

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Niagara University • College of Education • Spring 2009

Key Facts About the College of Education at NU

Employment and Educational Data

Employment Data (Class of 2007)

Employment status among graduates in the College of Education (full time/military service/part time)

- Undergraduate — 97.1%
- Graduate — 93.9%

Educational Advancement Data (Class of 2007)

Percentage of alumni continuing their education in graduate or professional school

- Undergraduate alumni — 77.3%
- Graduate alumni — 7%

Alumni Ratings of Knowledgeable Skills

Class of 2007	Undergrad	Graduate
Knowledge of the subject matter	4.34	4.39
Working with diverse learners and communities	4.31	4.43
Using a variety of instructional (or administrative) strategies to enhance performance	4.38	4.37
Motivating and managing the learning environment (school leaders — building a vision)	4.19	4.21
Creating interactive learning (and/or organizational) environments, including the use of technology	4.27	4.20
Implementing formal and informal assessment strategies	4.33	4.20
Willingness to continue professional growth and self-assessment (reflective practitioner)	4.63	4.69
Collaboration with colleagues, parents, community	4.34	4.47

Scale of 1– 5, 5 is exemplary

NCATE Accredited Since 1985

College Honors Outstanding Leaders, Teachers and Counselors

Several outstanding individuals working in educational roles were recognized at the college's annual professional recognition awards ceremony April 30. These award recipients were recognized for their outstanding contribution to children, youth and families — contributions that exemplify the Vincentian mission of Niagara University and the conceptual framework of the College of Education. Award recipient speeches were quite moving and talked about the benefits of successful, sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships.

The administrators-of-the-year were: Paul Casseri, high school principal, Lewiston Porter Central School District; and Michael Pautler, director of education, Halton Catholic District School Board. The two teachers-of-the-year were: Deanna Cudahy, Hyde Park Elementary School, Niagara Falls City School District; and Debbie Kandilas, St. Joachim Catholic Elementary School, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. The counselors-of-the-year were: Dr. Maryanna Fezer, Tonawanda City School District; and Pat Mete, secondary program consultant, Niagara Catholic District School Board. The community leader was Carol Houwaart-Diez, president of the United Way of Niagara.

College Celebrates Second Ontario BPS Commencement

The college held its second Bachelor of Professional Studies Program in Ontario commencement in January 2009. The Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., S.T.D., president of Niagara University, presided over the ceremony, which was held at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. A total of 158 teacher candidates were awarded their degrees, with primary/junior and intermediate/senior divisions both represented.

Michael “Pinball” Clemons, chief executive officer of the Toronto Argonauts in the Canadian Football League, was the keynote speaker. Clemons, who received the Founders Award, delivered a powerful speech about the impact teachers have on all students and in society. The BPS program is accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers and offered with consent of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.



Michael “Pinball” Clemons delivered the commencement address at the second BPS commencement in Toronto.

Faculty News and Awards

Heidi Kazulak, who completed undergraduate and graduate studies here at Niagara, has recently obtained National Board Teacher Certification. Kazulak was able to pass the final assessment on her first attempt, a feat only 23 percent of final assessment test takers are able to accomplish. National Board Teacher Certification is one of the highest accolades a teacher can receive. Kazulak teaches in the Lewiston-Porter Central School District and has returned to the university as a senior lecturer.

Ontario BPS program faculty member **Robert Giza** spoke at the Science Teacher's Association of Ontario conference for 2008. The focus of the conference was teaching through the use of science, technology, society and the environment today. Giza's presentation focused on the Bio-Index created for use with 11th-grade students.

Dr. Raphael Heaggans received the Outstanding Adviser Award at the Kappa Delta Pi pinning ceremony that was held in March 2009. The outstanding adviser is selected each year by undergraduate candidates in education. Advisers are responsible for guiding undergraduate candidates through their educational program. According to one student nomination, "Dr. Heaggans was very helpful and full of important information which helped me through my time at Niagara University!"



The Academy School Receives Special Recognition

The College of Education recognized the Academy School for its dedication to improving the teaching and learning at the school. The Academy School is a high-needs school serving 180 students between the ages of 17-21. Principal Gregg Mott and the Academy School teachers were joined by Mary Ruth Kapsiak, president of the board; Vivian Evans, board member; and Dr. James Williams, superintendent of schools, to accept the award.

