



Developing a New Ed.D. Program in the Rossier  
School of Education  
at the University of Southern California

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## SUMMARY

One of the nation's highest priorities for education reform is the development of effective leaders for urban education. But the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree—a major vehicle for developing such leaders—recently reached a crossroads. Some people think the Ed.D. should concentrate more on the work of practitioner leaders in education; others think it should be discontinued altogether. We think that an Ed.D. degree can be a very effective pathway to improved education leadership, but we also know that most universities will require serious reform to make this pathway truly successful.

Over the past five years, the Rossier School of Education (RSOE) at the University of Southern California (USC) has developed a new, nationally recognized Ed.D. program that focuses directly on the needs of urban education leaders. Our goal in this report is to share our experiences in developing this program by describing why and how we launched this new effort, what the program currently looks like, and what challenges we face in moving forward. We agree with those who think that the demands of leadership in education settings are substantial. We also agree that leadership must support strong student learning, and that meeting the needs of diverse learners in urban settings is an urgent national priority.

Our new program was launched in Spring 2001 at a futures conference, a three-day retreat in which all RSOE tenured/tenure-track and clinical faculty members and a number of key external stakeholders and RSOE staff members engaged in a strategic planning effort. This conference clarified our collective commitment to urban education and identified four themes that became the basis of our program: leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning.

In Fall 2001, an Ed.D. planning committee began setting forth plans for the new program. Because we had decided early on that tenured/tenure-track and clinical faculty members would have equal status in developing the program, this committee included both types of faculty members. The planning committee's major decisions were that (a) students would complete the program in three years and would move through the program with a cohort of 20–25 students; (b) core and concentration curriculum would have common syllabi, and students would take courses in a specified sequence; (c) instructional processes would focus on problem solving, discussion, and small-group work; (d) concentration courses would build on the interdisciplinary knowledge gained from core courses; and (e) the majority of students would participate in thematic dissertations, each student writing his or her own, unique dissertation while working on common themes or education issues and challenges with small groups of students directed by one or two faculty advisers.

The new program has four core courses, each reflecting a program theme—leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning—and employs various problem-solving models to help students learn to diagnose and solve education problems. Groups of faculty members developed these courses based on the idea

that they would be “owned” by the program (rather than by individual faculty members) and would lead to common course experiences for all students in the program.

After completing the core courses, students take courses in their choice of one of four academic concentrations: Educational Psychology, Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership, K–12 Leadership in Urban School Settings, and Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS). All courses in the concentrations expose students to context-specific best practices and applied research in an environment that stresses the application of theory to practice. Course assignments continue to focus on problem-solving learning experiences.

The program has two inquiry methods courses that were developed to answer the question, What primary tasks are education leaders confronted by in the workplace that require statistics and measurement knowledge? These courses introduce the knowledge and skills leaders need to make effective decisions. We see this approach as more useful than teaching research and evaluation methods in survey courses that review different methodologies apart from the decision-making context in which the competencies are applied.

For the culminating portion of the program, more than 80% of students participate in thematic dissertations. Each student works with several others in a group, either on very related topics or with the same database, to produce his or her own, unique dissertation. Themes for the dissertations are generally organized around field-based issues or problems, and students are required to collaborate in developing their proposals and to critique each other’s work. In short, a unifying feature ties several Ed.D. students together such that they can be mentored as a group. Students begin with a problem and then analyze the literature to find guidance on how to research it. This dissertation approach differs from the traditional Ph.D. dissertation process, in which students typically work alone and begin by reviewing the literature to identify gaps and constructs, then deciding on the setting in which to conduct their research.

To support students and faculty in the new Ed.D. program, we launched a number of new organizational features: an Ed.D. program office, a leadership role with an executive director, an office of student affairs and recruiting, a strategy for student orientation and student support, and a dissertation support center.

Overall, it has been difficult and rewarding to develop this new Ed.D. program, and one essential aspect of this work is that it will never be completed. We have made great progress on this curriculum endeavor in the first five years, but that is not to say there are no major challenges remaining. Faculty members are fully aware that constant evaluation and adaptation are necessary if the program is to be maintained. And we are aware that we must continue to have a constant dialogue with faculty members and must use the established Ed.D. governance committee to review, evaluate, and develop new policy for the program.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the past five years, the University of Southern California's (USC's) Rossier School of Education (RSOE) has designed and implemented a new Ed.D. program. In this report, we describe and evaluate this newly developed program with three purposes in mind. First, we want to provide a full, collective account of the new program's development (including its design and implementation), next steps, and remaining challenges for future accreditation teams and similar reviews for the RSOE. Second, we want to document our experiences, pathways, and challenges for other universities to use as a supporting reference in developing their own Ed.D. programs. Third, we want to contribute to the national conceptual and strategic dialogue about the Ed.D.

### **BACKGROUND**

USC has offered an Ed.D. degree for over a half-century. In the program's early days, it was the only such program in the Southern California region, and it was seen by those in the education field as the pathway to education leadership positions in kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) and community college settings. The RSOE faculty had a strong practitioner focus, and faculty members were seen as effective leaders of change across the region. In what was an era of dominant deans who ruled with a strong hand, the RSOE benefited from such a leader, Dr. Irwin Melbo, who during the 20 years he served, recruited the best superintendents available to serve as faculty in the Ed.D. program and built a management team and faculty culture strongly supportive of the Ed.D. In addition, Dean Melbo carefully directed the placement of graduates and established a career development office that dominated the selection process of superintendents in Southern California. USC's Ed.D. program enrollment was so large that one-third of the school superintendents in Southern California were USC graduates. Dean Melbo also expanded the Ed.D. program to other settings, primarily through the Department of Defense school system; as a result, USC had multiple off-campus centers in Europe, Asia, and the Panama Canal.

### **REASONS FOR DEVELOPING THE NEW PROGRAM**

By the year 2000, the perception of the RSOE Ed.D. program had changed; it was seen as flawed, outdated, and no longer effective. Moreover, external factors were shaking up the context within which the program existed.

#### **Perceived Problems**

The program needed to come to terms with some essential problems. For instance, the work of education practitioners in Southern California and beyond was changing rapidly, and the program was not

adequately preparing its students to handle those changes: meeting the needs of diverse urban students, standards and comprehensive school reform, accountability and assessment, best practices, and new approaches to leadership. Moreover, the Ed.D. program did not have an ongoing strategic governance/design process for refining or rethinking the overall program when changes were needed. In the previous era, the program had focused on the K–12 practitioner. The RSOE’s nationally prominent faculty in higher education was using a modified K–12 program design for its segment of the Ed.D. program, and there was strong interest in expanding the involvement of all faculty members in the program. Likewise, there was a need to expand the range of practitioners to include those working in teacher education, private companies in education, and related dimensions of professional practice.

Further, the program’s once vibrant connection with the field of education was outdated and perceived to be fading. Recreating the connection of the 1960s was definitely not the goal, but both the practitioner colleagues and the faculty knew that something had to be done. Because USC had shifted from being a regionally prominent university serving key practitioners to a nationally focused research university, the RSOE had gained research-oriented faculty members but had lost its clinical/practitioner faculty members—as well as the sense that all of the faculty understood or cared about the practice of education. In short, both a strategic governance process and the collaborative voices needed to make the Ed.D. program stronger and relevant were lacking.

Another problem was that the core courses in the existing Ed.D. program had become increasingly disconnected from each other, and individual courses were seen as outdated. The courses had no connected message and no theory of how to make a difference for practitioners. Moreover, there were, in essence, fiefdoms in which individual faculty members “owned” key courses. In consequence, courses could not benefit from the best thinking of a set of faculty members and thus could not be effectively connected and updated. The program also suffered from a weak process for developing curriculum and a weak strategy for assessing student learning—or even student satisfaction with the program.

In addition, the approach to student dissertations was flawed. We were asking our practitioner students, who had never conducted a research project and would never conduct one again, to produce a high-quality traditional dissertation, and what they were producing was not meeting our expectations. We realized that the goal we were setting was unrealistic, since it had little prospect of helping these students do their professional work more effectively. We also had a large and growing group of students who had finished their course work but, for various reasons, had not finished their dissertations. This group, which we came to call our “legacy” students, represented a major challenge for us, particularly because the dissertation stage is the most labor intensive for faculty members and yet represents the lowest number of academic units. These students constituted a lost generation in that we did not know enough about them and could not provide adequate faculty or staff support for them.

The RSOE was also poorly structured for providing students in the Ed.D. program with ongoing academic and student support. Invariably, academic coordination tasks reached across inflexible departments, staff resources devoted to making the program successful were inadequate, and students were being asked to solve their degree-progress issues within a disjointed support-service structure. No single office could resolve an academic or student affairs issue. We realized that these were a set of connected concerns needing to be addressed in relation to each other.

## **External Factors**

Along with the Ed.D. program's internal problems, there were external factors serving as an impetus for change. The first of these was USC's stature as a tier I private research university ambitious to become even better. The university had sufficient centralized authority to direct reform, and the central administration was pushing academic units to define indicators of quality relevant to their work, and to propose and implement energetic strategic improvement initiatives. Clearly, improvement of our Ed.D. program could be seen as part of this broader effort to make each academic unit a nationally visible leader in its field or face possible serious consequences. USC has a set of strong professional schools, many of which have made the shift from a regional and service-to-the-field perspective to a nationally recognized research perspective that supports a new type of professional preparation within the schools.

The second external factor was USC's practice of revenue-centered management. Each academic unit must raise its own revenue, practice care in linking expenditures to available revenue, and use its own resources to enhance its academic standing. The Ed.D. program had never been used as a "cash cow"; but, similar to other RSOE programs, it had to balance three considerations: (1) the need to enhance professional relevance and academic quality, (2) the need to generate fiscal resources to sustain and grow the academic programs and the RSOE in general, and (3) the need to create a feasible and sustainable effort—that is, to not "burn itself out." The proper balance of academic/professional quality and the fiscal realities of the Ed.D. program has been, and continues to be, a major point of discussion and contention within the RSOE. We have a small endowment as a university and limited scholarship funding for our Ed.D. students—and the cost of the Ed.D. degree is currently at about \$50,000.

