Researchers Explore Experiences of Women in Chicago’s Puerto Rican Community

On September 26, assistant professor Laura Ruth Johnson presented, “Repaying the Sea” at the College of Education. The event was co-sponsored by NIU’s Presidential Commission on the Status of Women and the Women’s Resource Center.

“Repaying the Sea” refers to a Puerto Rican folktale that illustrates the importance of giving back. “It’s my title when I talk about reciprocal research,” Johnson said. “It’s my title when I talk about giving back. It’s my title when I talk about living in this community.”

NIU’s Literacy Clinic is working to change this. With nearly 50 years of service, the Clinic helps foster literacy and language development across the lifespan and provides practionum experiences for graduate students who are preparing to be reading specialists. Each year, about 100 students in grades K-12 come to the clinic for diagnostic assessment of reading ability and tutoring. Most are in 2nd - 4th grades, which are critical years in a child’s education. The Clinic is also a key partner in the “America Reads” program, providing one-on-one tutoring for DeKalb elementary school students who struggle with reading. Literacy professionals also look to the Clinic as a resource for professional development workshops.

Earlier this year, the Literacy Clinic moved to the community’s “health and wellness” corridor, to share a facility with NIU’s Speech-Hearing-Language and Physical Therapy Clinics. The Clinic is now poised to expand its diagnostic and tutoring services. Its twelve tutoring rooms allow for private, individualized instruction, and the Clinic continues to be recognized as an excellent site for practionum experiences for graduate students in reading. Two-way mirrors and video recording equipment allow reading specialists-in-training to observe practitioners and clients without interruption; this equipment also offers the chance for specialists-in-training to tape and critique themselves to improve instructional skills. Literacy Education courses and the reading specialist program also meet in the Clinic, providing ready access to specialized materials and demonstrations.

Elish-Piper gets animated when talking about the clinic’s new home. “This location is much easier for the public.” It is accessible, inviting, and more conducive to the work we are doing than our previous location was,” she says. “The environment allows for reflective practice and effective training, and we are now clustered with programs that also provide language development services to the community.”

Services are offered on a sliding fee scale to ensure access and affordability for everyone. The Literacy Clinic is planning a community open house later this fall to showcase its new home and to heighten awareness of its programs and services. For more information, visit www.cedu.niu.edu/lrc/services/lit_clinic.shtml.

Contact: (815) 753-1416
Website: www.cedu.niu.edu/lrc/services/lit_clinic.shtml

Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches. Letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights. - Pauline R. Kizer
On May 22-23, 2008, the NIU College of Education’s Blackwall History of Education Museum, in collaboration with other institutions, initiated the Society for Educating Women by sponsoring a conference at Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago. Sponsoring agencies included The Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Georgia, and the National Park Service. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences.

The conference called attention to issues of recurring concern. Ruth Sweetser, president of the AAUW, opened the conference with a lecture about the history of women’s education in the United States. She discussed the role of women’s educational institutions in the development of the nation and the challenges faced by women in pursuing higher education. Sweetser emphasized the importance of women’s education in shaping the future of society.

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The lecture series was established in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education by sponsoring a conference at Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago. Sponsoring agencies included The Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Georgia, and the National Park Service. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences. The conference was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hull-House Settlement and to create a space for current and future women educators to share their experiences.
Race Across the West: A Personal Reflection

[Editor’s Note: On June 12, 2008, KNP&E Department Chair and avid cyclist Paul Carpenter won the Race Across the West (RAW), an endurance race from Oceanside, CA, to Taos, NM, over 3-314 miles in 3 days, 11 hours, and 27 minutes, averaging 12.51 mph. Here, he reflects on his experience.]

I decided to take part in the Race Across the West (RAW) to see if the full Race Across America distance (3,314 miles) was possible. I looked closely at the race course and more about race logistics, the planning required, and my own capacities, when asked if I will race in the 2009 RAW my answer was, “Yes, maybe.”