The partnership of the Academy School and the College of Education extends the Vincentian mission of Niagara University. Many of the faculty members and professional staff were immediately drawn to the needs of the school and the commitment of its teachers. Through the efforts of the Teacher Leader Quality Partnerships Grant funded by the New York State Education Department, faculty provided course work with a focus on literacy and multiculturalism. Niagara University's College of Education was proud to present the Academy School with its the "School Recognition Award" for 2009.

NUFTA in the Community

In March, the Niagara University Future Teachers Association participated in the Colonial Village Reading Night at Colonial Village Elementary School. During the reading night, seven members read folktales and created literacy activities for over 30 students to complete with the help of 20 Colonial Village teachers. One activity was a Reader's Theater where the students made masks of characters in the story and acted it out.

As a professional development club, NUFTA's primary goal is to help future teachers develop skills that can help them become exceptional teachers. In addition to the various club meetings held on learning skills such as the interview process, members of NUFTA pride themselves on contributing and helping the community.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Practices Workshops

Dr. Haoua M. Hamza, associate professor in education, and Mulu-Tsehay Belete, a teacher from Lafayette High, have been approved to offer professional development on culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the Buffalo Teacher Resource Center. The workshops are specifically designed to help teachers understand multicultural education in action in connection with second language acquisition theory and practice. While the workshop provides an understanding of approaches to instructing a diverse classroom in general, it creates awareness of specific learning circumstances and conditions of limited English proficient students in the classroom. It thus seeks to empower educators to effectively work with a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students.

At left: Dr. Debra Colley, dean of the College of Education and Kappa Delta Pi chapter counselor, delivered an address at the society's induction ceremony in November 2008.

A Tribute to Robert Bennett, Chancellor of the New York Board of Regents

It was a distinct honor of the university to recognize and thank the former chancellor of the Board of Regents, Robert M. Bennett, at the College of Education's annual professional recognition dinner. He has served the state and, in doing so, has exemplified the mission of Niagara University. Robert Bennett was named to the New York State Board of Regents in 1995 and was elected as chancellor of the board in 2002. Bennett leaves his footprint on education across the state — a footprint that extends across the many facets of the University of the State of New York, from special education to rehabilitation, from early childhood to libraries and museums, from the college and university system to the professions.

Our special recognition included mention of his passion for high standards, his focus on the “performance gap” and high school graduation, and his P-16 policy agenda. In addition, he was recognized as a facilitative and servant leader who insists upon the involvement of the whole community — co-locating services, cultivating organizational influence, and including all components of the educational system in solving our most pressing issues.

As was noted by Dr. Bonnie Rose, executive vice president and vice president of academic affairs, “While his responsibilities have been state-wide and far-reaching, we have been fortunate to have a chancellor in our midst! Our students and our faculty have benefitted from his teaching and his range of knowledge. We have entrusted a very large educational system to this leader. It is with great admiration that we thank him for his passion for children and youth — especially for those, as is evident in our mission, who are most in need.”

Creating Teacher Leaders Through Collaboration

The Niagara Falls City School District and Niagara University have received a federal, Title IIB Mathematics and Science Partnerships grant that is funded by the New York State Education Department. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics cohort comprises 215 participants out of the school district's 640 employees. The participating teachers are required to complete 60 hours of embedded professional development yearly over the three-year grant cycle. Forty-one of those teachers have opted to take 18 graduate credit hours to become MST content specialists.

Teacher pre- and post-assessments are conducted annually to establish baseline data for professional development. Through support of an instructional coach model for professional development, teachers who may not have a preference for science content will become more comfortable and transition to teaching science as an investigation, expanding their knowledge and experimenting with new teaching strategies.

At right: Literacy Family Night, held in December 2008, featured stations such as this one, where twins Gabriella and Olivia created ornaments with the help of Julia, a student from Dr. Donna Phillips' literacy class.