The third external factor working at the time was the more specific mandate at USC to enhance the quality of Ph.D. programs and to differentiate them from professional doctorate degrees. The Provost had made it clear: Academic units that do not create high-quality, nationally recognized, research-focused Ph.D. programs face the prospect of having their Ph.D. programs terminated. We viewed ourselves as especially vulnerable in this regard, because we had a large, unwieldy set of Ph.D. programs that were uneven in quality, unfocused in mission, and weakly supported by student scholarships and tuition

stipends. We knew we would have to make efforts to enhance the quality of our Ph.D. degree and to differentiate the purposes of our Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees.

The fourth external factor was the large size of the metropolitan region served by USC and the resulting need to provide a substantial number of leaders for urban education institutions. More students attend public schools in Los Angeles County than in all of the New England states combined. And the five counties comprising the Los Angeles region expand the demand for education leaders even further.

The fifth, and final, external factor that served as an impetus for change was Dr. Karen Symms Gallagher, who arrived as the new dean of the RSOE in 2000, bringing her strong intention to carry out a strategic planning process. She worked with faculty and staff leaders in the RSOE to create a futures conference that was held in Spring 2001. This conference led to the RSOE's mission being firmly focused on leadership in urban education and to the identification of four academic themes that were to play a key role in our development and design of the new Ed.D. program.

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

Section 2 of this report discusses what we envisioned for the new Ed.D. program in terms of desired characteristics and strategic direction. Section 3 describes the basic approach and guiding principles of our program's design. Section 4 details the new program's design and implementation, including our experiences along the way, related issues and challenges, and the program's major elements: the core courses, concentration courses, inquiry methods courses, and culminating, or capstone, experience.

Section 5 focuses on the ways in which the program provides support. It describes the student population and its needs, as well as the newly created support structures for meeting those needs and the needs of the program itself. Section 6 talks about the data on the new program that have been collected, analyzed, and used to shape the program so far, as well as external views affecting the program and its reputation. Section 7 presents the challenges that lay ahead as we continue to improve and maintain the new program.

## **2. OUR VISION**

We began our design of the new Ed.D. program with a concept that would lead us in a direction very unlike that of traditional Ph.D. programs. Instead of starting with the history, theory, and research in different foundational disciplines, we identified the tasks that leaders face in different educational contexts. Our goal was to focus on what our students should be able to do as professionals in the new education-reform contexts and on our mission in urban education: We wanted to connect a huge amount of conceptual and clinical knowledge with best use of research and best practices to produce effective leaders for urban education. For us, knowledge would integrate all courses and would center on what students need as professionals. We also wanted a common problem-solving model, one that could serve as a signature pedagogy for our program's core, concentration, and culminating, or capstone, work.

This section describes the characteristics we envisioned our program having and the development of our strategic direction.

### **ENVISIONED PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS**

For program governance, we envisioned a process that would link the authorities and responsibilities of the dean, associate dean, and faculty council. The new Ed.D. program would be led by a faculty member who worked full time as the program director. A program governance committee, composed of faculty members, would provide curriculum and program guidance. We also wanted much greater faculty collaboration in ways that fit with the overall program governance strategy, as well as a strong and formalized student advisory process that offered clear and collaboratively developed written program guidelines for both faculty and students.

Further, we wanted the new program to have effective, ongoing oversight and review: data-based decision making and problem solving, as well as active use of indicators, data, and monitoring of success and problems that would continue to improve the program. We planned to initiate periodic reviews of our work, which would include evaluations by external visitors and at the formal program level. For curriculum development, we sought collaborative faculty involvement. We wanted to shift from specific courses being "owned" by specific faculty members to all courses being collectively developed and thus owned by the program. And we wanted each developed course to have one syllabus that all faculty members would use.

In our vision of the new Ed.D. program, each RSOE faculty member would see him- or herself as an Ed.D. program faculty member. We planned to build a new culture of respect and mutuality among faculty members that would lead to new levels of collaboration. We were aware of the advantages of such a culture, but we also knew it would foster dilemmas and problems, as well. As a result, we wanted the

idea of “faculty” to be expanded to create equal status for and engagement of all full-time faculty, whether tenured/tenure-track or clinical. Additionally, adjuncts and other practitioners currently in the program were to have an enhanced role in the expansion process. We looked at this idea as a way to help create our desired new connection with the field: helping faculty draw on their strengths and assets within the program.

The envisioned program was also going to have a new organization, new leadership, and new support for students. Our view was that we needed a skilled administrator to lead the program and good support services to assist the faculty and staff in implementing the program.

We wanted the new program to have much more consistency than the previous one had. New students were to start the program together as a cohort each fall, and there would be much stronger support for students. There would be an Ed.D. program office instead of a department structure, and it would have a strong student-support staff so that students would be able to solve a wide array of academic dilemmas at one location. We also wanted to dramatically improve student recruitment—in order to build on our field connections and our tradition of mentoring—by admitting leaders with the insights and strengths of the diverse urban setting we wanted to serve. This effort would also include recruiting students with high academic qualifications. Revitalizing our career placement center and career mentoring would be integral to this overall process.

We envisioned the new program as offering a strong set of core courses that all students would take. This core would feature powerful levers for effective practice—leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning—all of which came out of our 2001 futures conference as academic themes. The set of concentrations would expand to include such job-related concentrations as K–12 and higher education/community college, offering students some choice and focus. These concentrations would provide a meaningful yet limited set of options that were administratively feasible for our faculty and management approach. We also wanted to identify specific criteria for determining these concentrations, a task we knew would be controversial for the faculty.

For the culminating, or capstone, experience, we wanted the program to take an entirely different approach. Instead of the traditional experience of addressing gaps in the theoretical literature, our capstone experience would address relevant problems of practice. Through this experience, students would be helped to make a difference in their professional practice both during the program and, especially, afterward. They would also work collaboratively, as they would throughout their careers, and they would learn how to inquire and use best practices to address real-world problems. We saw the change-over to this new capstone experience being made in stages rather than immediately, for two reasons: the university’s concerns about quality, and the faculty’s diverse views and lack of experience with such an approach.

In contrast to the prior Ed.D. program's structure, in which students could (and did) take eleven core courses in essentially random order, the new program was to be structured so that the first year consisted of the four core courses for all students. In addition, the second year would build on what students had learned in the first, and the core and concentration courses would be closely connected. In short, the program would have layers that built on each year's work. The program would also have new approaches to assessment and student accountability. We were determined to have more student accountability than previously and a requirement for steady progress in the program—to avoid creating a legacy-student problem akin to the one inherited from the previous era.

As another avenue for improving the Ed.D. program, we sought to collaborate with other professional programs and to draw on the best thinking about professional doctorates that was available. We sought to be part of the national Ed.D. leadership while also recognizing the views of our alumni and other local stakeholders. Additionally, we were aware that we needed external credibility and validation—and that we needed to deserve them. Given the range of views within the RSOE faculty and the demand for excellence across USC, we knew that our interest in enhancing professional practice and urban education for our students would require external support.

Finally, we knew that in setting out to enact our vision, we were embarking on a bold and important adventure that was likely to have difficulties. But we also knew we could not turn back: It was time to move forward with the new Ed.D. program.

## **THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION: 2001 FUTURES CONFERENCE**

Under the leadership of the new dean, Karen Symms Gallagher, the RSOE held a futures conference in Spring 2001. The goal for this conference was to create a strategic direction for the entire RSOE through the involvement of over 100 faculty members, staff members, and key external stakeholders in a three-day planning retreat. To assist in achieving this goal, a team worked for six months with two external facilitators who had run futures conferences for many organizations across the county. This team wanted to maximize collective discussion and avoid any pre-set “answers” to what the direction of the school should be. Participation in the event was voluntary, but hard work and a strong expectation that everyone would participate led to nearly 100% faculty attendance for the full three days.

The goal of the 2001 futures conference was clearly met: We reaffirmed and clarified the RSOE's urban mission, and we created four academic themes seen as crucial to the success of that mission. Equally important was the organizational focus achieved: We created and collectively owned this new strategic direction for the school.

## **Our View of Urban Education**

We view urban education as the process of teaching and learning that takes place in complex urban-metropolitan settings typically characterized by broad diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture, and language abilities. Urban settings have a mature service-delivery infrastructure characterized by socio-political stratification and unequal access by citizens to services.

When we speak of the study of urban education, we mean the critical examination of the manner in which issues of broad diversity may intersect in complex ways to marginalize and adversely affect the learning and teaching process for some populations. A key element in our vision of urban education is a commitment to function not just as observers or commentators, but also as change agents, in our research, teaching, and service. This commitment presumes the creation of a collaborative learning community in our urban setting that advances knowledge about the skills and tools needed to enact social change in the pursuit of social justice—that is, to connect education practice to critical inquiry in urban settings. To this end, the urban paradigm played a key role in the content of all courses set forth as central to the new Ed.D. program.

## **The Four Academic Themes**

Part of what we did at the conference was to identify the intellectual framework of academic themes that would support our urban mission. The themes had to integrate the insights of academic disciplines and clinical knowledge in ways that made professional knowledge useful to practitioners; they also had to frame our research efforts in ways that supported professional improvement. We identified four such academic themes: leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning.

