

**Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED)  
The University of Vermont  
College of Education and Social Services  
CPED Palo Alto Convening, Progress Report  
May 31, 2008**

**I. Introduction**

The UVM College of Education and Social Services offers the Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDLP).<sup>1</sup> The Ed.D. is an applied research and education degree for professionals serving in leadership and management positions in elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, health care, law enforcement, and social service organizations. Degree requirements include research-based courses and a dissertation.

The College of Education and Social Services (CESS) began the conversation to review its doctoral offerings in Fall 2005. As part of this process, a Ph.D. Program Development Committee was formed and charged with the task of drafting a proposal for an interdisciplinary Ph.D. within the college. At the time, Dean Fayneese Miller noted that a Ph.D. in Education could be geared specifically towards the preparation of academicians interested in contributing to scholarly literature (Miller, 2005, p.1). Discussions about introducing a Ph.D. program therefore created an explicit need to differentiate the curricular objectives and experiences for the Ed.D. program.

Participation in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) offers the CESS a valuable opportunity to be part of a team of institutions that are engaged in strengthening doctoral education in the field of education. At the June 2008 Palo Alto Convening, the UVM CPED team intends to build on and contribute to the national conversation about the Education Doctorate by

- investigating ways to enhance UVM's existing Ed.D. program;
- exploring and understanding the use of capstone projects;
- contributing to a shared lexicon among institutional stakeholders;
- learning from the experiences of other CPED institutions about alternative options and assessments; and
- applying those learnings, as appropriate, in the local CESS context.

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<sup>1</sup> The CESS is home to the Department of Education, which includes more than 50 faculty in Elementary Education, Middle Level Education, Secondary Education, Physical Education, Art Education, Music Education, Educational Foundations, and Educational Leadership and Policy Studies programs; 15 faculty in the Department of Integrated Professional Studies, which includes Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood and Special Education, Family and Consumer Studies, Human Development, Counseling, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Higher Education and Student Affairs; and 12 faculty in the Department of Social Work.

## II. Description of Current Program

### Overview

The mission of The UVM College of Education and Social Services (CESS) is to provide “leadership in addressing the educational and human service needs of Vermont and the nation” (<http://www.uvm.edu/~cess/~mission.html>). A central tenet of the CESS is a commitment to pedagogy that fosters social justice and, to that end, many students engage in work that is making a difference in the lives of children, youth, and adults in the communities they serve (Gerstl-Pepin, Killeen, & Hasazi, 2006). This social justice pedagogy, which translates to a significant body of services to the state of Vermont, is in keeping with the university’s land-grant mission and responsibilities. Vermont is one of the smallest states in the nation, with an estimated population of 623,908 (U.S. Census, 2006). UVM is the only research university in the state, and the only Carnegie-classified Research-Extensive institution.

The CESS Ed.D. program fulfills the College mission by “preparing outstanding professionals in education, social work, and human services, engaging in scholarship of high quality, and providing exemplary professional service” (<http://www.uvm.edu/~cess/~mission.html>). Established in the early 1990s, the program has continued to grow in stature and strength. During Fall 2006, for example, there were 109 students working with 30 CESS faculty members. The number of faculty involved with CESS doctoral students significantly increases when faculty members from other UVM colleges and schools, -- who serve as doctoral dissertation chairs in accordance with UVM Graduate College requirements -- are included in the count.

Although UVM’s current doctoral studies and research projects extend far beyond Vermont borders, the genesis of the educational doctoral program at UVM emerged from a regional need for highly skilled leaders capable of bringing about effective change in schools, government agencies, and in higher education. Taking full advantage of Vermont’s small size, the Education Leadership and Policy Studies Ed.D. program benefits from the relatively easy access to government officials, agency leaders, and other university and PreK-12 school stakeholders. Many of the CESS faculty members are engaged in research that has direct value for the citizens of Vermont. Similarly, some doctoral students conduct research with a focus on Vermont policy issues.

