



Ph.D. Education Leadership, Research, and Policy Newsletter – June, 2022



PhD Educational Leadership,
Research, and Policy

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **COLORADO SPRINGS**

The end of the 2021-22 academic year brings about changes within the College of Education - adding validity to Heraclitus' axiom that "Change is the only constant in life." This summer sees: the conclusion of coursework for the second-year cohort, the departure of our former Dean Valerie Martin Conley to become the Provost at Idaho State University, a change of the guard with a new chair of the Department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations (see below), and an in-person graduation for three exceptional students – Dr. Sean Dean, Dr. Catherine Grandorff, and Dr. Regina Winters. We must keep reminding ourselves that change does not have to be good or bad, but rather an opportunity to change one's viewpoint and perspective. And, when we get down to it, doctoral study centers on the process of exploring ongoing change and its impact. It's all part of the learning experience. Enjoy your summer. Remember to wear sunscreen.

- Dr. Robert Mitchell

New LRF chair

After nine years chairing the department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations, Dr. Sylvia Mendez is passing the department chair torch to Dr. Andrea Bingham starting in the Fall, 2022 semester. During her tenure as chair, Dr. Mendez has shaped and guided all aspects of the doctoral program within the College of Education. Specifically, supporting the learning and dissertation processes for a significant number of UCCS students, fighting (and usually winning) countless budget battles to ensure proper program funding, and onboarding faculty and staff to ensure a smooth transition to UCCS and the continuity of the Ph.D. program.

"Sylvia's mentorship to new faculty in the department has allowed us the opportunities to progress in our academic trajectories." said Associate Professor Patty Witkowsky. "She has shouldered a great deal in her time as department chair to allow us to focus on the needs of students in our programs."

"I don't think people are fully aware of all the little things Sylvia in support of the doctoral program," commented Assistant Professor Robert Mitchell. "Her dedication to the program and the students working towards their Ph.D. is really remarkable and should be celebrated," he continued.



Professor Sylvia Mendez



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The new chair is a familiar face in Dr. Andrea Bingham who will be returning from sabbatical in August, 2022. Dr. Bingham brings a wealth of experience to the role of chair, highlighted by her work with the Faculty Senate, ongoing work on the promotion and tenure process for College of Education faculty, and leading efforts to modify the Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ) process throughout the CU system.



Associate Professor and
new incoming chair
Andrea Bingham

“I am excited to continue to work with Andrea as she takes on this role and provide her with support in her new role,” stated Witkowski. Mitchell added “Dr. Bingham has established herself as an internationally recognized expert in the field of qualitative research and research theory. I fully expect that she will continue to do great things for the program and for the students as chair of the department.”

Dr. Bingham is currently completing her sabbatical where she has focused on the completion of a new guidebook that focuses on research theories and theoretical frameworks. It is expected to be published in 2023.

Second year student field trip to Miami Yoder School



The second-year doctoral cohort recently travelled to Rush, Colorado to visit and learn about Colorado’s smaller public schools and the challenges associated with state education policy and finance. The visit was highlighted by a presentation by Miami Yoder Superintendent Dwight Barnes who spoke about the numerous challenges his district faces in Colorado’s unique school environment.



Important dates and reminders:

- August 1, 2022 - Synthesis I and II submission deadline
- August 15-16, 2022– Synthesis presentation and review
- August 23, 2022 – Classes begin for the Fall 2022 semester
- September 5-6, 2022 – Labor Day Holiday
- November 18, 2022 (*projected*) – Last day to for dissertation defense
- November 23-27, 2022 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 16, 2022 – Summer/Fall 2022 Commencement
- December 17, 2022 – Semester Ends

Student and Alumni Updates

Joe Palmer (ABD) recently had an article based on his Synthesis I project accepted for publication in the *Journal of Physical Therapy Education*. Joe also received the good news that he been



Dr. Phillip Morris, Patience Agana, Kate Watson, and Dale Wilson at AERA 2022 in San Diego

named an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, and was the recipient of a \$3000 grant to support his ongoing dissertation research ... UCCS Education Leadership, Research, and Policy Ph.D. students were well represented at the 2022 annual meeting of the American Education Research Association (AERA) in San Diego as Dr. Phillip Morris and his student research team

of **Patience**

Agana (2nd year), Kate Watson (2nd year), and Dale Wilson (2nd year) presented their paper “A National Study of Sleep Health for Student Servicemember/Veterans.” This paper was also selected as the Exemplary Paper Award within the AERA Adult Literacy/Adult Education Special Interest Group ... Kate Watson (**2nd year**) was the recipient of the 2022 AERA Division D award for outstanding research utilizing quantitative methodologies and educational assessment for her paper “A Quantitative Analysis of Secondary Teachers Perceived Ability to Support Student Mental Health” ... **Valerie Roberts (2nd year)** also attended and presented at the 2022 AERA conference along with Dr. Phillip Morris with the presentation “Examining Withdrawal for Veterans in Community Colleges ...