Student News and Awards

At the Bachelor of Professional Studies in Ontario commencement in January, several outstanding candidates were presented with awards. **Michael Rosen** and **Lisa Moore Haidle** received the Gold Medal in recognition of achieving the highest GPA in the primary/junior and intermediate/senior programs, respectively. **Giuseppina Pitaro** (primary/junior) and **Julia Nobrega** (intermediate/senior) received the Education Award for Excellence in Teacher Preparation.

Kaylin Ranagan graduated from Niagara with a degree in elementary education in May 2008. She immediately began work in the university's admissions office and studies toward a master's degree in literacy. In her junior year, Ranagan studied abroad in Ireland where she met a friend who worked in Washington, D.C., and recommended her for a job at the Presidential Youth Leadership Conference due to her background in education. Not only did Ranagan have an opportunity to witness history at the inauguration of President Obama, but she also attended the PYLC.

Recent teacher education program graduates **Nadia Chami** and **Leah Iacurti** have accepted positions through the Protocol Education agency in London, England. Chami and Iacurti are full-time substitute teachers in public schools across London for all ages K-12 in English and Individual in Society.



Faculty Scholarship

Books

Heaggans, R. (2009). *The 21st Century Hip-Hop Minstrel Show: Are We Continuing the Blackface Tradition?* University Readers: San Diego, CA.

Polka, W., & Litchka, P. (2008). *The Dark Side of Educational Leadership: Superintendents and the Professional Victim Syndrome.* Rowman & Littlefield Education: New York.

Vermette, P.J. (2008). *Engaging Teens in Their Own Learning: Eight Keys to Student Success.* Eye-On-Education: Larchmont, NY.

Articles

Augustyniak, K. & Kilanowski-Press, L. (2008). Neuromuscular disorders: A primer for school psychologists. *NASP Communicative.*

Hamza, H. M., Some, T. H., & Belete, M. (2008). Educating the African newcomer student in Western New York: The case of SIFE and multilingual learner. In Mutua, N. K. & Sunal, C. (Eds.), *Undertaking educational challenges in the 21st century: Research from the field.* Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.

Hodges, S., & Connelly, A. (2009). A job search manual for counselors and counselor educators: How to present and promote your counseling career. *American Counseling Association Press.*

Huang, J. (2009). What happens when two cultures meet in the classroom? *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 36(1).

Kozen, A.A., Augustyniak, K., Mattie, H., Iannarelli, B., & Brown, K. (2008). An investigation of factors that positively or negatively influence collaborative relationships. *Proceedings of the Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society*, 4, 61-69.

Polka, W., Litchka, P., & Davis, S. (2008). Female superintendents and the professional victim syndrome: Preparing current and aspiring superintendents to cope and succeed. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, (6)4.

NU Faculty at AERA Conference in San Diego

Five members of the faculty in education presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference in San Diego, Calif., in April. Major research topics included "Attitudinal change: developing good dispositions toward teaching," and "Dispositional discipline in teacher preparation programs: problems, pitfalls, and practices," as well as "The impact of no child left behind on diverse stakeholders in education." Faculty members who attended the conference included: Rev. Dr. Stephen Denig, Dr. Thomas Sheeran, Dr. Vincent Rinaldo, Michelle Ciminelli and Carmen Montgomery.

Sabbatical Outcomes: Dr. Sylvia Valentin in Puerto Rico

Dr. Sylvia Valentin was on sabbatical during the fall 2008 semester and worked with two kindergarten classrooms at the Moca School District in Moca, Puerto Rico. The students were culturally and linguistically diverse and most were ESL (English as a Second Language) students. This study allowed Valentin to survey teachers and students regarding the attitudes toward teaching ESL, current practices, and areas for future professional development. A manuscript entitled "Assessing Cultural Sensitivity in Elementary Education Pre-service Teachers" was created and submitted for publication.



Dr. R. Michael Smith (third row, far right) with the Chinese teachers at Sanda University during his recent sabbatical. Upon his return, Smith established a longitudinal study wherein 75 Niagara University graduate education students communicated weekly with 75 Chinese teachers via the Internet. Educators on both sides of this project benefit—the Chinese teachers enhance their language skills by conversing in English, while the Niagara students benefit from an expansion in cultural awareness and diversity.

Focus on Education is produced two times during the academic year by the Niagara University College of Education. For more information about the college and its programs, contact:

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