in College Student Personnel from Western Illinois University, an MBA with specialization in General Management and a BS in English from two top-rated universities in Nigeria; Ogun State University and the University of Ife, respectively. His varied professional experiences include working in Nigeria as a banker, marketer, insurance agent and practicing journalist. Once he came to the USA, he found his calling as a Student Affairs Professional, leading to his doctoral studies in the COE at FIU.

Currently, Yinka is a tenured faculty counselor and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Designated School Official at the North Campus of Broward College in Coconut Creek, Florida. His job involves helping students with career exploration, educational planning and immigration advising. He also coordinates the North Campus Conversation Café designed to help English as a second-language learners to practice conversational English and interact with faculty, staff, administrators and peers who are native speakers in an informal, out-of-classroom setting. Under his leadership, the conversation café has grown tremendously and was featured as a model program at the Annual Conference and Expo of NAFSA: Association of International Educators held in Washington DC from May 25-30, 2008.

Mostly, Yinka worked full time as he earned his doctorate (with the exception of a short sabbatical during data collection). When asked how he was able to balance work with his doctoral studies, he tells us, "It took the understanding of my family, my doggedness, determination and ability to multi-task. Of course, I had to keep a lot of late nights studying, meeting sometimes suffocating deadlines, and mulling over ideas and their connections.” With respect to his views on FIU’s doctoral program, Yinka writes, "I learned so much, not only from the outstanding faculty but from the diversity and depth of experience of my colleagues. Every day in the program, I felt both challenged and supported. Quite sincerely, I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything in the world!”

Well, quite sincerely, the COE wouldn’t trade students like Yinka for anything in the world, either. We are most impressed with his recently published book, “The Post-9/11 Syndrome: International Education in an Era of Homeland Insecurity: Perspectives from the Florida Frontline” which grew out of his dissertation. The research itself was influenced by the narrative of fear, insularity and distrust that permeated the U.S. national psyche and discourse in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Please, see a more thorough book description at http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.aspx?bookid=88037. His Major Professor, Dr. Benjamin Baez (pictured above left of Yinka), was proud to contribute the Afterword of his book.
Art Education Graduate Students are “Worlds Ahead”

Walk down the 3rd floor hallway of the COE building on any given day, and you might see art work leaning against the wall and hear Professor Chang and his students critiquing, as they make final selections for an upcoming show. Those of us who walk by often interrupt, as we are compelled to tell them how impressed we are with their work, and we are not the only ones!! Many current and graduated students from one of our masters degrees in Art Education have received top professional recognition.

For example, at the recent Florida Art Education Association Annual Conference in Orlando, Mark Rosencrantz was the recipient of the "Florida Art Educator of the Year" Award, Mabel Morales was elected President of the Florida Art Education Association (FAEA), and Jacqueline Roch was a featured artist and the conference’s keynote speaker. Also, Jacqueline was commissioned to decorate a new ship for the Carnival Cruise Lines. At the Art Bravo Exhibition in Fort Lauderdale, a recent graduate, Giuseppe Nino Liguori, won the top award “Best of Show Prize.” Finalists for this prestigious exhibition are selected for artistic excellence, which includes concept and mastery of techniques.

In another venue, current master’s student Donna Underwood (pictured left) illustrated a published children’s book, I Am Moxxy Dog!, that was introduced on national television in September, 2010. You can find this book at amazon.com.

Our Art Majors often present their work on campus too. For example, in December 2010, Nathan Delinois (pictured below-center, with his artwork) was just one of the Art Education graduating students whose work was exhibited at the Frost Art Museum and viewed by over 400 visitors on opening night alone. In addition to local opportunities, the Art Education graduate program globalizes its curriculum with study abroad programs in France and China. The students studying in France (pictured below-right) are standing in front of Claude Monet’s home in the small village of Giverny, France, where many of Monet’s most famous pieces were painted. To learn more about Art Education in the COE or future student exhibits, please contact Professor Chang at (305) 348-3393 or at changd@fiu.edu.
Project IMPRESS (Integrated Middle-grades Preparation Reaching Exceptional Secondary Students) is a federally-funded project designed to improve the education of secondary special education students by providing coursework leading to highly-qualified secondary special education teachers. IMPRESS participants earn an MS in Special Education with a track in middle grades education. Drs. Cramer and Barbetta, Co-PIs of this personnel preparation project, designed a grant to provide full tuition for 3 cohorts, totaling 40 students. Each participant is required to conduct an action research project in his or her classroom and present the findings at an Annual Research-to-Practice Conference. Their research projects are developed through a two-part action research course series in the special education masters degree, often taught by Dr. Linda Blanton. Action research offers educators the opportunity to learn more about professional issues of interest and to improve their classroom effectiveness. Incorporating action research into their classrooms is just another way that the COE capitalizes on the full time working status of most of its graduate students.