## **Distinction Between Ed.D. and Ph.D. Programs**

Another outcome was our achievement of a clear distinction between the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs offered by the RSOE. Extensive changes had already been made to the Ph.D. program's design prior to 2000, primarily in response to pressure from USC's central administration to offer only high-quality Ph.D. programs. We thus were at a point where we could design a new program that would be distinct from and of equal quality to the Ph.D. program. We saw both programs as emphasizing the acquisition of appropriate research and inquiry skills, but these skills would be applied differently. The Ed.D. student would be trained to use education inquiry skills to solve contemporary education problems; the Ph.D. student would be trained to contribute to the general and theoretical knowledge about education issues. Thus, the Ed.D. student would engage in research and development efforts aimed at directly improving education practice while the Ph.D. student would aim to contribute to theory and general

knowledge in a way expected to be relevant to solution of a problem but not necessarily applied to current education practice.

In a recent issue of the *Educational Researcher*, Lee Shulman et al. (2006) point to the RSOE as a rare “good example” of a school of education that has made a strong and appropriate distinction between the Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees. Shulman makes an important point when he states that it is difficult to move forward with a new Ed.D. program without also addressing the need to refine the Ph.D. program.

Our new Ed.D. program—the result of which is a premier degree in the RSOE—is specifically designed to produce practitioner leaders who are expert in promoting the enhancement of learning within an organization, an expertise that is relevant both in schools and in all other institutions where learning occurs.



### 3. DESIGN APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

The Ed.D. planning committee began discussing the design of a new Ed.D. program at the start of the Fall 2001 semester. This committee consisted of five tenured professors and four clinical professors. Myron H. Dembo, a tenured professor of Educational Psychology, and Stuart Gothold, a clinical professor of Education and a past superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, were chosen to serve as co-chairs. They and the seven other faculty members all represented different academic divisions of the RSOE.

The planning committee approached its task by instituting an open process. It invited all faculty members to present their concerns and recommendations throughout its deliberations. Faculty members simply had to contact one of the co-chairs to be placed on the agenda for any of the committee's monthly meetings. This approach greatly reduced the possibilities for isolation and conflict, because when the time came for the whole faculty to vote on the new program, almost every faculty member had taken advantage of the opportunity to voice his or her concerns. The result was overwhelming approval of the new program at the end of the Spring 2002 semester.

Faculty members praised the approach used for planning and curriculum development for being a professional-development opportunity the majority of them had never before experienced. They reported that they had never spent so much time discussing, debating, and evaluating their views about course content within a committee environment. This is not to say that the process was always harmonious; difficult times did indeed occur. However, in the end, an innovative Ed.D. program was developed.

The planning committee adopted the following guiding principles for the design of the new Ed.D. program:

*To differ from the Ph.D. program, the new Ed.D. program will involve students in activities that strengthen their leadership skills throughout the program.* That is to say, the program has to be based on the question, What cognitive and interpersonal knowledge and skills are necessary to function successfully in leadership positions in education? Our former program focused on the question, What knowledge do graduate students need to acquire in educational psychology, sociology, policy and administration, and other broadly defined academic disciplines? The new program will not stop emphasizing academic content, but its starting point will be educational settings rather than academic content. Our belief is that students' weekly academic experiences should be related to competencies and skills used in their chosen professions.

*Clinical faculty members will have equal status with tenured/tenure-track faculty members in developing the program.* This principle ensures that we will benefit from the opinions of some of the best practitioners and clinical scholars on the question of what skills and competencies education leaders have

to develop. Our guiding belief is that the change we want to implement cannot be accomplished without the input and involvement of the clinical faculty.

*Instructional processes will focus on problem solving, discussions, and small-group work rather than the traditional lecture format.* This is the principle that we have adapted for our signature pedagogy, which is a problem-solving model based on a gap analysis of practitioner challenges and goals, current situations, and strategies (see Clark & Estes, 2002).

*A core curriculum will be established for the first four courses.* Both these core classes and the ensuing, concentration courses will have common syllabi, and all students will take courses in a specified sequence. Concentration courses will build on the interdisciplinary knowledge gained from core courses. Our goal here is to provide students with a common course experience regardless of who teaches the course. In addition, this will ensure that instructors know what knowledge students have acquired in previous classes.

*Students will complete the program in three years.* This principle led to an administrative structure that included an Ed.D. executive director with dedicated advisors for each new doctoral class. In the past, students were in the program anywhere from three to ten years, taking courses in random sequence with different instructors who taught the same course but chose to cover different material. This structure made it nearly impossible to determine students' standing in the program, their level of expertise, and whether their status was active or inactive. And, the coupling of this structure with the cumbersome and inadequate record-keeping systems that existed made it extremely difficult to identify, track, and mentor students in the program and to develop accurate yearly budgets to support the program.

*Students will stay with their entering cohort as they move through the program.* Because collaboration is such an important skill in most education positions in the real world, we wanted to model this element during the Ed.D. program.

*Over 80% of students in the program will participate in thematic, rather than traditional, dissertations.* Each student will research and write his or her own dissertation, but all student work within a cohort will relate to common themes or education issues and challenges and will be done in small groups of students directed by one or two faculty advisers. We chose this form of capstone experience because it fosters and is based on the skills of inquiry and collaboration that we want graduates to carry with them as education leaders.

## 4. THE NEW PROGRAM

This section provides the details of our new Ed.D. program’s design and implementation, our experiences along the way, and related issues and challenges. We start with an overview of the three-year program as context; from there on, the discussion is organized by the major elements of the program: the core courses, concentration courses, inquiry methods courses, and culminating, or capstone, experience.

### OVERVIEW

All students admitted to the Ed.D. program must have a master’s degree and at least three years of relevant work experience. Table 1 shows the three-year course sequence established for earning an Ed.D.

**Table 1. Three-Year Sequence for Ed.D., by Year and Semester**

Year 1
Fall: Challenges in Urban Education: Leadership (EDUC 524) Challenges in Urban Education: Accountability (EDUC 522)
Spring: Challenges in Urban Education: Diversity (EDUC 523) Challenges in Urban Education: Learning (EDUC 525)
Summer: Summer Conference Inquiry Methods I (EDUC 532) Concentration Course 1
Year 2
Fall: Concentration Course 2 Concentration Course 3
Spring: Inquiry Methods II (EDUC 536) Critique of Research (EDUC 792)
Summer: Concentration Course 4 Concentration Course 5 Dissertation Research Seminar (EDUC 790) Qualifying Exams
Year 3
Fall: Dissertation
Spring: Dissertation Graduation

Each student begins the program in the fall semester, entering as one member of a cohort. All students in a cohort take the same four core courses in the first academic year. The following summer, they take the first of two inquiry methods courses and begin work in their choice of one of four concentrations: (1) Educational Psychology (applying teaching and learning in schooling/business and non-traditional educational settings), (2) Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership, (3) K–12 Leadership in Urban School Settings, and (4) Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS). Work connected with the thematic dissertations begins in the students’ first summer and continues to the end of the program.

## **CORE COURSES**

The conceptual framework from the 2001 futures conference became the conceptual base for our Ed.D. core program. That is, the four academic themes underpinning our urban education mission—leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning—became the basis for our four core courses. Along with acknowledging the benefits of having all Ed.D. students take a core set of courses, we thought it imperative that core content be generic so as to apply equally to all students regardless of concentration. There were several good reasons for having the core courses mirror the conceptual framework: the four elements provide powerful guidelines for practitioner leadership, they help integrate key theory relevant to practice, and they reflect important work strategies and dimensions of the actual work that leaders need to implement.

### **Rationale for Four Core Courses**

The four core courses proposed by the planning committee for the Ed.D. program and their rationales are described in the following paragraphs.

*Leadership.* This course covers “how” to focus education systems on learning. The goal of the course is to produce leaders who are committed to and capable of transforming urban schools into high-performance learning organizations. To this end, the course focuses on enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations, fostering productive relationships within the organization, and holding individuals accountable. Students also learn how to examine the organization in which they work and how to create improvement strategies that pay attention to the structural, human relations, political and symbolic/culture dimensions of their organizations.

*Accountability.* The accountability course helps students develop indicators of success in educational organizations, especially for determining what should be learned and how well it has been learned. Students then learn how to use a problem-solving model to analyze performance “gaps,” how to search for evidence-based best practices, and how to use data to drive organizational improvement. The course

also helps students address accountability issues related to leadership, diversity, and ethics in organizational change and how to establish a culture/process of continuous improvement and organizational learning in their settings.

*Diversity.* This course deals with the context within which educators operate, particularly in urban areas. It promotes an understanding of the specific strengths and needs of learners who differ in income, ethnicity, gender, language proficiency, or disability and ensures that graduates incorporate what they learn here into their practice.

*Learning.* This course presents the basic principles of how individuals and groups learn and teaches individuals how to apply a problem-solving model to solve educational problems. The course focuses on the application of learning principles indifferent social contexts.

An important goal in planning the core courses was to integrate all four themes whenever possible. For example, we wanted the diversity course to cover relevant topics on leadership, accountability, and learning. In addition, it was our intention to have the concentration courses build on what students had learned in the core classes. This strategy provided students with important foundational skills for later, more-advanced work and allowed teachers of later courses to know what knowledge their students had already acquired.

Here is what a faculty member said about how the sequence of core courses helped her teach a concentration course in instructional leadership and school improvement:

As I began teaching student engagement, I knew what the students covered in motivation in their learning course, so I was able to introduce topics knowing that they had the background. The same thing can be said about accountability. I am able to talk about different accountability measures and how data drives decision-making. I don't have to deal with important issues like criterion and norm reference measures because I know they were covered. As I talk about student engagement and the leadership of principals, I don't have to go back and survey what leadership is all about. I know what they covered in their leadership class.

### **Core Curriculum Planning Committee**

We began our design efforts with the idea that the core courses needed to be taught by a group of faculty members—in other words, needed to be “owned” by the program rather than by individual faculty members. This decision led to the idea of designing the program first and then figuring out how individual faculty members would fit in. We realized that this approach was risky, but we believed that having faculty members buy into the design up front would mean fewer obstacles later on. We found little resistance to having core courses. As expected, however, a few faculty members were concerned that their specific courses would not be offered.

