

Exceptional University Programs

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Fordham University: Coherence out of Diversity

In response to societal, pedagogical, and economic pressures for changes colleges of education and departments of educational leadership have sought alternative formats for the preparation of future educational leaders (Glasman & Glasman, 1997). The use of collaboration partnerships in the development and delivery of programs aimed at the preparation and development of various professionals has gained credibility as an efficient and effective organizational strategy (Petersen, 1999). While it is common place for preparation programs to talk about collaboration, few institutions actually implement programs that are mutually and collaboratively developed, with a shared vision, and demonstrate organizational commitment from all partners (Fusarelli & Smith, 1999). One program that has made substantial strides and enjoyed success and recognition with their endeavors to collaborate with school practitioners and other institutions is Fordham University's Administration, Policy and Urban Education Department.

Diversity and collaboration define Fordham University's Administration, Policy and Urban Education graduate programs: Geographic diversity, as students come from the City and the suburbs, from NY, NJ, and Connecticut, as well as overseas. Ethnic diversity, as the doctoral (both Ph.D. and Ed.D.) and masters and professional diploma programs, represent the African-American, Latino, Asian and White communities of the greater New York metropolitan area. And religious and secular diversity, since Fordham takes its Jesuit tradition seriously and serves students from Catholic and other religious institutions—as students from religious orders and dioceses are drawn to Fordham from across the world (Africa, Philippines, Asia, Australia).

Fordham not only has a multitude of cohorts recruited for the Master-Professional Diploma (MS/PD) and PhD/EdD but also within the cohorts are subgroups representing the diversity of professions and institutions we served. Within the Executive Leadership Program (ELP), now in its 12th year, for example, are doctoral students from K-12 education, from higher education, church leadership, and human resources education. This diversity-within-diversity makes for a rich learning environment, not often found in graduate study today.

The glue that holds these diverse cohorts together is collaboration: collaboration between school districts and the university, who at the MS/PD pay one-third of the students' costs, the university

contributes a third, and the students pay a third. This arrangement encourages "sending districts" within the City and neighboring towns such as Yonkers and Greenburgh, NY, to nominate their most talented educators, to commit to giving them a good internship experience and even to promoting them. Collaboration between the Archdiocese of New York (stretching up into Putnam and Rockland Counties) and the Dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Center (Long Island) gives Fordham a stake in helping Catholic schools and their leaders in the largest Catholic community in the country. These programs are coordinated through Fordham's Center for Non Public Education, a unique feature of the Fordham graduate program in school leadership.

If this all sounds complicated, it is. Fordham has struggled to give coherence to this diversity and collaboration. And we've succeeded in several interesting ways. First, we seek to recruit students who can make a real contribution to their particular institutions and communities. Second, students within cohorts work together for years, coming to know and support one another during graduate study and beyond. And third, students take a clearly defined series of courses that include: the role of teaching and learning, and the organizational, political, financial, legal, and social foundations, from theoretical, technical, and managerial perspectives.

- **Entry Level:** The VIA (Visionary, Instructional & Administrative) Program includes a robust curriculum leading to a Master's of Science in Education (MSEd) or Professional Diploma (PD) in Educational Administration for students interested in receiving state certification (in NY, CT, NJ) at both the school (SAS) and district (SDS) levels. VIA is an innovative professional program through its close working relationship with area schools and other institutions in the field, to bring theory and practice together in a practical and productive way. An internship is an integral part of the program.

- **Advanced Level:** The advanced-level program is geared for mid-career professionals seeking a PhD or EdD in Administration with a special emphasis on institutional leadership and/or research and development positions in American schools, religious organizations, business, or other related fields. Two programs, the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) and the Church Leadership Program (CLP) are combined in "cohorts" of between 12 and 22 students, giving students a peer support group to sustain them through their doctorate. The doctoral courses rest on a number of disciplines, including philosophy, history, culture, sociology, legal analysis, policy and political science, psychology, and organizational studies. These courses interact to give students an understanding of leadership in modern, complex systems such as schools. Courses, assignments, a one-year residency program, dissertations and other learning opportunities reinforce the knowledge and theoretical base in the field.

Fordham's program has a long and distinguished history and brings together MS/PD and PhD/EdD students in a number of other settings. The Center for Non Public Education reaches out to the dioceses of the region, and is led by Dr. Gerald Cattaro. Institutes are held in the summer: one week, intensive experiences, with long histories of excellence. Dr. Bruce Cooper coordinates the National Finance Institute, now in its 5th year, bringing to campus leaders in school finance and economics. Dr. Lew Smith is planning the 4th National Principals Institute for this summer; and Dr. Cattaro organizes institutes for private religious school leaders, last summer in Rome and this year in Ireland. In 2000 and again in 2001, the Principals Institute was supported by a grant from the Chase Foundation, identifying six exemplary, "improved and reformed" schools for a national award. Fordham's program also includes a Human Resources Education program, run by Dr. Toby Tetenbaum, to prepare leaders for business.

These enterprises support and are supported by an extensive research and development agenda, as faculty do studies and publish together, often involving doctoral students in their publications and presentations. This reflects our philosophy that the best practitioners are those who are critically reflective and engaged in major issues in education. For two years, the Division has successfully sponsored a doctoral student to attend the UCEA Graduate Student Seminar at AERA. We've published widely, and are part of key editorial boards and committees. Out of diversity and collaboration emerges a powerful environment for preparing school, church, and business leaders—while building on and extending the knowledge base in education leadership.

References:

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