RAW was an amazing and incredible adventure. The route passed through spectacular scenery, including the deserts of southern California and Arizona, Monument Valley, and the Colorado and New Mexico Rockies. The race atmosphere was unique and the camaraderie uplifting. My crew, composed of my parents and a cousin and his wife, had no experience with ultra cycling and were concerned about my ability to ride twice as far as I ever had, 2) coping with adversity, and 3) sleep deprivation. I was confident that I would complete the race within the official time limit. I had trained well and was in great condition. I was mentally prepared, and I was not anxious about the distance. My plan was to focus on an 8 to 10 hour time-station rather than the overall distance made the race manageable and gave me confidence. While the heat was a challenge, my concerns about sleep deprivation were not realized. Staying alert was an issue on two occasions, with one described above, being more of a crisis of confidence.

Although my primary goal had not been to win, as the race progressed I became aware of my race position. While my crew didn’t tell me how I was placed, and I tried not to get caught up in a battle for the lead, I knew where I stood each time they pulled alongside. I knew this was a long, tough race and that my final race position would take care of itself, and it did. Competing was an unforgettable experience and the highlight of my ultra cycling career to date. Stay tuned for 2009!

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I Believe in Change: Educating Malawi Girls

“When a Malawi girl drops out of school, that is the end of her education. Some girls begin families at 17, and their life then becomes caring for the children, the home, working in the gardens, and making sure the family has clean water. I have seen girls—bright girls—who could have had a future, but dropping out of school ended that.”

Assistant Professor Margaret Mbilizi in the Department of Counseling, Adult and Higher Education, received a prestigious Fulbright-NIEUS Office of International Initiatives sadly relates what she has witnessed in Malawi. A narrow, land-locked country in southern Africa, Malawi is one of the least developed countries worldwide, with 65% of its 10 million people living in deep poverty. Educational opportunities are limited, especially for girls, with only 9% of females receiving a primary education and 5% completing secondary school. Less than 1% completes a university education.

As a native Malawian, Mbilizi is among that very fortunate 1%. After receiving her undergraduate degree in the U.S., Mbilizi returned to Malawi. She became the Director of Higher Education for Malawi’s Ministry of Education and eventually served as Special Assistant on Education to the president of Malawi. The problems she witnessed in Malawi and changes in her own life led her to get involved with the plight of the people in the villages. I would ask myself, “How do I help them get out of poverty?” Mbilizi recounts. “After some time, I thought perhaps I could make a greater impact if I ran for a seat in Parliament.”

And in Malawi’s male-dominated society, Mbilizi was unsuccessful in her Parliamentary bid. So, she returned to the U.S., completed her doctorate, and achieved her dream of becoming a university professor. But she was haunted by images of the poor Malawians—particularly the young girls. Once a girl becomes pregnant in Malawi, she is no longer allowed to attend school. Many unwed mothers are rejected by their families, so even if they wanted to return to school, the support system is not there. Chronic poverty and gender inequity contribute to the poor outlook for these young women.

Being in education for a very, very long time, I realize that you can solve problems with simple solutions. I know there must be a way. And when I began reading about other projects in developing countries, projects using the Flexible Learning System, I thought that might work in Malawi, too.”

Flexible learning systems (FLS) are fairly recent developments; they focus on providing learners with increased choice, convenience, and personalization to suit their particular learning needs. To determine whether this approach might be effective in providing basic education and life skills education for females in Malawi, Mbilizi has completed a field study in the country’s rural, southern region, involving 70 interviews with female students from four villages. With about 30% of the data are promising: of the 70 interviewed, 50% expressed a desire to return to school, over 70% said they would like help in starting their own business, and many would like to reach the college level.

Mbilizi is now examining FLS models in other countries to see how they might be modified to work in Malawi. She hopes her research will effect systemic change in the political and educational systems so that all girls can complete their education, regardless of their situation. “These young girls can still get an education. Education can still change their lives,” she says. “I believe in change. I believe in trying new things. With the support of educational and political leaders, we will find a way to help these women and girls realize their educational aspirations.”

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Awards/Honors


Sarah Radke, (CAHE alumnus) has an article published in the National Athletic Trainers’ Education Journal: “A Conceptual Framework for Clinical Education in Athletic Training.”