The Ed.D. planning committee appointed a core curriculum planning committee consisting of faculty members representing different divisions and academic disciplines in the RSOE. This committee then

appointed four subcommittees that were responsible for developing the syllabi for each of the four core courses.

The core curriculum planning committee established guidelines for course development; these included increased discussion time, use of simulations, and use of case study and other experiential activities. In addition, this committee established that readings would be limited to the most essential for the course and that students would be taught how to use research to diagnose and solve problems. Initially, an attempt was made to identify one problem-solving model for all four core courses, but several issues met with different opinions from faculty members: Should only the Clark/Estes model be used? Should multiple models be used? And was faculty agreement about which model to use really necessary? After much discussion, we decided to use multiple models.

The limitation on the number of readings to be included caused some problems. In some cases, the number of readings was too large because members of the subcommittees for each core class were reluctant to negotiate among themselves. Faculty members found it difficult to question others about the importance or relevance of certain readings. The deliberations of the core curriculum planning committee were what solved the problems, since the members of this committee were outside the subcommittees and thus could raise questions about the readings. This process provided a collegial check on the subcommittees. The core curriculum planning committee also played a major role in reminding subcommittees and individual faculty members when they departed from earlier agreements that had been made.

The subcommittees often found that traditional textbooks tended not to be the best reading material. Many of these textbooks focused primarily on individual theories and the history of the discipline rather than on providing an answer to the core curriculum planning committees' question, What is it that a leader needs to know about solving education problems in diverse settings? As a result, the subcommittees relied more on journal articles.

We decided that the core courses would be the same regardless of the students' chosen educational context. Thus, for example, if one student's educational setting was K-12 and another student's was higher-education institutions, both students would still take the same leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning courses. Initially, this strategy posed a problem for some faculty members who had never in their careers had to consider how different constructs applied to individuals in different social contexts. This decision caused many debates among faculty members developing the syllabi for the courses. After considerable discussion, we reached an agreement that readings and class experiences must be responsive to the work of a diverse group of students.

## **Core Course Foci and Development Issues**

*Core leadership course.* This course focuses a great deal on self-assessment and reflection. Students use a number of self-assessment instruments and explore theories of leadership; at the end of the course, they summarize in a paper what they have learned about themselves.

*Core accountability course.* The members of the subcommittee developing the accountability course had to deal with their different conceptualizations of accountability, especially the psychometric approach versus the policy and systems view. They then had to determine how to deal with accountability issues in different educational contexts and relate them to leadership, diversity, and learning. The course traces the evolution of the accountability concept, with an emphasis on emerging accountability issues in urban schools and colleges that serve large numbers of low-income and racial/ethnic students. Special attention is given to helping leaders understand, analyze, and cope within the context of increased demands for accountability. This course adopted the same problem-solving approach as the learning course did: gap-analysis.

*Core diversity course.* This course focuses on helping students clarify their own thinking about diversity issues, identify problems, and consider solutions. The focus of this course took some time to arrive at, however. It initially ran into difficulty because a few faculty members who were developing the course believed its content focused more on problems than on solutions. Over time, the subcommittee resolved this issue by identifying multiple frameworks for addressing the achievement gap and recommended suggestions for implementing change. For example, one suggestion was to have each student use an Internet discussion board to make an original entry each week that addresses one or more of the readings and analyzes what he or she has read. Each student then responds to two other students' entries on the discussion board. Faculty members would not respond to the student discussion but would frame questions to clarify issues in the next class meeting.

*Core learning course.* The members of the subcommittee developing the learning course agreed on a gap-analysis problem-solving approach for the course early on (see Clark & Estes, 2002). In this approach, students define goals, determine the gaps by comparing the goals to the standard used, determine the causes of the gaps (i.e., knowledge, motivation, and/or culture/context), determine solutions for closing the gaps, and develop an evaluation plan for the recommended solutions. The subcommittee members debated the significance of different readings when they initially attempted to make the course relevant to students in K–12, higher education, business, and human performance. They started with a textbook in the first year, moved to a book of readings in the second year, and then returned to a textbook for limited readings plus two books, one on gap analysis and one on goal setting.

## **CONCENTRATION COURSES**

Rather than grandfather in the existing concentrations, the Ed.D. governance committee requested proposals from the faculty to determine which concentrations would be offered in the new program. We wanted to rethink the concentrations and not automatically accept any courses. Our final decision was that there would be one Ed.D. degree, called educational leadership, and within it there would be a number of concentrations approved by the Ed.D. governance committee for recommendation to the RSOE dean.

### **Selection of Concentrations**

We received six proposals for concentrations and approved the following four: Educational Psychology, Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership, K–12 Leadership in Urban School Settings, and Multicultural Teacher Education (which later became Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies, or TEMS). The criteria used in our selection process were as follows:

1. At least three faculty members must have made academic and professional contributions in the concentration according to information in the Faculty Performance Index (i.e., the annual review of academic performance used to determine salary increases). In some cases, the faculty members may come from other USC schools or divisions as long as those faculty members indicate that they will teach a course in the concentration.
2. The concentration must have an approved course sequence.
3. There must be an appointed faculty chair for the concentration who will also serve as a member of the Ed.D. governance committee.
4. There must be a schedule of classes, and the faculty members who are to teach each course must be named.
5. Evidence must be provided of the concentration's potential or actual marketability in terms of revenue.

One problem that soon emerged had to do with the Multicultural Teacher Education concentration, whose professors had different content specializations (such as reading, international education, mathematics education, and science education). They had simply merged their own programs into a mix of courses, which resulted in four different areas with a total of fourteen courses. We realized that the concentration lacked a clear focus and that there would never be enough students to enroll in the courses that were to be offered.

The Ed.D. governance committee asked this group of faculty members to reduce its course offerings and focus on a particular theme for the concentration. After a year of deliberations, the issues had not been resolved. The governance committee then asked the RSOE dean to appoint a committee comprising both state and national leaders in teacher education and some concentration faculty members in the

RSOE. This new committee recommended a concentration focused on teacher education, to be called Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS), and a faculty committee then developed a sequence of five courses for the concentration.

### **Foci and Relationships of Concentration Courses**

Table 2 lists all the individual courses in the four concentrations; its purpose is to serve as an overview for the discussion here, which covers how the courses within each concentration focus on the urban education mission and relate to the program’s four core courses—leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning. (See Appendix B for a student profile for each concentration.)

### **Educational Psychology**

This concentration focuses on research and practice in the areas of learning and motivation in diverse social contexts. The course work emphasizes how people learn, what motivates them, what instructional and motivational strategies are the most effective for individuals from different cultures, and how the social context of instruction affects learning. The goal of this concentration is to help professionals in

**Table 2. Required Courses in the Four Concentrations**

<b>Educational Psychology</b>	<b>Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership</b>	<b>K–12 Leadership in Urban School Settings</b>	<b>Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS)</b>
Advanced Educational Measurement and Evaluation	Special Topics Proseminar in Higher Education	The Policies and Politics of Educational Governance	Research in Teacher Education
Research in Learning	Administration in Higher Education	School Leadership and Instructional Improvement	Teacher Education Curriculum
Advanced Motivation	Advanced Student Development in Higher Education	Economics of Education	Evaluation of Education Programs
Lifespan Development	Issues in Economics, Accountability, and Institutional Assessment	Management of Human Resources	Examining Literacy Theories
Social Psychology of Education	Policy and Performance	Seminar in the Principalship OR Superintendency	Pedagogy

K–12, higher education, and business, military, and government organizations improve the motivation, achievement, performance, and retention of diverse learners.

A major task in the core course on learning is to identify the causes of performance gaps in education. The five courses in this concentration support a learner-centered approach to education problems that provides theory and empirical research to help students identify such gaps. In addition, the content is linked to each of the four core courses.

The Advanced Educational Measurement and Evaluation course in this concentration presents a framework for determining how to select measurement instruments and develop an evaluation design for education outcomes. This content is useful in helping education leaders develop accountability systems and accurately diagnose diverse students' learning problems and achievement outcomes. The Research in Learning course allows students to examine current research applications of the learning theories introduced in the core learning course in the context of education settings. The content provides the empirical and theoretical background required to diagnose knowledge, motivation, and learning gaps in learning environments. The Advanced Motivation course introduces content that adds an important component missing in the discussion of school reform as leaders attempt to understand problems in accountability systems. More specifically, motivation is linked to issues of underperformance of diverse students and the inability of some educators to develop environments that promote motivated behavior. Theory-based approaches to solving motivation issues are examined. The Lifespan Development course helps students understand issues of individual differences and human development that relate to effective problem solving. The course content relates to issues in education leadership for diverse students and how to develop accountability programs that focus on students' individual differences.

The Social Psychology of Education course focuses on social factors that influence learning and builds on issues of leadership, accountability, and diversity by raising the following type of questions: How effective are prejudice-reduction strategies? What role does organizational climate play in the social and academic development of students? How can leaders best facilitate collaborative learning experiences? What are effective ways of integrating cultural aspects of learning into instruction?

### **Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership**

Students enrolling in this concentration work in an academic or administrative unit of a higher education institution or in two- or four-year colleges or universities that provide direct services to students. Each course in the concentration supports the urban mission.

The Special Topics Proseminar in Higher Education course examines several issues important for urban higher education institutions, including access, globalization, and diversity. The Administration in Higher Education course focuses on key areas within urban institutions, such as diversity, assessment, and

creation of change. The Advanced Student Development in Higher Education course is aimed at helping higher education institutions in urban areas be more effective in educating students from varying backgrounds and who might need special support. The Issues in Economics, Accountability, and Institutional Assessment course examines financial issues and focuses on institutional assessment of urban institutions. Lastly, the Policy and Performance course pays special attention to building the capacity and accountability needed at the institutional and state levels to achieve successful and equitable outcomes for all students.