As examples, recent Vermont-focused dissertation topics include:

- Aspirations of rural youth living in poverty
- Analyzing state-wide youth risk surveys
- Organizational restructuring of a Vermont agency
- Communities of practice and school reform
- Organizational leadership in higher education
- Democratic schooling in Vermont communities
- Vermont foster youth aging out of state custody
- African-American communities in rural Vermont
- Full-service schools through integrated partnerships

### **III. Structure and Content of Current Program**

The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at UVM is an applied research and education degree for professionals serving in leadership and management positions in elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, health care, law enforcement, and social service organizations. Its mission is to “produce leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities” (EDLP Handbook, 2006, p. 2). Program emphases include the design and implementation of educational research; policy studies; adaptation of theoretical constructs and models related to leadership and change in educational and social service settings; knowledge and skills in inter-organizational relationships; budget and strategic planning; and program evaluation (UVM On-line Catalog 2007-08). The program is characterized by a research orientation in core courses, elective courses, a qualifying paper, qualifying examination, and a dissertation.

#### Cohort Model.

The doctoral program is organized around a cohort model in which a group of approximately 20 students is admitted each year. Each cohort is comprised of students with varied professional experiences in education, social services, and health. The cohort approach is designed to foster a learning community, to maintain student commitment, and is intended to lead to higher completion rates. The majority of students are Vermont residents but there is an interest in increasing the diversity of the applicant pool to increase the participation of out-of-state and international students.

#### Admission to the Ed.D. Program.

Applications from the years 2002 to 2007 average about 40 per year, with an average yield of about 80 percent. Applicants must hold a master’s degree or equivalent and demonstrate a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 for previous graduate study. Students applying for graduate fellowships or assistantships are required to demonstrate satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Examination, which is not required for admission to the program.

#### Ed.D. Curricular Themes

The Ed.D. curriculum is organized according to four domains:

- Organizational Theory, Change, and Leadership (leadership roles, policy analysis);
- Inquiry Processes, Applied Research, and Utilization of Knowledge (research paradigms, interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data);
- Critical Perspectives (societal and educational dynamics relating to social justice and the inter-relationships among ideology, power, and socio-historical contexts);
- Learning and Development (theories of human development and learning as applied to program development and evaluation).

### Ed.D. Degree Requirements and Completion

Degree requirements closely resemble Ph.D. requirements in the arts and sciences. The Ed.D. requires a minimum of 56 credit hours beyond a master's degree, and is comprised of coursework, a comprehensive exam, a qualifying paper, and a dissertation.

Coursework is divided among core courses (21 credits) and courses in a selected elective concentration (15 credit hours).

Students are eligible to enroll in dissertation credits only after successful completion of the core courses, comprehensive examination, and the qualifying paper. Ed.D. candidates are subject to the regulations of the UVM Graduate College, which requires that the dissertation chair must be a Graduate College faculty member from outside the doctoral candidate's department or school.

Full-time students may be able to complete the program in 3-4 years. Part-time students may complete the Ed.D. program in seven years. From 2003-04 to 2006-07, UVM awarded the following Ed.D. degrees: 2003-04: 18; 2004-05: 21; 2005-06: 12; 2006-07: 12; 2007-08: 24.

### Ed.D. Program Governance and Administration. (See also *Dedicated Resources* below.)

The Ed.D. is administered by a senior faculty member who serves as Program Director and an administrative professional who oversees the program's day-to-day operations. The Program Director is assisted by a core faculty and advised by a Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) comprised of faculty with interdisciplinary interests. Noted as a key component of the program by university-level program reviewers,

The DAC is charged with reviewing student evaluations and progress, proposing curricular revisions, and reviewing and refining policy. [The DAC] meets four to six times per year to accomplish its tasks, and is staffed by 28 active members of the program faculty. (UVM Faculty Senate Curriculum Affairs Committee, 2007, p. 1)

## **IV. Strengths of Current Program**

Aligning with the missions of the university, college, and department, the Ed.D. program strives to develop leadership skills among candidates concerned about social justice so that they are ready to lead in a range of dynamic environments. Benefiting from prior experiences of their cohort, Ed.D. students derive mutual benefit from the varied experiences and perspectives of their peers.

Another particular strength of the current program is "the vital contribution" of faculty and students "to the social service organizations and educational programs across Vermont". In addition, other strengths include the high quality of mentoring as indicated on student evaluations and a curriculum that aligns with program values (UVM Faculty Senate, Curriculum Affairs Committee, 2007, p. 1-2).