Kristi McCann presenting at AEEP in Denver



Valerie Roberts and Dr. Phillip Morris presenting research at AERA in San Diego

Kristi McCann (ABD)

presented her research last March in Denver at the annual meeting of the Association for Education Finance and Policy. Her presentation was titled “A Discourse-Historical Approach to Understanding National, State, and Local Discourse Surrounding Equity and Access to High-Quality STEM Education” ... **Misty DeHerrera (ABD)** and **Megan Oleson (ABD)** collaborated with Dr. Dick Carpenter on a published article titled “Effects of Principal Turnover on School Performance” in the *Bulletin for the National Association for Secondary School Principals* ...

Nicole Ferguson (2021) recently published her research “Effects of Faculty and Staff Connectedness on Student Self-Efficacy” in the



2022 Policy Fellow



Elizabeth Peterson

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning ... **Jeff Dieckman (2nd year)** has been exceptionally active in presenting his research focusing on veterans education at numerous academic conferences including the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, National Association for Student Personnel Administrators, and AERA ... **Jeanette Diaz (ABD)** spoke at the 37th annual Distance Teaching and Learning



2022 Policy Fellow



Jeanette Diaz

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Conference in August where she spoke on the “Impact of Course Delivery Mode on Student Evaluations of Teaching”... **Elizabeth Peterson (2nd year)** and **Jeanette Diaz (ABD)** recently completed a year-long fellowship at the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) through their Policy Fellows program. Only 22 graduate students from throughout Colorado were selected for this DHE program.

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. Patty Witkowski** recently received the news that she has earned both tenure and promotion to Associate Professor within the College of Education at UCCS ... An innovative collaborative research project between **Dr. Phillip Morris, Dr. Joe Taylor, Dr. Dick Carpenter, and Dr. Grant Clayton (2014)** recently led to their article “Conducting Online Research with Data From the National Center for Education Statistics” published through Sage Research Methods – a valuable on-line resource for the best practices of educational research ... **Dr. Robert Mitchell, Dr. Nicholas Tapia-Fuslier, and Dr. Patty Witkowski** have embarked on a statewide research project examining the challenges associated with



Associate Professor
Patty Witkowski

recruiting and retaining higher education professionals at rural community colleges throughout Colorado ... **Dr. Sylvia Mendez**

presented her work “Engineering Faculty Perspectives: The Conceptualization and Promotion of STEM Identity among Undergraduate Women in the Classroom” (along with second year doctoral students Emily Kulakowski and Elizabeth Peterson) at the Collaborative Network for engineering and Computing Diversity conference in February, 2022 in New Orleans ... **Dr. Nicholas Tapia-Fuselier** recently received the UCCS College of Education Teaching Award, while **Dr. Patty Witkowski** received the UCCS College of Education Service Award. Both awards are based on peer nominations and exceptional work in research, service or teaching.



Assistant Professor
Nick Tapia-Fuselier

Alumni Spotlight – Dr. Sarah Kaka

Dr. Sarah Kaka (2017) has been involved in education research and educator preparation since her time as a secondary social studies educator in Illinois. After completing her Ph.D. from UCCS in 2017, she secured an academic position as an Assistant Professor at Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU) in Delaware, Ohio. Since her arrival at OWU, she has been named department chair, presented at numerous national academic conferences, and recently published her first book entitled *Hollywood or History? An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Teach About Inequality and Inequity Throughout History* (Information Age Publishing, 2022). She took a few moments to reply to a few questions about her experience and advice about doctoral study.



Assistant Professor Sarah Kaka (2017)
Ohio Wesleyan University

What have you been doing since you finished your Ph.D. at UCCS? How is life in Ohio?

I was hired in a tenure-track position at Ohio Wesleyan University (a selective, private, liberal arts university) and moved to the Columbus area shortly after graduation from the PhD program in May 2017. I was hired as an Assistant Professor of Education and the Director of the Middle & Secondary Education Programs. Since then, after a series of retirements, I have also taken on the role of Accreditation Officer and am one year in to being Department Chair. All of those administrative responsibilities, on top of my teaching, scholarship, and service, keep me VERY busy! I am also heavily involved in the Ohio Council for the Social Studies, am now the Executive Editor for the *Ohio Social Studies Review*, and have found myself using my Ed Policy knowledge (thanks, Dr. Al Ramirez, for the amazing foundation!) to advocate against a variety of proposed legislations here in OH.

Congratulations on the recent publication of Hollywood or History?: An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Teach About Inequality and Inequity Throughout History. Can you provide a brief summary of the book. and explain why this topic has such interest for you?