The courses in this concentration relate to leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning in several ways. The courses in administration, economics, and policy and performance all have an accountability component that builds on the concepts and theories taught in the first year. The proseminar, policy and performance, and advanced student affairs courses all have sections related to diversity and equity in higher education. They, too, build on the foundation of the first year, examining these issues in particular as they are played out in higher education. The administration course builds on the core concepts from the leadership course, including change and navigating the social and political environments in which administrators work. The specific dynamics of the higher education context are highlighted in the course on administration of higher education. In addition, the course on advanced student affairs describes leadership issues within this particular administrative area of higher education. Finally, learning is a major focus of the proseminar course, in which students examine innovative learning strategies in higher education; of the advanced student affairs course, in which students examine learning strategies as they relate to student development; and of the policies and performance course, in which students examine the advantages and disadvantages of policies related to learning.

### **K–12 Leadership in Urban School Settings**

The K–12 concentration is designed for current and prospective K–12 site and district administrators and/or those working with education policy and practice at local, state, and federal levels. The courses meet the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELS) and are designed in sequence to culminate in either the Seminar in the Principalship or the Seminar in the Superintendentcy. These two seminars use what students have learned in the previous courses to create an integrated composite of the practices of principals and superintendents that have been effective in improving organizational (school or district) outcomes, including increased student achievement in urban environments. Students select one of the culminating seminars based on their current positions: aspiring and new principals enroll in the Seminar in the Principalship; experienced site or district administrators enroll in the Seminar in the Superintendentcy.

For this concentration, the core course in accountability leads to learning about the role of accountability in education policies, especially in terms of how the concept of accountability has evolved in such policies as state accountability systems, the politics of testing, and the high school exit exams. Diversity is discussed in terms of how education policies reflect diversity in such programs as Title I, Title IX, special education, and desegregation. Leadership is discussed in terms of who (of the federal, state, and local policy-makers) controls schools, which means that topics covered—all of which have implications for education leadership—include charter schools, mayoral takeovers, union contracts, collective bargaining, vouchers, and choice. Finally, learning is covered in terms of the guiding question: Is there a match between what we know about how students learn and educational policies developed to promote student learning?

### **Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS)**

Students in this concentration aspire to be faculty members in teacher education programs, professional development specialists in various educational institutions, or curriculum developers in K–12 settings. Each course in this concentration supports the urban mission.

The *research* course examines several issues that are important for teacher education pre-service and professional development programs, including teacher learning theory, teacher efficacy, and the role that urban field experiences play in urban teacher engagement and development. The *assessment* course focuses on key areas within urban teaching, such as teacher and student assessment and creating changes in urban education in K–12 environments. In the *curriculum* course, students explore and critique curricular practices in urban areas and explore how to train teachers to be more effective in educating students from varying backgrounds and who might need special support and attention. The *literacy* course focuses on literacy development of learners in urban environments and on the effects of effective practice on educating and supporting teachers who must improve literacy achievement in urban learners. Lastly, the course on *pedagogy* concentrates on exploring the pedagogical practices of in-service and pre-service teacher education that assist teachers in urban settings.

The courses in this concentration relate to the core courses in several ways. Primarily, the research course provides the theoretical frameworks for other courses related to leadership, accountability, diversity, and learning as applied to teacher education. It builds on the core learning course in the areas of adult and child learning theory, teacher and student motivation and efficacy, and student and teacher information processing. Additionally, it explores research-based models of building teacher leadership. The curriculum course focuses on both student learning and teacher learning as they apply to curricular components and models of teaching and instruction. It connects assessment and accountability to curriculum planning through a study of high-stakes testing and its association with curriculum development and

instructional planning. It also links to diversity in that it explores curricular accommodations for teachers and learners with diverse learning needs. The assessment course focuses primarily on diversity and accountability. Teacher and student assessment and its link to accountability, particularly as applied to the federal No Child Left Behind Act, are a focus in this course. Diversity and the need for assessments that accommodate diversity are discussed. The literacy course focuses on learning theory applied to literacy. Diversity and learners with special needs and linguistic diversity are explored in this course through the examination of literacy instruction. High-stakes testing and its connection to literacy instructional practices are also examined and analyzed. The pedagogy course, which is the final course in the concentration sequence, explores pedagogical practices in teacher education that are related to student and teacher diversity, framed by sound practices based on learning theory, and focused on building educational leaders.

## **INQUIRY METHODS COURSES**

The inquiry methods courses have been the most difficult part of Ed.D. program development. There are three possible purposes for inquiry methods courses in a doctoral program: (1) to enhance the professional competence of students by promoting an identified set of important intellectual skills necessary for effective education leadership, (2) to prepare students for the academic requirements in their course work, and (3) to prepare students to conduct research investigations required by their thematic or individual dissertations.

We decided to use the two inquiry methods courses to enhance students' professional competence by promoting an identified set of important intellectual skills necessary for effective education leadership. Students with these skills will be able to

- Make valid inferences from qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Use and do scientific research in everyday educational practice
- Analyze education programs, policies, institutions, and processes
- Evaluate education programs, policies, institutions, and processes
- Create solutions to education problems using scientific evidence to drive decision making.

What we want from our two inquiry methods courses is for students to approach their challenging workplace problems using rigorous inferential thinking, in much the same way that scientists use inferential thinking to solve theoretical problems.

Currently, the inquiry methods courses are not fully developed. Once they are, we plan to have all new students begin the program with the first of them, Inquiry Methods I. Students will then be better prepared for the academic demands of the four core courses. Both inquiry methods courses are meant to

assist students in their dissertation research, but we do not believe they provide sufficient background on using research methods for collecting and analyzing data. For this reason, we are developing separate online modules on collecting, analyzing, and using test data, and on collecting, analyzing, and using interview/observation data.

The following paragraphs describe how we currently view the purpose and needed development of the inquiry methods courses.

### **Collecting, Analyzing, and Using Data to Solve Problems of Practice**

Problem solving in the work setting is best accomplished by collecting local data or by using extant data that are routinely collected. When solving problems of practice, both qualitative and quantitative data can be used for many purposes:

- To describe the problem
- To identify and validate the problem
- To understand and diagnose the problem
- To plan and implement problem solutions
- To set targets, benchmarks, and local standards
- To promote problem awareness and problem solving
- To evaluate progress in solving the problem.

The RSOE approach to using qualitative and quantitative data to make valid inferences is rigorous and evidence based, which means that its use can lead to more-effective decision making by educational leaders.

### **Collecting, Analyzing, and Using Data to Evaluate Education Institutions, Programs, and Policies**

Education leaders are frequently called on to evaluate and improve education institutions, programs, and policies. Evaluation of an entity's value and impact can be best accomplished by using evidence in the form of local qualitative and quantitative data.

Although evaluations of education programs are not "scientific" in the sense that their purpose is not to generate new knowledge, the theme in Inquiry Methods II is that evidence-based data collection methodologies and inferential reasoning should be used routinely to enhance the accuracy, authenticity, fairness, utility, and generalizability of education program evaluations. This involves the classical issues of causality, internal and external validity, confounding factors, and quasi-experimental control (by design and statistical), as well as a disciplined approach to the program evaluation's fairness and utility to the evaluation's stakeholders.

## Pedagogy

Inquiry Methods I and II are taught by RSOE instructors using a common syllabus and common assessments (both in-class lectures/activities and out-of-class examinations). The pedagogy course is a series of group and individual activities designed to foster transferable, broad-based research skills (primarily procedural knowledge). For example, a typical class might consist of three or four short (20–30 minute) lectures by the instructor and three or four brief group activities designed to reinforce the content of the lecture. Some in-class group/individual activities are graded, and each class is followed by a take-home, open-book assessment delivered via BlackBoard™ (Bb). All parts of the course—readings, content standards (lecture PowerPoint™ presentations), in-class activities, and out-of-class assessments—are aligned.

In-class activities are built around real-world scenarios that leaders will encounter in practice and are generally designed to promote procedural knowledge. Figure 1 shows an example of an instructional sequence used in an Inquiry Methods I module. The approach shown, objective → scenario → activity, is used throughout the inquiry methods courses for each of three phases of the research process: design, data collection, and analysis. Figure 2 shows an example from an Inquiry Methods II module, this one for instructing students in how to compare means using actual California online test data.

<p><b>INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE:</b> Students will be able to design, implement, and critically analyze six approaches to assessing institutional performance for accountability purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Norm-referenced Status Models</li><li>2. Criterion-referenced Status Models</li><li>3. Predictive Efficiency Models</li><li>4. Explanatory Efficiency Models</li><li>5. Longitudinal Growth Models</li><li>6. Value-added Growth Models</li></ol> <p><b>SCENARIO:</b> Dr. Mary Jones is the Associate Provost for Accountability in the Los Angeles Community College District. Her job is to assess institutional performance and to use these data to drive institutional improvement. Dr. Jones needs to prepare a presentation to the California Community College Chancellor’s office that will help the office diagnose problems, set goals, and evaluate the performance of the Los Angeles Community College District.</p> <p><b>ACTIVITY:</b> Design and critically analyze six different ways that Dr. Jones can use institutional data to comply with the directive to prepare a presentation to the Chancellor’s office that will help diagnose problems, set goals, and evaluate the performance of the Los Angeles Community College District.</p>
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**Figure 1. Sample Instructional Sequence for the Inquiry Methods I Course**

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to use the SPSS computer program to compare mean scale scores for two dependent groups, and will be able to interpret and communicate the findings.

**SCENARIO:** In 2004, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) initiates random visits to elementary school classrooms to gauge the extent to which elementary school teachers are teaching at grade level. It is predicted that the “threat” of these observations will cause teachers to focus on grade-level math and literacy standards. Growth from 2004 to 2005 is one way to evaluate progress. Although it is known that LAUSD scores did increase from 2004 to 2005, it is possible that this change could have resulted from sampling error. The Director of LAUSD’s evaluation unit is asked to address this issue and to communicate the findings to the LAUSD accountability unit.