Recent Graduate Accepts University Position at University of Louisville and Nominated for Prestigious Dissertation Award

Dr. Brad Shuck, Summer 2010 EdD graduate in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Human Resource Education at the University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development. Dr. Shuck began his tenure track position in August 2010 and is pictured here with Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr. during the Fall 2010 Commencement. At the University of Louisville, Dr. Shuck teaches the Instructional Design, eLearning, and Leadership core for the undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, he is supervising several doctoral students and focusing on advancing his research agenda around employee engagement. Dr. Shuck’s dissertation, entitled “Employee Engagement: An Examination of Antecedent and Outcome Variables” has been named one of three finalist for the 2011 Malcolm S. Knowles Dissertation of the Year Award, presented annually at the Academy of Human Resource Development Conference of the Americas.
Dissertation Evidence Acquisition (DEA) Fellowship

Maryam Soltan Zadeh, PhD student in Curriculum and Instruction, was awarded the FIU-DEA Fellowship to collect data for her dissertation, “History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Iran: Textbooks, Classrooms, and Students’ Historical Memory.” This study examined how national and religious dimensions of Iranian identity and history are portrayed in middle school history textbooks through the inclusion and exclusion of historical events, value judgments, and the presentation of influential figures. In addition, the politics of textbook publishing in Iran were examined to understand how social and political dynamics have affected educational policies and strategies related to history education and history textbooks since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Also, the study examined how students responded to the portrayal of history, how they perceive the country’s past, and how they define their national identity. This fellowship allowed her to travel to Germany to study archived textbooks and to Iran to collect data via direct classroom observations and in-depth interviews with students and teachers.

Dissertation Year Fellowship (DYF) Awarded

Ms. Yang (Lydia) Yang was awarded the DYF for up to three semesters starting Spring 2011 during her data analysis and writing phase of her dissertation. Lydia is a PhD student in Curriculum and Instruction and her dissertation is entitled, “A Q Factor Analysis of College Undergraduate Students’ Study Behaviors.” By using the Q factor analysis technique, her dissertation categorizes students based on types of study behaviors and makes predictions concerning academic achievement based on these categorizations. Lydia hopes to defend her dissertation in Summer 2011.

Examples of Recent Graduate Student Publications*


* Names in blue and green represent doctoral and masters students, respectively.
Summer/Fall 2010
Doctoral Graduates and Faculty

Dr. Theresa Lucas (committee member) with C&I graduate, Jacqueline Pena

Flavia Iuspa with Major Professor, Dr. Mohammed Farouk

Dr. Doug Smith, Co-Major Professor, marches in with Ya-Hui Elegance Chang

Summer/Fall 2010 COE Doctoral Graduates

Dr. Theresa Lucas (committee member) with C&I graduate, Jacqueline Pena

COE Faculty at Graduation: Drs. Laura Dinehart, Robert Wolff, and Joanne Sansone-Reiro
COE Office of Graduate Studies

Summer/Fall 2010
Doctoral Graduates and Faculty

Exceptional Student Education Graduates
Jacques Bentollia and Carol Ann Falkenberg

Dr. Benjamin Baez (center) with Higher Education Graduates: Anouchka Rachelson (left) and Oluwinka Tella

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Summer/Fall 2010 AE/HRD Doctoral Graduates

