Teacher Education and Social Justice

As many of you are aware, the IWU Teacher Education Program has been a model of excellence for almost two decades. We were the first licensure program in the Central Illinois area to strongly encourage and often require all students to complete intensive on-site clinical experiences in a single setting tied directly to their student teaching during the spring and then fall of their junior and senior years. We were the first program to require intensive scholarly reflection after completion of one’s student teaching, leading to a public presentation of their work at a research conference, and have been one of a few programs to offer all candidates the opportunity to student teach in Chicago public schools. And, in spite of the numerous challenges to our basic liberal arts philosophy that the standards movement has encouraged, we feel proud of our ability to work with some extremely talented individuals who will be the educational leaders of the future.

For over a decade, the Illinois Wesleyan University Teacher Education Program has been committed to preparing candidates who want to enter the profession in order to make a difference in children’s lives as reiterated through our social justice mission. Your assistance in helping undergraduates assume the professional responsibilities that will allow them to contribute to such needed educational reform is invaluable, and it is in part because of your efforts, that we have been able to be so successful.

Working for Social Justice: Two Profiles

Last November, our Student Education Association chapter, under the leadership of President Nathan Douglas, who will be student teaching at Normal Community High School this fall, was awarded a Community Learning Through America’s Schools (CLASS) grant to work with Habitat for Humanity in the construction of a quality playhouse that will be of regular use to children in the McLean County area. Another IWU student, Colin Rathe, who will be student teaching at Bloomington High School this fall, worked with the Constitutional Rights Foundation-Chicago, researching, writing, and preparing faculty development materials, while visiting students and teachers at Chicago public schools. Nathan and Colin are ready to take the next steps as they begin their student teaching experience, armed with the knowledge that teaching excellence involves embracing the community organizations whose resources can be used in support of children’s needs.

Whether it involve working to help provide community resources for children, or whether it include finding creative ways to help students understand what a just world should entail, Nathan and Colin have demonstrated a passion for education and social justice that we hope to cultivate in all of our candidates. In doing so, we are so appreciative of your assistance and support and thank you in advance for helping our candidates pursue the dreams that we together share.

Teacher Performance Assessment

This will be the third year that we will be administering the Educational Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (edTPA) to our student teachers. Developed by Stanford University, the State of Illinois has been requiring all teacher education programs to begin phasing in the edTPA which will be made mandatory in the fall of 2015. The edTPA is intended to provide a measure of student teachers’ ability to plan, implement, and assess instruction and student learning specific to the particular students in their classrooms through construction of a portfolio of artifacts from a brief period during the student teaching experience accompanied by written commentaries. The primary elements of the TPA focus on instructional planning and delivery with an emphasis on academic language and an assessment of student learning. Video recording is required and elements of the edTPA are aligned with IPTS standards. Because of its importance and its extensive nature, the edTPA portfolio may be used as evidence during student teaching evaluation conferences.

Student teachers will need the support of their cooperating teachers as they develop and implement lesson plans and assessments of student learning, seek parental consents for video recording, and record three to five hours of instruction when students are engaged in learning. University supervisors will also play a direct role in assisting students as they prepare their edTPA portfolios, supporting their efforts to craft constructive, reflective self-evaluations while demonstrating the accurate use of academic language specific to their disciplines. Student teachers have been directed to share the requirements with you and to seek your approval for edTPA tasks. The department will be using the TaskStream data management system to help students upload documents, video clips, forms, assessments, and lesson plans.

Student teachers are required to adhere to all measures to protect the confidentiality of their students and their families. No individuals will be identified by their name, school, or district. By regulation, the edTPA does not allow the sharing of video recordings with potential employers – they will only be used internally within the Educational Studies or Music Education departments. Once edTPA portfolios have been evaluated all video recordings will be destroyed.
Another Year of Self-Study During Student Teaching

All elementary and secondary student teachers engage in a systematic and focused self-study of their practice as student teachers. During the fall they frame their study, obtain parental consents, and collect their data, which includes mostly reflective field notes and samples of student work. In the spring they engage in literature review, data analysis and the writing of their reports. By embedding self-study in student teaching, IWU student teachers have a supported professional development experience. Self-study has the potential to improve one’s teaching practice and simultaneously improve students’ learning. We encourage cooperating teachers to be involved in student teachers’ self-studies. We hope to see you at our Teaching and Learning Inquiry Conference next April when our current student teachers will present their self-studies. You may view posters and abstracts from last year at:

- http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2014/ESposters/
- http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2014/oralpresES/

What Graduates Have to Say About the Self Study Process:

…The self-study really did influence my identity as a teacher-scholar. I loved that I was able to research a topic that was of interest to me. I was able to choose something I was passionate about. This study really furthered my understanding of a topic linked to inequality in the field of education. It is what drove me to really share my knowledge with others.

…It really helped me find my passion. It also helped me see that you are never done studying as a teacher. It is important to always be researching ways to improve your classroom.

…It was an excellent way to learn how to take risks and develop a personal teaching style. I loved having it. It forced me to discover new things about my own teaching.

…The self-study allowed me to find a part of education that I am passionate about and practice it in the classroom. It also made me a more self-reflective teacher. I will definitely use what I learned from my self-study in the future.

IWU Faculty and Staff Updates

Robin Leavitt continues her longstanding service as Director of the Teacher Education Program.
Irv Epstein continues as Chair of the Educational Studies department.
Jen Crider continues as Field Placement Coordinator.
Jeanne Koehler, Leah Nillas, Jen Crider, Pennie Gray, Dorothy Strickler, and Irv Epstein will also serve as university student teaching supervisors, while the Department is pleased to welcome back Ben Wellenreiter, who teaches Social Science, and Sean Mullins, who teaches Science in the elementary program, during the fall and spring respectively.
Tamara Thies returns as Head of the Music Education program, while also observing student teachers. We are also extremely pleased that Drew Dahan will be joining her as a visiting faculty member.
Kelly Lawton will be continuing in her role as Assistant Director of Teacher Licensure and Assessment while telecommuting from her new home in Dallas.
Moreena Tiede is Operations Coordinator for the department.

What you can do with your IWU affiliate card

- Discount tickets to McPherson Theatre events. The schedule is available at:
  http://www.iwu.edu/theatre/
- Use of weight/cardio room and pool at Shirk. For hours:
  http://www.iwu.edu/wellness/aboutus/shirkhours.html
- Free admission to regular season sporting events
- Reduced rates for wellness classes:
  http://www.iwu.edu/wellness/
- 10% off Bookstore items (excluding textbooks)

For a new card, visit the Security Office (a house), located at 110 E Graham Street (just north and east of Main Street). The office is open Monday – Friday, 8-4:30 p.m.

Thank you!

We are grateful for all that you do in supporting our students through their student teaching experience, and appreciate all the work you do in mentoring them as they prepare to enter the profession.