**ACTIVITY:** In this analysis, use the dependent groups’ t-test and the online STAR test data to analyze whether or not the average API gain for 458 LAUSD elementary schools is statistically significant at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ). Write up your findings in a single paragraph and table.

### **Figure 2. Sample Instructional Sequence for the Inquiry Methods II Course**

Using this model of course development, we plan to identify the major inquiry/evaluation tasks that our students face in their jobs and to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to make effective decisions. We believe this approach is more useful than teaching survey courses on research methods and evaluation that are simply reviews, with little relation to the decision-making context in which competencies are to be applied.

### **CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE**

As the capstone experience of the Ed.D. program, the student is required to verify his or her ability to inquire at the doctoral level. Historically, students have had to fulfill this requirement by conducting original research in the form of a traditional dissertation. Because we envisioned our new Ed.D. degree as being more related to the students’ specific professional position or future goals than it had been in the past, we wanted the Ed.D. dissertation to result in improved education practice. Our preferred path was thus the thematic, rather than the traditional, dissertation.

The ideal way to proceed with the change to thematic dissertations would have been to simply require all dissertations in this form. However, issues of quality at the university level and the unfamiliarity of many faculty members with this new form of dissertation cautioned us about making such a radical change in one step. We decided to approach this issue in stages, the first one being approval of two Ed.D. dissertation paths, the traditional and the thematic. Our established goal was that 80% of student dissertations would be thematic.

## **Assets of the Thematic Dissertation**

There are distinct differences between these two forms of dissertations. The traditional dissertation requires the student to work closely with a faculty member to conduct a research investigation and produce an original and unique dissertation. This path is virtually identical to that pursued by Ph.D. students. This form of dissertation requires faculty members to devote large amounts of mentoring time to students on an individual basis. The bulk of the dissertation is written alone and without benefit of peer support.

Like the traditional dissertation, the thematic dissertation results in an original and unique dissertation from each student. It differs, however, in that several students work on very related topics or with the same database. In addition, the themes for the dissertations are generally organized around field-based issues or problems and require students to collaborate with each other as they develop their proposals and to critique each other's work. In short, there is a unifying feature that ties some of the Ed.D. students together such that they can be mentored as a group.

Another key difference with thematic dissertations is that students begin with a problem and then analyze the literature for guidance on how to research the problem, rather than engaging in the typical traditional dissertation process of reviewing the literature to identify gaps and constructs and then deciding on a setting for conducting their research. Although the thematic dissertation mode requires a great deal of faculty time, the total time devoted to the group is less than what would have been accorded had each student in the group chosen the traditional dissertation mode. Another feature of the thematic dissertation mode is that it allows a faculty member to design the group in accordance with her or his area of expertise and current research agenda.

Students participating in thematic dissertations meet both formally and informally in all stages of their projects. This model of collaboration is apparent throughout the dissertation process. Students can assist each other in every aspect of the task and can critique and learn from each other's efforts. As a result, the thematic dissertation group increases individual productivity and accountability and can produce robust studies that may make a significant contribution.

For the most part, the graduate students in our program are full-time professionals who complete their program of study in the afternoon and evening. The thematic approach to dissertations serves many purposes for these students. First, it encourages collaboration, which is related to the tasks that students experience on the job. Second, it emphasizes inquiry training around practice. Third, it is more concerned with helping these practitioners deal with field-based problems and issues than with initiating them in the work of academic scholars, which is not the primary focus of the majority of students. Fourth, thematic dissertations have the potential to provide important research data for school districts and higher educa-

tion institutions. And the traditional, individual dissertation is offered as a viable option for those students who plan to teach in an institution of higher learning.

### **Process of Selection for Dissertation Themes**

Each spring, faculty members are required to submit their proposals for thematic dissertation themes based on specific criteria (see Appendix A) approved by the Ed.D. governance committee. Chairs then present their topics during a one-day summer conference at which students are given the opportunity to attend up to six presentations. Students fill out forms describing how they meet the prerequisites for joining a specific group and how the theme relates to their professional interests; they also rank their three choices online. The Ed.D. executive director and staff make the initial group assignments and submit them as lists to the thematic chairs for feedback. This feedback usually leads to the need for adjustments, after which the chairs each receive a list of their final group of advisees.

This process is only for students who choose to produce thematic dissertations. Students who wish to engage in a traditional, independent dissertation must fulfill three requirements: identify a faculty member willing to chair the study, explain why their career path would be enhanced by completing the dissertation, and demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of and interest in the topic.

### **Thematic Dissertation Groups**

The following paragraphs describe some of the thematic dissertation groups that have been formed in the program.

#### **Large-Scale Education Reform: Assessing the Evidence**

This group, which was directed by Professor Amanda Datnow, focused on “large scale educational reform in the era of accountability.” The movement toward large-scale reform marks a shift away from the notion that school improvement should proceed organically, one school at a time. Rather, the idea is to achieve change across a large number of schools at the same time. Examples of large-scale reform include the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the nationwide scale-up of the small schools model.

The students in this dissertation group conducted qualitative studies on various aspects of large-scale education reform in K–12 urban settings. The methods were “held constant” while the students chose their own topics and conducted completely different studies under this broader-topic umbrella. The dissertations clustered into various subgroups within large-scale reform, including leadership, data-driven decision making, and curriculum implementation.

For example, one student’s dissertation explored how Reading First programs are implemented differently across schools and why. Even though the two schools in this study had differences in achievement levels, there were no marked differences in implementation and level of district support. However,

there were differences in leadership stability that may have contributed to differences in achievement across the two sites.

A second student explored how standards-based instruction (SBI) is implemented in mild/moderate special education classrooms. He found that while teachers were eager to embrace the standards, they lacked the materials and resources to do so. Therefore, even though they used standards to guide their instruction, those standards tended to be several years below grade level.

A third student compared the philosophies and ideas of traditional and non-traditional superintendents in urban school districts. Superintendents were interviewed about their perspectives on accountability measures pertaining to federal mandates, community involvement, and school board relations.

### **Effective Practices in High-Performing Charter Schools**

In another thematic group, this one directed by Professor Priscilla Wohlstetter, students conducted case studies of promising practices in California charter schools to document strategies that effectively support student achievement. Each student in the group chose *one* of the following main content areas as her or his focus:

- Improving administrative and teacher leadership
- Creating school-university partnerships
- Improving high school reform efforts
- Increasing parent involvement
- Improving student behavior
- Teaching through project-based learning
- Improving literacy for English-language learners
- Teaching through the arts
- Improving special education
- Improving math and science education through the use of technology.

Promising practices were identified through a statewide nomination process, and 20 of the practices were ultimately selected for the compendium. Each student was responsible for investigating two promising practices (at two different schools) in his or her content area.

Students collected information during site visits to the charter schools, primarily through interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, and parents. Findings from the students' dissertations were subsequently incorporated into "USC's Compendium of Promising Practices," a searchable online database developed by the Center on Educational Governance. The compendium is an ongoing project; every other year, a new cohort of students will conduct field research on promising practices in California charter schools, the results of which will be added to the compendium. (For details on the compendium,

please see the compendium's Executive Summary and visit the Center on Educational Governance Website at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/>.)

### **Rethinking the Causes of Underachievement: A Focus on Learning and Motivation**

In a thematic dissertation group led by Robert Rueda, the overarching theme was persistent achievement problems in low socio-economic status (SES) urban schools. The impetus for this choice was that few if any school-reform initiatives target student motivation, and past work has tended to treat low achievement as an issue related to lack of student knowledge rather than as an issue of motivation. The dissertations completed in this group therefore targeted key motivational issues in these settings, and the studies completed involved students, teachers, and parents.

One study, for example—this one a mixed-methods study by a K–12 student in the group—focused on motivational factors in Latino students' reading engagement that were specifically related to parental variables. The study found that parental literacy resources were positively related to children's motivational outcomes. The student also found that parental involvement in reading was positively and significantly related to children's motivational outcomes, but that parental involvement in schooling was not significantly related to students' achievement. The results suggest that having literacy resources (books) in the home for children to access and choose from and having parents that engage in reading activities with their children are related to children's reading achievement. In contrast, having parents who simply attend school meetings is not associated with increased achievement.

A second study found that third- and fourth-grade teachers in an urban school district favored a motivational goal orientation that did not emphasize social comparison and competitive practices in their classrooms, factors which have been shown to be related to lower achievement. However, teachers did report that accountability pressures have affected their teaching practices, causing them to make changes in this direction.

And a third study examined generational differences within a group of English learners. In this case, the student chose to examine English learners not in the usual manner, as a homogenous group, but as two separate groups: recently arrived first-generation immigrants, and U.S.-born second-generation children of immigrants (Generation 1.5). Even past work that does look at generation as a factor often fails to address the differences at this level. For this study, the student specifically examined motivational variables related to language learning for secondary students based on generational status. The student found that of the two groups, first-generation English Learners reported higher levels of effort, desire, attitudes, and motivation to learn English, and Generation 1.5 students reported higher levels of U.S. acculturation and identity and more competence with English.

## **Teacher Evaluation and Student Achievement**

Clinical Professor Stuart Gothold chaired a thematic group in which students studied urban schools that were outperforming similar schools on California's standardized achievement tests. These higher-performing schools were studied to determine whether their state-mandated system of teacher evaluation led to improved teacher practice and student learning as measured by the state testing program. The studies concluded that the system of teacher evaluation was not a significant factor in improving teacher practice. The key factors in improvement were specific administrative behavior that

- Connected daily student work to a school vision or mission statement that promoted high expectations and increased student learning
- Responded to students' individual differences
- Showed competency in performing operational duties (e.g., campus safety and discipline)
- Supported targeted professional development through meeting attendance, non-threatening classroom observation, and informal dialogue about teacher practices
- Involved teachers and other stakeholders in the school's decision making
- Integrated the formal teacher evaluation process into the school's overall instructional plan for excellence.