Front Row Left to Right: Vanetta Bailey-Iddrisu, Dr Tonette Rocco, Ya-Hui Elegance Chang,
Back Row Left to Right: Dr. Smith, Michael B. Shuck, Justin Bennett, Pauline Smith,
Maria Piakhotrik, Dr. Tom Reio, Elsie Paredes, Regina McOndle

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Dr. Glenda Musoba and Suzanne Onorato, Higher Ed Graduate

Christina More-Muelle with Major Professor, Dr. Charles Bleiker

Dr. Glenda Musoba and Suzanne Onorato, Higher Ed Graduate

Christina More-Muelle with Major Professor, Dr. Charles Bleiker
In the fall of 2006, I was given an opportunity to enroll in a doctoral program with a focus on one of the passions in my life: Exceptional Student Education (ESE). I became a member of the Urban SEALs (Special Education Academic Leaders) cohort, which focuses on developing urban special education leaders.

When I began my program, I worked in an elementary setting with students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities (EBD), but as a result of having certifications in elementary education and ESE, I was switched to general education. That only lasted a year and now I work fulltime at a separate day school with students with EBD. I am their teacher and team leader. While pursuing my doctorate, I presented at local and national conferences with colleagues and faculty. I also had the opportunity to teach special-education courses at Miami Dade College, the University of Miami, and Florida International University. All were valuable experiences that helped in my formation as a doctoral student and professional.

Being employed full-time and participating in a doctoral program can be difficult at first. You need to be organized and develop time management skills. I had to develop a schedule to manage my family, job, and doctoral program. I decided to wake up earlier and be at school an hour before the students arrived. This allowed me time to plan my day, read course assignments, and/or conduct Internet searches for research articles for my literature review. I would also stay late at work on days that I had classes at FIU and use that time on my coursework or dissertation. I still remember when my son was born about a year into my program. I was taking three classes, and it was the end of the school year for my job. It was a very exhausting time, but I was able to persevere thanks to the support of my family, cohort, colleagues, and faculty. Being in a doctoral program is not for the faint-hearted. It takes commitment.

Training myself to come early and leave late helped immensely when I began to write my dissertation. Trying to work at home with a young child can be difficult. It’s all about organization and time management. There is room in one’s life for what is important, as long you understand your priorities. For me, family is the most important, and my role as a teacher is exceptionally important. But, completing my dissertation was very important, also. So, I did what I needed to do to get it all accomplished.

There is room for all that is important in your life. I am proof of that because I plan to graduate in the spring of 2011. – Raul Escarpio

I began my course work toward an Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction with an emphasis in English Education in 2009. Working as an 8th grade language arts teacher and going to school full-time can be an exhaustive, yet rewarding experience. Surviving and thriving in a doctoral program while teaching requires prioritizing and time management. Having the support of my wife and family has been invaluable as writing a dissertation often infringes on time that usually is theirs. Developing a network of fellow doctoral students has been a blessing as we help each other not just academically, but by supporting each other through the trials and tribulations of grad school. The professors at FIU have been fantastic, and I have found all to be ready to help in any way they can. Happily, I am currently in my last semester of course work, and I plan to defend my dissertation proposal this term. My dissertation examines the effects of reading the young adult novel “Speak” on adolescents’ rape myth acceptance.

As part of Doctoral Seminar in Curriculum Studies, Dr. Spears-Bunton assisted me in applying for a grant from the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN). I was fortunate enough to win the grant, and the award covered the costs of novels for my dissertation. A paper on the theoretical foundations and design of my dissertation was accepted for presentation at the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research Conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in February, 2011.

A continuing part of my graduate experience at FIU has been presenting at national conferences on topics ranging from examining the influence of cultural hegemony on the development of heroic archetypes in literature, to a panel presentation on utopian, dystopian and post-apocalyptic literature. I believe becoming involved in a national professional organization is invaluable and my involvement has directly led to conducting workshops at The Pennsylvania Governor’s Academy for Urban Education, Muhlenberg College, PA., at Georgetown College, Kentucky, and for the Hurst-Euless-Bedford School district in Dallas, Texas. Teaching is also a part of my experience at FIU as I have taught courses in English Education and co-taught in Project IMPRESS to assist special education teachers in developing improved knowledge and skills in teaching English.

