

Alumnus Hired as D.C. Public Schools Chief of Innovation and Research

August 13, 2014

D.C. Public Schools has recently hired TLES alumni Robert Simmons for a new senior-level position as the system's chief of innovation and research.

Simmons has chosen to take an indefinite sabbatical from his position as Director of the Center for Innovation in Urban Education at Loyola University Maryland where he is also a professor of urban education.

"I am excited to join the amazing educators in the District of Columbia Public Schools. Having spent my entire career focusing on urban education I can think of no better place to learn and collaborate with courageous educators, led by Kaya Henderson, and the amazing community of Washington DC," Simmons states.

Simmons will be asked to co-lead an initiative hoping to improve the graduation rate of African American males in the District which is now only at 38 percent. He will also be conducting research leading to more effective initiatives to ensure academic success in an urban school setting.

Simmons graduated from Western Michigan University in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in science education. He then went on to earn his masters from Lawrence Technological University in 2001 and his doctorate from Hamline University in 2007.



Fifty Years Ago is a Long Time

Sept. 25, 2014

The year was 1963. A couple of weeks before the assassination of President John Kennedy, Dr. Dan Morgan had his senior year career advising appointment with Richard Patterson, a counselor at East Detroit High School. Their conversation is vivid, a memory which he remembers to this day:

Patterson: "So what will you be doing after graduation?"

Morgan: "Probably going to college."

P: "Where?"

M: "Western Michigan University...some of my friends are going there I think."

P: "What do you want to do?"

M: "Probably be a teacher."

P: "What subject do you want to teach?"

M: "Not Math. Not Chemistry or Physics. Maybe English. Maybe History."



P: "What about special ed? I used to be a speech correctionist."

M: "You mean like the kids in the Erin Building"? (The Erin Building was a separate facility on the EDHS campus where students with disabilities went to school.)

P: "That would be a good choice for you." (Patterson did not know anything about Morgan.)

M: "I'll check into it."

Dr. Morgan entered WMU in September 1964 as a declared special education major. Like many students, Dr. Morgan's primary concern about college was how he was going to pay for his education. After some research he discovered that there were scholarships and government loan programs available for prospective special education teachers:

"I applied for and was awarded a full-ride tuition scholarship (\$300 for the academic year!) from the Kalamazoo Chapter of Michigan Association of Emotionally Disturbed Teachers (MAEDT) after I was able to convince them that I wanted to teach emotionally disturbed students and not students with mental retardation as my application letter originally indicated. I was also awarded a National Defense Education Act loan for \$600 for my freshman year."

Combined with his savings from a part-time job as a drug store clerk, he had his freshman year expenses covered. For his sophomore year he again received a full-ride scholarship and loan. The \$1200 loans were ultimately forgiven because of the years he taught as a special education teacher.

It wasn't until his junior year that he began major-specific courses.

"I remember a field trip to Coldwater State Hospital in the Introduction to Special Education course where we observed children who, today, would be educated in neighborhood schools. I also remember my only pre-student teaching field experience tutoring a "troubled" student that was arranged by a community mental health agency. My Psychopathology of Childhood course did not really prepare me for my special education student teaching experience in the adolescent unit at the Kalamazoo State Hospital teaching 8 boys and girls all day beginning with the second day of the semester. What prepared me better were the courses I completed in the Psychology Department. I took Dr. Dick Mallot's first Experimental Psychology course in 1966. The lessons I learned conducting experiments with rats and pigeons had a profound impact on my approach to teaching that have stuck with me throughout my career."

It took Dr. Morgan 4 and a half years to finish his undergraduate degree. He graduated in December 1968 with several teaching offers. One was from Detroit Public Schools as a teacher of 35 socially maladjusted elementary students: "I had recently read Jonathan Kozol's Death at an Early Age and, while inspiring, I didn't think I had what it would take to survive that assignment as a brand new teacher who really didn't know what he was doing." Instead, he accepted an offer to be the Crisis Teacher at Ottawa Junior High School in the Lakeview School District in St. Clair Shores. "I was a mid-year replacement for a teacher who had taken a leave of absence due to a 'nervous breakdown'." Today, he believes her departure would be more accurately described as "burnout", which Morgan describes as "a too often occurrence among special education teachers."

Dr. Morgan taught at Ottawa for a year and a half, leaving for a full-ride masters fellowship at Michigan State University during the 1971-72 academic year. Following MSU, he accepted a job as a Teacher Consultant in Mt. Pleasant, MI, where he worked until resigning at the end of the school year in 1974 to work on his Ph.D. at Florida State University. After FSU, Dr. Morgan accepted a position as an Assistant Professor at Utah State University in Logan, UT where he served as a member of the faculty and as Department Head for over 30 years.

"The opportunity to return to WMU in 2009 came at the right time for me on a personal basis. In the back of my mind was the realization that, if I could make it until 2014, I will have completed a 50-year circle from the time I entered WMU as a freshman special education major in 1964. My experiences as an undergraduate at WMU continue to significantly influence my professional goals. I want to do what I can do to ensure that students graduating as special education majors have a set of starter skills that will make their first year of teaching more successful and less stressful than my first years of teaching. That ten minute session with Mr. Patterson began my journey as a special educator and the clock is still running."