As a group, the students synthesized the results of their studies and developed a set of recommendations for revising policy and practice on teacher evaluation in California. Professor Gothold reports that each student (most of whom are practicing school administrators) has returned to his or her school with a heightened concern about a productive supervision process. Presently, the students are focusing on changes needed in school district practices to support this process.

## **Assessing, Preventing, and Responding to Violence in Educational Settings**

Professors Melora Sundt and Ron Astor co-chaired a thematic group consisting of students interested in violence in educational settings. Six students shared a single methodology; the rest conducted related but independent studies.

Three of the studies surveyed student affairs practitioners around the country about their knowledge of the Clery Act, a federal law addressing sexual assault and violence on college campuses. One finding of the studies was that while few student affairs professionals had any knowledge of the Clery Act, senior professionals knew the most, and those working at two-year colleges knew the least. Further, these studies revealed the absence of any in-depth preparation for professionals, either in graduate programs or through professional-development opportunities. Another study looked at how academically successful high school students cope with bullying. After interviewing 25 students and their teachers, the student conducting the study concluded that these students dealt with bullying not by seeking help from adults, but by using their internal resources, particularly a common ability to focus on future goals.

Most of the students doing studies in K–12 settings returned to those settings to conduct a professional development debriefing on their findings. The students studying knowledge about the Clery Act have been working with related professional associations to develop training to address the knowledge gaps they uncovered.

### **Advising Thematic Dissertations**

Faculty members have found numerous ways to advise students producing thematic dissertations. Professor Myron Dembo, for example, who is in his second cycle of advisement, is working with a community college to identify learning and motivational issues related to its instructional program. Faculty members at the community college have volunteered to become members of his students' doctoral committee so that they can assist in the students' research, and they will be third authors in any journal submissions or paper presentations stemming from the students' research. The community college has formed an advisory committee with the associate dean for research and planning as chair to assist Professor Dembo and his four students during the process. At the completion of their dissertations, the students will write an executive summary along with recommendations and will report their findings to the faculty and staff of the community college.

During the first cycle of thematic dissertations, we found differences in the professors' abilities to transition to the thematic dissertation mode. For example, the individual dissertations completed by students in some professors' thematic dissertation groups had little in common. We are now assisting faculty members who are conducting thematic groups by providing workshops and sharing advisement and course materials. In addition, we meet with faculty members who have completed thematic dissertation groups to learn how we can improve the process in future cycles.

## 5. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND THE PROGRAM

For the new program to be effective and successful, we had to ensure it included the appropriate support strategies and structures. We developed support strategies and structures to meet the needs of our students and the faculty that serves them. We also developed support strategies and structures to support the program itself, one of our primary objectives being to put in place mechanisms that would enable us to alter aspects of the program as needed.

### OUR STUDENTS

We have worked hard to find prospective students who are urban leaders and to find faculty members who can provide a quality education for these students. The 147 students making up the most recent (Fall 2006) cohort to begin the Ed.D. program have very diverse ethnic, academic, and professional backgrounds. The average student age for this entering class is 36 years old, and the age range is 25–60. Female students are in the majority, comprising 66% of the class; minorities comprise 46%; and 2% have international backgrounds. This high minority representation in the current cohort was also apparent in 2005's cohort: 53% of the 153 Ed.D. students entering the program in 2005 were minorities. In fact, according to Borden and Brown (2006), the RSOE is the top “Total Minority Doctoral Degree in Education Producer” among all Tier I research intensive institutions for 2006.

The academic qualifications of our Ed.D. students can be seen in their master's and undergraduate degree grade point averages (GPAs) and in their scores on the Graduate Records Examination (GRE). The Fall 2006 entering class has an average master's degree GPA of 3.75, with only 13% having a GPA below 3.5. The undergraduate GPA for this same cohort of students is, on average, 3.13. Their GRE verbal scores average 489 and their GRE quantitative scores average 534, for an average total GRE score of 1,023.

Of the 147 students in the 2006 cohort, 16 indicated a preference for the Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS) concentration. This group brings experience from careers as K–12 teachers, professional-development coordinators, and literacy coaches. The largest group, 69 students, indicated a preference for the K–12 Leadership concentration. This group brings experience from careers as administrators, K–12 teachers, and other such professions.

Our faculty members fit our program's students and their needs. Like our students, our Ed.D. faculty members come from very diverse backgrounds, in terms of both race/ethnicity and academics. Another aspect of our Ed.D. faculty that is of benefit to our students is that the faculty consists of both clinical and adjunct members and tenured and tenure-track members. The clinical and adjunct faculty members bring their expertise from the field into the classroom; the tenured and tenure-track faculty bring

their knowledge and research about the field into the classroom. For the Fall 2006 semester, there were 14 clinical/adjunct professors and 8 tenured/tenure-track professors teaching in the Ed.D. program.

Beginning in Fall 2006, the RSOE welcomed ten new members to the faculty. The RSOE currently has 54 full-time faculty members, 17 of whom are minorities.

## **SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

The Ed.D. program has drawn a new cohort of about 150 students each fall for the past three years (2004–2006). As described above, our students have full-time jobs, so they need to balance their professional work, their degree program, and their personal lives. We are attempting to assist them in every way we can by providing effective program and organizational support strategies and structures.

### **Ed.D. Program Office and Director**

In 2002, when we began the new Ed.D. program, we knew that a new type of program office and program leadership would be needed. It was obvious to us that because the Ed.D. program involves all faculty members and many areas of course content, the academic department structure was not the right fit. We also knew that a full-time director was needed, one professor who could simultaneously focus on the quality of the academic program and manage such a large program operation.

We looked across the campus with the thought of finding other professional schools that were providing highly respected professional graduate programs, had large numbers (in Ed.D. terms) of students, and yet were able to provide strong student support. Our assumption was that we needed to look outside for a good model.

We found two professional degrees that were similar to ours—the law degree and the Master’s of Business Administration (MBA) degree. A few months later, we hired Dr. Shaun Harper, a man with the qualifications we were seeking, as our first Ed.D. executive director. Dr. Harper not only had a doctorate in education from a very highly rated school of education, he had also served in a key role in an M.B.A. program that provides “one-stop” student services for all aspects of the program. Additionally, he brought a strong perspective on diversity and urban education, a tie-in with our program’s mission and focus. Since 2002, Dr. Harper has provided academic and program leadership and has taught one course per semester.

The position of Ed.D. executive director can be filled only by a member of the clinical (full time, non-tenure track) faculty; the position is appointed and runs for three years. Our current executive director is Dr. Kathy Stowe, who was previously a school principal and district leader in an urban K–12 setting.

## **Recruiting and Admissions Office**

Initially, our recruiting efforts for the Ed.D. program were much too casual for a private university that seeks to have strong professional programs but also depends highly on tuition revenue. Our recruiting efforts did include working with practitioner leaders, but we lacked a coherent strategy and our overall effort was not sufficient.

With the creation of a recruiting office in 2003, we hired a full-time recruiter devoted solely to the Ed.D. program. This led to development of an attractive brochure, our “view book,” for getting information about our program out to prospective students and others. We also improved our Website, held recruiting events sponsored by practitioner alumni, and hosted a “decision-support” luncheon for prospective students just before the admission deadline.

Recruiters, of course, do not make admission decisions; who is ultimately admitted to the program is decided by faculty committees organized by program concentration. Ed.D. program admission is based on many factors. Applicants must describe their relevant professional experience, have a master’s degree prior to admission, and write two essays about their professional views and values.

## **Student Orientation and Student Advisory Committee**

A key part of our development of effective recruiting and admission processes for the Ed.D. program entailed developing powerful norms and an information base that would help new students succeed. We found that many students were entering the program wondering what the program actually entailed and what their chances of success were. In other words, we had not supplied new students with what they needed to know about the program’s mechanics and our expectations. We created a two-day student orientation and a detailed student handbook to help students become familiar with the program and its rules and requirements. Former students proved invaluable in sharing their strategies for success with us as we developed the orientation materials.

Once students have begun taking courses in the program, we have many strategies for communicating and problem solving with them: a “one-stop” student-support approach in the Ed.D. program office, a monthly newsletter, an elected student advisory committee that meets periodically with the Ed.D. executive director, and an Ed.D. staff person who is assigned to each yearly cohort.

## **Early Warning System**

We also found that we were not monitoring student progress well enough. Now, however, we have an early warning system. At the midpoints of a cohort of new students’ first two (fall and spring) semesters, the instructors of all Ed.D. core courses review their students’ work to date and inform the Ed.D.

program office of any student considered at that point to be either unacceptable or marginal in one of three areas:

1. *Alignment of goals with program focus*: career goals match program focus; likely to benefit from the program and be able to use it to further his/her career goals.
2. *Student engagement*: shows ability to do academic work at doctoral level; reads and comprehends professional ideas at doctoral level; applies ideas to practice and solves problems; demonstrates strength of understanding across topics. Also, comes to class on time and prepared; submits assignments in a timely manner.
3. *Writing ability and achievement*: writing mechanics are at doctoral level; quality of ideas in written expression; shows understanding of substance of courses; expresses ideas with clarity and accuracy; appears able to complete dissertation given current level of writing proficiency.

Affected students are quickly provided with this information so they can seek assistance from the doctoral support center or other appropriate resources, and can begin (or continue) to work with the appropriate instructor to improve their performance.

All students identified in the early warning system and all students who have any grade of B– or lower are required to submit dossiers for faculty review in May as a part of the process known as the first-year preliminary review. It is important that students identified through the early warning system clearly understand the specific types of improvement needed for them to continue in and be successful in the program.