The experience of working with students and other teachers everyday informs and guides my scholarship in both practice and theory. In times where educational fads are ubiquitous and propaganda claiming to be based in research is rampant; having the everyday experience of teaching in an urban school is invaluable. -Victor Malo-Juvera
Project Educate:
Grant Awarded to Support Doctoral Studies in Special Education

Drs. Linda Blanton, Elizabeth Cramer, and Diana Valle-Riestra were awarded a U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, grant for Project EDUCATE (Empowering Diverse Urban Change Agents through Education). EDUCATE was funded to prepare a diverse cohort of doctoral students to focus on one of two special education roles: higher education teacher education (HETA) or community agency leadership/advocacy (CALA). Nine students began the program in January 2011 and all are working full-time in the field of special education. These emerging leaders will bring and acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable them to address the needs of CLD learners with disabilities and their families in terms of ethnic/racial, language, values/beliefs, and interpretations of disability. EDUCATE offers a unique graduate curriculum focused on collaboration among an interdisciplinary faculty, urban community partners, and CLD families to meet the needs of students who have disabilities in inclusive environments. The cohort-based, interdisciplinary program is composed of professional studies, a core of special education advanced courses, a cognate focused on CLD learners and urban settings, and a strong emphasis on research. Further, the program will offer academic year and summer internships that engage doctoral candidates in working in role-related settings.

Doctoral Candidate Fernanda Pineda Publishes in Intercultural and International Education

These publications grew out of coursework, a candidacy examination question, and the development of her dissertation literature review. Congratulations Fernanda!!


This chapter focuses on the philosophical and historical foundations of intercultural education in Mexico, providing a general overview of the movements and phenomena that resulted in the current definition(s) and model(s) of intercultural education (IE), anchoring them in the human rights arena. The IE concept(s), policies and model(s) discussed herein are those taken from official policy documents from the Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP).


This chapter discusses the criticisms of standardized assessments by doing a document analysis of mainly Mexico’s and Argentina’s ministries of education’s web sites and exploring the theoretical work of diverse authors, mainly critical pedagogues and culturalists.
### Summer/Fall 2010 College of Education Doctoral Graduates' Dissertations and Committee Memberships

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T&L = Teaching and Learning; LPS = Leadership and Professional Studies
COE Faculty Engage in Doctoral Programming Forums

A College of Education (COE) Doctoral Program Review, facilitated by the College’s Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), was conducted during the Spring 2010 semester and involved gathering and analyzing data from various sources including existing University and COE databases, student and faculty surveys, and meetings with students, faculty, and representatives from FIU’s University Graduate School. The COE-wide data collected was organized into seven areas: (1) Conceptual Framework and Assessment Systems, (2) Doctoral Degrees Curricula, (3) Doctoral Students Profile, (4) Candidacy Examinations, (5) Dissertation Process, (6) Doctoral Student Assistants, and (7) Graduate Faculty. Each section concluded with a summary of related strengths and challenges with potential plans to address each appropriately. During Spring 2011, UGS will facilitate an on-site visit from an outside evaluator.

Overall, the COE’s Doctoral Program Review reflected positive views from students and faculty alike and demonstrated productive student and faculty outcomes. Students and faculty did identify challenges and areas for improvement. Multiple approaches are underway to address these areas, including monthly forums for doctoral faculty, facilitated by Dr. Patty Barbetta and the COE’s Office of Graduate Studies. Each month’s forum has been (or will be) dedicated to a major area. Topics thus far have included (1) The dissertation process, “soup-to-nuts,” (2) Strategies for recruitment and admission and building a doctoral community with mostly students who work full-time, (3) Candidacy examinations, (4) Moving students through the dissertation process in a timely fashion, (5) Common dissertation writing challenges and strategies to overcome them, and (6) Effective major professor and committee member roles. These well-attended, highly-interactive forums have included many moments of thought-provoking sharing of ideas, and have resulted in the development of ad-hoc groups to continue this work. Future sessions will relate to dissertation development and quantitative and qualitative research. These forums represent just one way in which the COE demonstrates its ongoing commitment to quality doctoral programming. Forums for doctoral students are being planned for the 2011-2012 school year.
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