



Ph.D. Education Leadership, Research, and Policy Newsletter – January, 2023



PhD Educational Leadership,
Research, and Policy

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One of the great things about living and studying in Colorado is the amazing outdoor opportunities. We are only minutes from majestic mountains, world-class skiing and snowboarding, and plenty of places to escape the hubbub of the Front Range. As a friend recently reminded me, we are fortunate enough to live in a place where people pay a great deal of money to only visit. I've been lucky, as I continue to travel and see the amazing offerings of the Centennial State. My favorites continue to be the town of Ouray, the sheer beauty of Boulder and Rocky Mountain National Park, and (of course) the wide-open spaces of the eastern plains of Colorado. Unfortunately, we all tend to put off visiting these regions of the state due to our busy lives and overextended schedules. For 2023, I urge you to carve out the time to go explore a new part of Colorado every month or so. It's a big state with some great people – we just need to remember to take the time to explore it all.

In this bi-annual edition of LRF newsletter we welcome new leadership in the College of Education with Dr. Henrietta Williams Pichon, celebrate our December, 2023 graduates, speak with UCCS alum Dr. Curtis Garcia, and provide both student and faculty updates. Please also be sure to make note of the Graduate School's various dates and requirements for graduation, as well as information on summer due dates and the academic calendar for the Spring, 2023 semester.

Have a great 2023! I hope to see you out and about whenever possible.

- Dr. Robert Mitchell

New COE Dean

In July, the College of Education welcomed a new Dean to Columbine Hall. Dr. Henrietta Williams Pichon joined UCCS from New Mexico where she served as the Interim Dean at New Mexico State University. A former Louisiana resident, Dean Pichon completed her undergraduate degree at Louisiana Tech before moving south to complete her doctorate at the University of New Orleans.

A nationally recognized scholar in the fields of leadership and higher education administration, Dr. Pichon brings another strong higher education and student affairs presence to the Department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations.



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While she may still be getting used to the snowy Colorado winters, she has started the process of learning and understanding the unique UCCS climate and working with the three departments within the College of Education.

*New Dean of the UCCS College of Education,
Dr. Henrietta Williams Pichon*



F

irst-year doctoral students

A new cohort of 11 new doctoral students began their academic journey through the PhD program in August. Last fall they completed LEAD 8300 (Leadership Excellence and Complex Organizations) and LEAD 7100 (Intermediate Quantitative Research and Statistics). This spring, they will complete coursework in qualitative research and research measurement and evaluation.



First year cohort (left to right): Daniel Kirby, Daniel Hixson, Chianna Smith, Mi Na Choo, Evelyn Adams, Kriselda Craven, Michelle Kephart, Anneke Bruwer, Susan Dallam, Audrey Faulkner, Zach McComsey

Important dates and reminders:

- February 10 – Application for admission to candidacy due to the Graduate School
- March 27 to April 2 – Spring break
- April 14 – Last day for dissertation defense for Spring, 2023 graduation
- May 11 – Dissertation copy due to the Graduate School
- May 12 – Spring Commencement
- May 13 – Spring semester ends
- July 31 – Synthesis project submission due date

Student and Alumni Updates:

Danielle Springston (ABD) presented her research at two sessions during the annual Virginia Association of Colleges and Teacher Education last fall ... **Natalia Brunton (2023)** was named principal at Will Rogers Elementary School in Colorado Springs District 11 ... **Patience Agana (ABD)** was recently selected to be included in the Colorado Education Association's Ambassador Fellowship program as a Fellow for the



Anneke Bruwer speaks to students about the South African educational system

Colorado Education Association. In this program, she will continue her work in public policy development and legislative outreach ... **Mona Shaker (ABD)** and **Anneke Bruwer (1st year)** were invited guest lecturers for undergraduate education courses in the College of Education where they provided insight about the Egyptian and South African education systems ... **Audrey Faulkner (1st year)** continues to be involved in grant proposal development with the U.S. Department of State to support academic connections between UCCS and the University of the Seychelles ... **Kathryn Starkey (2022)** was a collaborative author, along with Dr. Sylvia Mendez, on the article "Environmental Influences on the STEM Identity and Career Intentions of Latinx STEM

Postdoctoral Scholars" that appeared in the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* ...

Regina Winters (2022) and **Brian Donelson (ABD)** were co-authors on a paper with Dr. Phillip Morris titled "Self-efficacy curriculum and peer leader support in gateway college mathematics" that appeared in the journal *Learning Environments Research*.

If you have updates or news you would like to share, please send an e-mail to: rmitchel@uccs.edu for inclusion in future newsletters

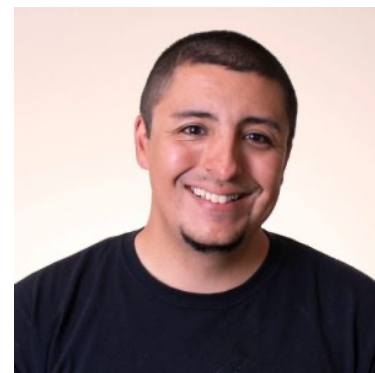
Faculty News: **Dr. Sylvia Mendez** recently secured a significant grant from the National Science Foundation for her project titled: Increasing Minority Presence within Academia through Continuous Training at Scale (IMPACTS). This project is scheduled to continue through 2027... **Dr. Nick Tapia-Fuselier** has been named a Fellow with the Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Program in the UCCS College of Business ... **Dr. Patty Witkowski** has co-edited a book titled *International student identities and mental well-being: Beyond the single story* to be published in 2023 ... **Dr. Robert Mitchell** had the collaborative article “Teacher futures: Global reaction to teacher shortages in rural education” published in the *IAFOR Journal of Education* ... **Dr. Joe Taylor** was published in the *Journal of Research on Education Effectiveness* with the collaborative article “Evidence gap maps in education research ... **Dr. Elisa Thompson** received the Student Affairs Higher Education Educator (SAHE) Award for her outstanding work with students enrolled and completing the SAHE program at UCCS ... **Dr. Phillip Morris** and **Dr. Patty Witkowski** completed an successful educational tour of Ireland with SAHE students in January, 2023 ... **Dr. Robert Mitchell** was an invited speaker at the annual meeting of the Society for the Provisioning of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) where he spoke about best practices in rural education ... **Dr. Nick Tapia-Fuselier** was published in the journal *Innovations in Higher Education* with “We do it all: Understanding the experiences of undocumented student research center professionals” ... **Dr. Phillip Morris** and **Dr. Joe Taylor** (and collaborators) published the research article “NCES public datasets for research: A case study using Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study” as a component of the *Sage Research Case Studies*.