Spybrook Awarded Three-year Grant



Aug. 21, 2014

College of Education and Human Development faculty member Dr. Jessaca Spybrook was recently awarded a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation entitled “Power Analyses for Moderator and Mediator Effects in Cluster Randomized Trials.” The purpose of the project is to improve the planning and design of multilevel studies throughout the social sciences by (1) developing power analysis formulas to estimate the probability with which a design can detect multilevel mediation and moderation effects if they exist and (2) implementing these formulas in software. The \$799,688 grant is a collaborative research project with three Principal Investigators, Spybrook at WMU (\$266,187), Professor Ben Kelcey at the University of Cincinnati (\$289,949) and Professor Nianbo Dong at the University of Missouri (\$243,552).

Annual Scholarship Reception

Sept. 19, 2014

The College of Education and Human Development hosted its annual scholarship reception on Friday, Sept. 19, 2014. For the 2014-15 academic year over \$340,000 was awarded to CEHD students. The reception was well attended by recipients and their families as well as several scholarship donors. Timothy Green, Provost of the University, and Ming Li, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, spoke at the reception.

Student Receives Scholarship from Foundation

Sept. 25, 2014

Eden Souser, a textile and apparel studies major, recently received a scholarship from the Monroe-Brown Foundation. The scholarship provides Kalamazoo area college students with funding for their studies as well as an internship with a life science or advanced manufacturing firm in Kalamazoo County. Souser completed her internship during the summer of 2014 at Edwards Garment, a Kalamazoo-based uniform and image clothing manufacturer. During her time there she was able to enhance her marketing, merchandising and product development skills. An apron Souser designed will be featured in an upcoming Edwards Garment product collection. After finishing her studies at WMU Eden plans to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and pursue a career in apparel design and product development.



Miller named chair of committee for National Athletic Trainers' Association

Aug. 4, 2014

Dr. Michael Miller, faculty member in the Department of Human Performance and Health Education, was recently selected as chair of the Research and Development Committee for the Executive Committee for Education (ECE) for the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA).

The ECE oversees matters related to athletic training graduate and undergraduate education and coordination of the delivery of educational programming for the profession of athletic training. Their groups fall under the auspices of the ECE, which are the Continuing Education Committee, the Post-Professional Education Council, and the Professional Education Council. Dr. Miller will coordinate specific research questions of the various groups of the ECE to lead to the development of a “research agenda for the future of athletic training education” and assist the developing of organizational structures that will contribute to the ongoing sustainability of this initiative for the ECE.



Alumna and Faculty Members Have Manuscript Published

Sept. 25, 2014

Counselor education alumna Dr. Janee Steele, Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology faculty member Dr. Stephen Craig, and adjunct faculty member and Department of Family and Consumer Sciences Chair Dr. Gary Bischof, recently received good news. Their manuscript, “Political Ideology and Perceptions of Social Justice Advocacy Among Members of the American Counseling Association,” has been accepted for publication in the International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling. The article is based on Dr. Steele’s dissertation research, for which Dr. Bischof served as her Chair and Major advisor.

Partnerships Help Teacher Preparation Candidates

Sept. 26, 2014

The TRiO Future Educator Success Program and Kalamazoo Public School middle school learners have just completed the academic learning phase of the Summer Slide Prevention Program in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Kalamazoo. This partnership focused on building the middle school learners’ skills in the areas of math, reading, financial literacy, career exploration and academic planning and allowed the teacher preparation candidates the opportunity to put into practice their formal education through experiential learning. This collaboration between three entities (College of Education and Human Development TRiO Future Educator Success Program, The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Public Schools) was funded by a BE GREAT Grant from the Greg Jennings Foundation. “The data indicates that this collaboration filled a need in our



community and the 84% completion rate for the middle school learners was a number too great to be ignored” says Marcy L. Peake, Director of TRiO FESP.

The teacher preparation candidates also developed their teacher dispositions, spent time learning about the moods, movements and responses of middle school learners, experienced the joys and challenges of working with other people’s children and interacted with parents and guardians. Said one teacher candidate about participating in this program, “I learned to work together with other teachers, bounce ideas off each other and synthesize. But the biggest thing I learned was patience with children and to have confidence in myself as a leader/teacher. Because when I had no confidence and was telling myself that the kids did not like me and that I was a horrible teacher, then I became one. So once I started being positive, I saw an improvement in both the kids and my ability to lead.”

On Oct. 4 all learners will be reunited for a day of team building and leadership activities at the YMCA’s Camp Eberhart in Three Rivers, Michigan. This reunion will allow the middle school learners to reunite with their TRiO FESP leaders, develop new skill sets and have some fun together.

As one partnership comes to an end, a new one is beginning. Dr. Ming Li, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development and Dr. Michael Rice, Superintendent of Kalamazoo Public Schools, and their leadership teams met to discuss a 2014-15 collaboration between TRiO FESP teacher preparation candidates and Phoenix High School learners and recent graduates. TRiO FESP learners will be paired to provide academic tutoring and mentoring support four afternoons per week to Phoenix High School learners as a component of the Phoenix High School restructuring plan. “This opportunity allows for our learners to provide academic assistance and encourage a college going culture in the community while gaining experience in a high school setting with veteran educators, everyone wins in situations like these” says Peake.

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