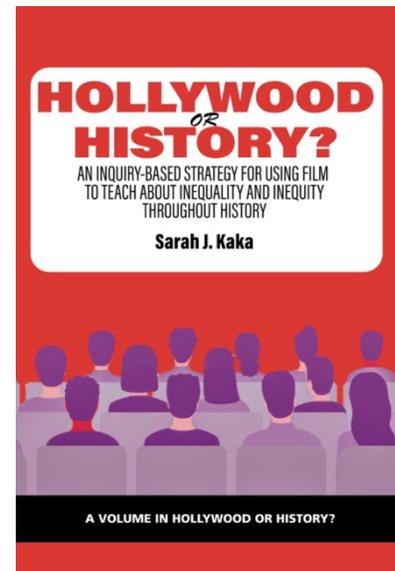
The book is aimed at middle and high school teachers that want to teach standards-based lessons about historical inequity and inequality, and who want to do it in a way that is engaging and relevant, and pushes students to think critically by using an inquiry-based method. It consists of 30 educator-created lesson plans that use the *Hollywood or History?* method of inquiry, created by Roberts & Elfer (2018). This method challenges teachers and students to evaluate competing claims, detect bias, and measure evidence from multiple sources with the goal of developing reasoned perspectives regarding the relative accuracy of commercially-produced motion pictures. By the end of a *Hollywood or History?* lesson, students are positioned to express those self-generated assessments, orally and in writing, by making claims about whether a film selection is 100% History (all fact), 100% Hollywood (all fiction) or somewhere in between.

The book covers nine different areas of historical inequity and inequality, including issues surrounding gender inequity, slavery as the root of racial inequality, racial inequity, LGBTQ+ rights, American Indian rights, economic inequality, educational inequity, and even a section on

intersectionality. As a former social studies teacher, I know just how little of this content is covered in textbooks, so having plug-and-play lessons like these is so powerful in the hands of teachers. It is vital in today's social and political climate that we provide tools for classroom teachers to assist them in teaching America's uncomfortable, and sometimes ugly, past. Since it is known that many of these topics aren't accurately covered in textbooks, teachers have the responsibility to supplement those texts with outside resources, both primary and secondary in nature. Films can be used to teach students about a variety of hot-button issues surrounding inequality and inequity throughout history, many of which are whitewashed and glossed over in social studies classrooms around the country.

On top of that, the book could literally not be any more timely. As of right now, 14 states have passed legislation that bans teaching 'divisive' issues in schools—issues such as racism, sexism, white privilege, and sexuality. 22 other states have similar legislation in process, including Ohio's HB 327 and HB 616. All of the lessons in this book would fit in those 'banned' areas, but the lessons themselves give teachers the tools to help students examine issues from multiple perspectives, which is what the legislation requires. So this book would equip teachers with lessons to teach within the confines of the new laws.

Your current role focuses on preparing future educators for very difficult careers in the classroom. What do you think about the current of a teacher in today's schools? What are some of the unseen benefits of a career in education?



Teaching has always been a difficult profession, but it is more so now than ever before. I think one of the most important things to do in teacher preparation is to make sure preservice teachers are going into the profession with their eyes open. In my classes, we talk a lot about the challenges and realities of being a teacher—I don't sugar coat things anymore. They need to be aware of what they might walk into! But then we discuss the intrinsic rewards of education, and how those are really the driving force behind what keeps teachers going—creating lasting relationships with kids, and mentoring them to help them become successful; sharing your passion with young people; connecting with colleagues who become friends that understand what life is like "in the trenches"; and getting to be a lifelong learner.

You finished your dissertation at UCCS while working at the university in a job that required extensive hours and dedication. What is your advice for candidates working on their dissertations while engaged in a full-time career? How did you balance all your obligations?

I literally laughed out loud when I read this question because thinking back now, I have NO IDEA how I was able to actually pull all of that off. I think I was fueled by coffee and alcohol :)

But really, I was lucky enough to surround myself with people that were all rooting for me, and who wanted me to succeed. My family, colleagues, and my fellow Doc students were 100% the reason I was able to make it through. I think one thing that really helped me was early on, Dr. Carpenter told me how important it was to "work smarter, not harder" when it came to coursework, synthesis projects, and my dissertation. So I took full advantage of that advice, and

made sure that everything I did connected in a way that I could build on it for something greater. Oh, and don't procrastinate on your annotated bibliography—annotate everything you read as you read it so that it's ready to submit without any added stress!

What are your fun plans for the summer? Have you fully embraced being a Buckeye yet?

We're going to take full advantage of the Midwest and travel around here! We're going to take several trips within driving distance: Springfield, Illinois, Chicago, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, Pennsylvania...and also finish 3 manuscripts in between all of that :) I go up for tenure this fall!

Graduation – Spring, 2022

Congratulations to our Spring, 2022 Ph.D. graduates:

Dr. Sean Dean

Dr. Catherine Grandorff

Dr. Regina Winters.

(photo courtesy of Dr. Patty Witkowsky)



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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