Han Sik Shin (CAHE alumnus) and Ho-Yeong Lee (CAHE alumnus) are now researchers for the newly formed National Institute of Lifelong Education in Seoul, South Korea. They have both published articles based on their dissertations in the Journal of Industrial Teacher Education.

Gina Delmanto (Instructor, KNPE) and Phil Voorhis (KNPE alumnus), who are also the head athletic trainer for the team, are 2008 winners of this prestigious Athletic Trainer Service Award from the National Athletic Trainers Association.

Mike Braid (KNPE alumnus) is a 2008 inductee into the Michigan Athletic Trainers Society Hall of Fame. The former NIU head athletic trainer (1990-94) received the honor this past May, in recognition of his dedicated and professional service to the field.

Pamela Nelson (professor emeritus, TLRN) was selected by the International Reading Association to receive a 2008 MaryAnn Manning Outstanding Volunteer Service Award. This prestigious award is given only to five dedicated volunteers annually.

Stacy Kelly (CAHE Ed.D. candidate) landed a key position as a policy research associate for the American Federation for the Blind (AFB), the leading advocacy group for Americans who are blind or visually impaired. Kelly will be focusing on legislation affecting those with visual impairments.

Li-ken Kuo (associate professor, ETRA) and Wei-Chen Hung (professor, LEPF) is the principal investigator for a three-year, $150,000 project funded by the National Science Foundation. Along with Wei-Chen (professor emerita, TLRN), the former NIU head athletic trainer (1990-94) received the honor this past May, in recognition of his dedicated and professional service to the field.

Jennifer A. Schmidt (associate professor, ETRA) and M Cecil Smith (professor, LEPF) have received a grant of $476,131 from the National Science Foundation for a three-year project to explore science programs from the perspective of female and male students. The project will provide crucial foundational knowledge about students’ actual experiences in science classes and could have substantial implications for instructional practices, course design and curriculum in high school science.

MC Cecil Smith (professor, LEPF) is the principal investigator for a three-year, $150,000 project funded by the National Science Foundation. Along with Wei-Chen (professor emerita, TLRN), the former NIU head athletic trainer (1990-94) received the honor this past May, in recognition of his dedicated and professional service to the field.

Robert Carter (Instructor, TLRN) received the Malcolm D. Swan Award from the Educational Environment Association of Illinois (EEA). This award recognizes excellence in the field of academic and professional support to American Indians.

Lynette Chandler (professor, TLRN) received the Service to the Executive Board Award from the International Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children. In recognition of her work on behalf of the organization.

Lisa Yamagata-Lynch (associate professor, ETRA) and Thomas Smith (professor, ETRA) Smith will develop and assess the effectiveness of ResearchMentor, a computerized research project funded by the National Science Foundation. Along with Wei-Chen (professor emerita, TLRN), the former NIU head athletic trainer (1990-94) received the honor this past May, in recognition of his dedicated and professional service to the field.


Kay Sheltor (Ed.D. candidate, ETRA) presented a paper entitled, “Teaching Students the Emotional Topics of Islam and Immigration Using Displaced Learning,” at the World Universities Forum held in Davos, Switzerland.

Brandon Taylor (Ed.D. candidate, ETRA) presented his research about using online library databases via an iPhone®/iPod Touch® for the Technology, Colleges and Community Worldwide Online Conference.

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Focus group discussions

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Dean’s Message

It is autumn in the Midwest, which is one of the most magical times of the year to come to Northern Illinois University. If you have not been back in a while, you will be amazed at the changes. Change is inevitable, and as humans we have very little power to halt it.

We have embraced change in the College of Education and understand that we must be active in planning our destiny with regard to the changing economy, demographics, external demands, and the public’s expectations of an institution of higher education. Whenever possible, I tell the stories of how remarkable and committed our faculty remain as we work smarter at doing more with less. Currently, we are gearing up for our NCATE accreditation visit next year, and faculty and department chairs have done an outstanding job of writing reports in preparation of the review.