*Dr. Elisa Thompson,
LRF Department*

Alumni Spotlight – *Dr. Curtis Garcia, Adams State University*

Dr. Curtis Garcia completed his doctoral study at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs in 2020. While completing coursework at UCCS, he also was leading the educator preparation program at Adams State University in Alamosa and commuted from Alamosa to Colorado Springs weekly. He continues to be a statewide leader in addressing challenges associated with teacher and educator preparation, and he took a few moments to update us on his current work and the issues impacting teacher shortages in Colorado.



*Dr. Curtis Garcia, Department Chair,
Adams State University*

Can you explain your current role at Adams State? What do you love best in your daily work?

I currently serve as the Director of the School of Education for Adams State University where I oversee undergraduate (BA) and graduate level (MA) faculty, staff, and programs in K-12 teacher licensure, principal licensure, and higher education. I also teach courses in Assessment, Classroom Management, and Mentoring/Coaching of teachers and support campus-wide initiatives to expand post-secondary pathways to students coming from rural schools. The thing I love most about my daily work is being able to engage with future and in-service teachers to see the amazing work they do with kids. My best days are always the ones I get to spend out and about in schools working side by side with our students and mentor teachers.

We know Colorado is going through challenges with teacher shortages and k-12 budgets. How big a problem are these issues in your average classroom in Colorado?

The teacher shortage is a big concern and has only grown bigger as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It comes up in every (and I mean every) conversation I have with school leaders who continue to struggle to fill open positions in their buildings. We simply



*The Great Sand Dunes in the San Luis Valley
(courtesy: VisitAlamosa)*

aren't able to produce teachers quickly enough to meet all the needs. Alternative pathways and state funding have provided some relief, but I see these as band-aids to much bigger challenges we face around the teacher workforce where recruitment and retention are critical issues. Budgets are also an issue of concern, particularly as federal COVID funds dry up and districts are faced with difficult choices about cutting staff and programs that they initiated using COVID funds, but can not sustain on their own. It is well known that Colorado falls behind most other states in

education funding and I think it is time our legislatures take a serious look at how we can change that.

The San Luis Valley is a unique part of Colorado. What drew you back to the area? What makes this part of Colorado so special?

The San Luis Valley is my home and has been the home to my family for more than eight generations. I am proud to live and serve in the Valley where I not only support the school districts in that region, but all rural school districts and communities across the state who face common challenges around education, economic development, and preserving the land, culture, and heritage that characterizes most of Colorado. It is the deep culture and

heritage - rooted in Hispano and indigenous populations native to the region - that I believe makes the San Luis Valley such a special place to live and work.

You also are involved in numerous aspects of leadership and policy - including being a valued member of the Colorado Council of Deans of Education. What role do colleges and universities play in addressing some of the educational problems in Colorado?

In my view, colleges and universities have always been - and continue to be- important hubs where research and innovation around some of our biggest challenges in education can take place. They also play an important role in advocating for legislation and funding that supports broader access to education (particularly for historically underserved populations), which ultimately leads people to better jobs, and stronger, more stable socio-economic standing. I hear about so many wonderful things happening in colleges and universities around Colorado (including at Adams State) to streamline pathways to teaching and other careers, while striving to lower the costs of higher education so that it ultimately becomes more accessible to more people. I think we are definitely at a crossroads right now where I believe we have to make higher education more relevant and affordable to folks if we want to address some of our biggest needs as an economy and society.

Do you have time to pursue your research interests? If so, what is your current focus?

Yes - my current focus is on understanding how mentoring can not only support pre-service and beginning teachers, but also serve as a rewarding experience for veteran teachers (who are serving as mentors) and are often searching for ways to reignite their careers in teaching. Adams State was one of the first in Colorado to launch a mentoring program that leads to a state mentoring endorsement and my involvement in leading that program has uncovered a number of promising outcomes around teacher efficacy and job satisfaction that I believe could ultimately inform how we create better systems to support and retain new and veteran teachers alike!



Dr. Garcia of Adams State University
(courtesy: Nathaniel Minor –
Colorado Public Radio)

You used to commute from Alamosa to attend classes in Colorado Springs. Do you miss the drive?

Haha- love this question! It is hard to say I miss the 7-hour round trip drive every Thursday to attend classes, but I suppose I underappreciated the time I had back then to reflect and ponder as I was on the road.

Graduation – Fall, 2022

Congratulations to our Winter 2022 Ph.D. graduates:

Dr. Eric Burton

Dr. Patrick Radigan



Dr. Sylvia Mendez with Dr. Burton and Dr. Radigan (above)

Dr. Patty Witkowski and College of Education Associate Dean Katie Anderson Pence enjoying commencement (left)

For additional information about the
Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, Research, and Policy
or to schedule an admission information session,
please contact Dr. Robert Mitchell
at rmitchel@uccs.edu.



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