## **V. Steps Taken to Identify Program Changes**

In their academic program review of the Ed.D. program, the UVM Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee suggested that, “while there may be efforts to establish a Ph.D. program in education, it is critical to maintain and support the Ed.D. program. Indeed, there is a need for both research and applied doctorates in Education at UVM” (UVM Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee, 2007). With this in mind, the CESS dean, faculty, and administrators are continuing conversations about the identification of best practices for delivering high quality educational and research opportunities to graduate students in the college.

For the June 2008 Palo Alto CPED Convening, work specifically has focused attention on these conversations, bringing interested partners to the table to begin the work of developing a cohesive vision for better coordination of graduate education.

## **VI. Dedicated Resources**

The Ed.D. program and CPED initiative are staffed as follows:

As noted above, a senior faculty member, who serves as Program Director, is assisted by core faculty who work to align curricular elements with the program’s mission. An administrative professional oversees and manages the day-to-day operations and provides a consistent liaison for Ed.D. students. As noted, the Doctoral Advisory Committee contributes to admission and advising processes. Further administrative support is provided by the UVM Graduate College personnel.

In addition, the CESS Dean’s Office has supported the CPED initiative directly by providing administrative and clerical staffing, and by funding essential work. Specifically, one of the college’s two associate deans has been charged with leading college-focused collaborative efforts and facilitating relationships with CPED partners. The Dean’s Office also assigns a portion of a faculty member’s time to special projects including research and analysis of doctoral programs in education.

Two students, one recent graduate and one beginning the third year of the program, have been included in CPED discussions that have occurred throughout the year. One who attended the October 2007 Convening will be attending the June 2008 Convening to offer both continuity among the “out-front” team members and to provide the perspective of one who has experienced the program.

## VII. Next Steps

The debate about the appropriate degree for educational professionals is not new. Indeed, the creation of the Ed.D. resulted from opposition of arts and sciences faculty at numerous institutions who had concerns about whether “professional fields possessed a body of scholarly knowledge” and about degrees awarded outside the administrative control of the graduate schools (Townsend, 2002; 1990). Since UC Berkeley offered the first Ed.D. in 1921 and Harvard followed the next year, the legitimacy of the education doctorate has continued to be questioned (Clifford & Gutherie, 1988).

In recent years, however, highly visible criticism of Schools of Education, and widespread disagreement among faculty, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners about how to prepare education professionals has given the issue new urgency (Archbald, 2008; Levine, 2005; Shulman, Golde, Bueschel & Kristen, 2006). One thing is clear: It is necessary “to make transparent to prospective doctoral students what doctoral education consists of, and what it requires” (Nyquist & Wuff, 2000).

Given the context of the national dialogue and the UVM local experience, UVM CPED team members hope to both learn from the experience of others and to contribute to the dialogue by talking about the UVM CESS Ed.D. model with CPED peers. Because relationships established in graduate school build on a laboratory of practice that emphasizes collaboration among a range of professionals for problem-solving, the UVM CPED team members are interested in exploring implications of capstone experiences that capitalize on collaboration. For example, it is the intent of the UVM team to investigate ways in which to strengthen the existing UVM program by understanding the use of capstone projects and to learn from the examples of other participating institutions about these alternative options.

At the same time, we want to share the CESS experience of working with an inter-professional doctoral cohort with the larger CPED group. Taking advantage of the special UVM role as the state’s premier research university, the CESS Ed.D. program has attracted and enrolled a diverse professional group. This doctoral preparation emphasizes the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to social and economic problems and the inherent value of professional collaboration. Although other CPED schools might have taken similar approaches, we have not learned of other programs moving in this direction. For this reason we hope to contribute our experience with an inter-professional cohort model to inform the conversation about the professional practice doctorate.

Other questions we intend to explore include:

- In what ways might there be further articulation and differentiation of the Ed.D. program from a Ph.D. experience without diluting the existing program?
- In what ways can the CPED initiative inform strategies for increasing research grant opportunities for doctoral candidates?
- What research skills are needed for graduates of an Ed.D. program?

## VIII. Challenges and Concerns

Currently, UVM CESS faculty members are involved in the process of discussing and identifying best practices for graduate education, including doctoral programs. Many recognize the need for grant funding opportunities in order to continue to recruit and support a diverse and talented pool of students. Because UVM is a relatively small school, as compared to other CPED institutions, limited resources, most notably faculty time, must be used in ways that maximize program efficacy. UVM CPED team members recognize that in the current climate, most campuses are facing similar challenges and we hope to learn if others have identified creative approaches or solutions.

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