We continue to strengthen our student teaching experiences by centralizing the clinical office for a more seamless and direct approach to working with students, faculty, and school districts. We would also welcome any volunteer who might want to be a part of the supervision process for our students in the field.

Last year, as we began the strategic planning process, the committee included faculty, staff, alumni, retirees, and friends. Our strategic planning process will continue this year as we chart our course for the future, and our alumni, retirees, and friends are again welcome to the table for that discussion.

I have been at NIU for six years, and I have seen tremendous additions to and changes within the staff, faculty, and administration of the College. In fact, our leadership team has two new department chairs. Dr. Barbara Johnson is the new department chair for Counseling, Adult and Higher Education, and Dr. Lara Luetkehans is the new department chair for Educational Technology, Research and Assessment.

Yes, the adage tells us, “Nothing is permanent but change,” and we can attest to it. As you will see from this issue of the newsletter, we have included a calendar of events and lectures that you could attend during the upcoming year.

Contact Gail Hayenga (815-753-8370 or ghayenga@niu.edu) for more information about the above events or opportunities to volunteer.

Credits: Writer/Editor: Deborah Fransen (dfransen@niu.edu) Design: Deborah Holderness www.cedu.niu.edu Printed by the authority of the State of Illinois.

Professor Assists Teachers of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

On any given day, over 1.5 million children experience homelessness, living on the streets of America’s small towns, rural areas, resort communities, and urban areas. While devastating, homelessness does not mean that young people cannot succeed. Maylan Dunn-Kenney can attest to this, having witnessed firsthand the amazing resiliency of youth.

One of the fourth-graders in her Oklahoma City classroom had spent years living in a family car. Once she became aware of this, Dunn-Kenney changed how she interacted with the student and watched as this bright girl caught up to—and in some cases surpassed—her classmates.

“I gave her just a little special attention, maybe just a few minutes of review or stopping at her desk a little more often,” says Dunn-Kenney, now an associate professor of early childhood education in NIU’s College of Education. “She had the ability to succeed in school, but never the opportunity.”

Dunn-Kenney hopes to broaden that opportunity for other children in similar circumstances through her work with Dian Nilan, a national advocate for those experiencing homelessness. Dunn-Kenney has developed a curriculum for teachers to help recognize signs of homelessness and then intervene to provide the best possible education. NIU communications professor Laura Vazquez also worked on the project.

The curriculum, called “Jonathan’s Heart,” is already being integrated into some College of Education courses. It is available online at Nilan’s website (www.hearus.us/), which also features statistics, testimonials, and a video about the plight of children experiencing homelessness. Vazquez and NIU alumna Becca Barry helped to create the video.

Dunn-Kenney says, “When you show the video, teachers become more sensitive, but they don’t really know what to do. Now we have really specific instructions for the classroom so that if teachers are faced with this complex problem, their role is understandable.” The curriculum outlines warning signs of homelessness and includes case studies. Teachers also learn about the McKinney-Vento Act, federal legislation that guarantees schooling for homeless children and outlines expectations for schools to assist them.

Sensitivity and understanding on the part of educators is critical. “Homeless children are ordinary children, and this is something that’s happened to them in their lives,” says Dunn-Kenney. “Extremely intelligent children experience homelessness. We need to provide stability and routine.”

Excerpts from Mark McGowan, Northern Today, 9/2/08. ◆

Upcoming Events

James and Helen Merritt Philosophy of Education Lecture: Dr. Louis Gordon
Thursday, October 23, 3:30 p.m.
Holmes Student Center Sky Room

Last Home Football Game – GO HUSKIES!!
Saturday, November 25, NIU vs. Navy, 6:00 p.m. Kickoff

College of Education Holiday Celebration
Wednesday, December 10, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Anderson Hall 100

NIU December Commencements:
Graduate—December 13, Undergraduate—December 14

College of Education Spring Event (invitation only)
Friday, April 17, NIU-Naperville

Contact Gail Hayenga (815-753-8370 or ghayenga@niu.edu) for more information about the above events or opportunities to volunteer.