### **Doctoral Support Center**

To support students in our Ed.D. (and our Ph.D.) program, the RSOE established a doctoral support center. The mission of this center is to help students in doctoral programs finish their course work and dissertation, complete their degrees, and have a successful graduate school experience. The center helps students improve their writing and addresses such related issues as dissertation preparation and completion, as well as the emotional issues associated with dissertation writing. Specifically, the center offers the following services:

- Individual appointments to have course papers and dissertation chapters critiqued
- Workshops on how to improve academic writing skills, including how to conceptualize, develop, and edit course papers and dissertations
- Workshops on how to tackle the challenges associated with working on a graduate degree, including preparing for degree milestones (such as the qualifying exam and the dissertation defense), improving motivation and overcoming procrastination, and managing life-style adjustments associated with doctoral study

- Online programs that address the above two areas
- Coaching for thematic dissertation groups
- Screening of dissertation manuscripts for common errors before the manuscripts are submitted to the graduate school
- Referral for students who need assistance outside what the center offers
- Social events to encourage students to interact with each other.

The doctoral support center is closely linked to our program faculty and curriculum. Faculty members can refer specific students to the center; they also work collaboratively to have the center provide key services to all students in a specific thematic dissertation group.

### **Career Placement Office**

The career placement office is headed by a former school superintendent. It provides Ed.D. program students and alumni with career development assistance in the form of an extensive array of workshops, career counseling, placement-file processing, job-search resources, and related services. Its services also include the RSOE student/alumni network. Students and alumni can also create and maintain placement files here. These files contain such items as personal and professional information, letters of recommendation, evaluations of student teaching experience, credentials, and transcripts; they can be used for various purposes, including applying for job openings and graduate school.

The career placement office is also where students can access job postings sent to the office by school districts, colleges, and universities interested in filling positions in teaching, administration, higher education, counseling, and student affairs. This office is very proactive in connecting with the field to learn about job openings and provides excellent coaching to students on how to approach specific openings. Comprehensive job listings and career resources for students interested in education (that is, K–12 teaching and administration and higher education teaching and administration) are readily available. Students can also make appointments to receive personalized assistance with resume building, interviewing skills, and career counseling.

### **Program Governance**

The Ed.D. program, like the other major academic programs in the school (e.g., those for master's and Ph.D. degrees), has a faculty governance committee. Called the Ed.D. governance committee, its members are appointed by the faculty council in consultation with the dean of the RSOE. Professor Myron Dembo has chaired this committee for the past three years.

The Ed.D. governance committee has three types of responsibilities:

1. Formal approval of new and modified course syllabi and curriculum

2. Establishing procedures for major academic matters in the program, such as the early warning system and the admission process
3. Serving as a sounding board, communication device, and direction setter for concerns and problems in the Ed.D. program.

The Ed.D. executive director reports to the associate dean for academic programs (who is an ex officio member of the governance committee) but works under the close direction of the Ed.D. governance committee. This dual-path relationship for the director has been a strength of the program and only rarely has caused a problem. The governance committee publishes minutes of its meetings and keeps a careful log of program governance procedures and their effects on programs, faculty, and students.

## **6. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REPUTATION**

We have collected and analyzed extensive data about our new Ed.D. program and have used those data to redirect and refine almost every aspect of the program. The data were gathered both internally by the RSOE and externally by a research group, Vital Research LLC. We have also paid attention to some external perspectives that have provided us with useful feedback about our work.

### **EVALUATION OF FIRST CYCLE OF PROGRAM**

In 2007, we will complete an evaluation of the first cycle of the new program. This evaluation will focus on the adequacy of the original program design, the extent to which the original program was effectively implemented, the views of graduates and other stakeholders about the program and its effect on graduates, the quality of the program from both a national and an internal perspective, and the challenges we must address in moving forward.

### **NATIONAL ATTENTION**

The new Ed.D. program has received attention on the national level from both scholars and practitioners. The RSOE is currently regarded as offering one of the top Ed.D. programs for various concentrations. Scholarly articles, external market surveys, and national rankings serve as evidence of the external perceptions of the RSOE and its Ed.D. program.

#### **National Rankings**

In 2006, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked three RSOE programs in the top 25 nationally: Higher Education ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation, K–12 Leadership is 13<sup>th</sup>, and Education Policy is 21<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Scholarly Articles**

Shulman et al. (2006) highlighted our Ed.D. program in an article focusing on the theoretical distinctions between the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs. The authors proposed that if a school wanted to differentiate between their doctoral programs, the first step should be to clearly define the Ed.D. capstone experience. Starting from the final vision of what knowledge and skills a graduate of a professional doctorate program should possess, a university can begin effectively developing a specific pedagogy for imparting that knowledge and those skills.

Shulman et al. also named the RSOE as one of the schools that have successfully transformed their programs. Their article describes the three-day strategic planning meeting (our

futures conference) in which the RSOE faculty convened to discuss and ultimately define its vision of the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs. The Ed.D. program that emerged from this meeting and subsequent work was a three-year program clearly distinct from the Ph.D. program in purpose, student preparation, and time to degree. Development of the new Ed.D. program engaged the RSOE faculty, drew on expertise in the field, and continues to be a work in progress as the school strives to offer top-level preparation for education leaders.

Murphy and Vriesenga (2005) called the RSOE Ed.D. program one of the doctoral programs that have clearly distinguished themselves from Ph.D. programs. Out of 161 Ed.D. programs offering a degree in Educational Leadership, four were cited for having created alternative dissertations and “professionally anchored capstone” experiences: St. Louis University, USC, UCLA, and University of Pennsylvania. Each of these programs has addressed issues of program design, institutional change, creation of signature pedagogy and capstone assessments, and related efforts. The authors describe how the RSOE Ed.D. program has students producing dissertations focused on “meaningful topics” aimed at helping students gain “real world experience.” As a result, the authors state, the dissertations present “implications for practice” (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2005) According to the authors, the four schools they cite are models for other schools wanting to embark on the same path.

## **Market Analysis**

In 2004, the RSOE commissioned Vital Research, LLC, an external consulting company, to perform a market analysis to examine the school’s reputation and the quality of its academic programs compared with those of other schools of education. Vital Research conducted telephone interviews with deans of nationally ranked schools of education and with superintendents of urban school districts; it also took direct reports from staff members in other USC departments that interact with RSOE staff, faculty, and students.

The overall impressions of the deans were positive about the Ed.D. program; many of them were impressed with the clear distinction between the two doctoral degrees offered by the RSOE. Specifically, many deans were interested in the innovative idea of the Ed.D. program’s thematic dissertations and were curious to see what the results would be. Superintendents that were interviewed cited reputation and the “RSOE network” as key strengths of the RSOE programs. Superintendents also commented that, as employers, they appreciated the mix of theory and practice provided in the Ed.D. program. Other USC staff members noted the school’s current leadership and its efforts to continually improve program quality as strengths of the RSOE.

## **7. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD**

We have identified a set of challenges associated with improving and maintaining our new Ed.D. program that warrant attention. This section discusses these challenges.

### **INQUIRY COURSES**

Although we have an applied focus for the inquiry methods courses in our Ed.D. program, issues remain about the nature and depth of knowledge students must acquire to use inquiry skills effectively in their work environments and to complete their dissertations. As a result, we need to devote more attention to inquiry course development.

### **CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE**

We are proud of our thematic dissertation approach but know that it may not be the best vehicle for our capstone experience in the future. We formed a subcommittee of our Ed.D. governance committee that is to develop options for what the capstone could look like, and we have obtained information from seven other universities about how their dissertations/capstones are accomplished. We need to consider several issues in designing the capstone experience: What makes more sense from the perspective of professional leadership enhancement? What is feasible/desirable from the perspective of program size? What is best from the perspective of program quality?

### **CORE CURRICULUM**

We are pleased with the extensive and highly collaborative process that led to the initial design of the four core courses, which have all now been implemented and revised over three years. We believe it is time to review the core courses with a view to determining how they are contributing to our overall goal of creating effective leaders in urban education.

### **SIGNATURE PEDAGOGY**

As part of the core courses, we adapted a “gap analysis” model. This model has been used extensively in the core courses and in some (but not all) of the concentrations. We want to further evaluate our use of the gap analysis model, looking at it in terms of faculty-wide agreement about its role, ways to expand its use in the inquiry and concentration courses, and its proposed role as a required central feature of the new capstone strategy.

## **FOCUS OF CONCENTRATIONS**

Shulman et al. (2006) make a very good point about the distinction between preparing teacher educators and preparing K–12 leaders of practice. We have wrestled with this issue extensively and currently have two concentrations that are quite different from each other. Even so, we need to spend more time making both concentrations more effective and more focused in their respective purposes.

## **PROGRAM SIZE**

Our current program is quite large when compared with other Ed.D. programs. We need to address the issue of appropriate program size in light of faculty concerns about program quality, effectiveness, feasibility, and support. One of our options for reducing program size is to curtail a specific concentration rather than limit the overall number of students. This choice, of course, has many implications that need careful attention.

## **FACULTY ENGAGEMENT**

The good news is that: (a) all of our faculty members—both tenured/tenure-track and clinical—were designated as Ed.D. program faculty, (b) the program initially received extensive review and approval by the entire faculty, and (c) nearly all of the faculty members have taught courses and/or chaired thematic dissertation groups over the past three years. In spite of this good news, however, faculty members still have important differences of opinion about how the program has fared to date and the direction it should take in the next few years.

## **STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE Ed.D.**

Considering the challenges of institutional change, we are pleased with the distinction in goals and intellectual activities that we have so far achieved in our Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs. Our goal is to direct our continuing development and implementation efforts toward establishing an Ed.D. program that will be nationally recognized as one of the premier doctoral programs in the country. To move forward with this goal, we joined the network of Ed.D. programs created by the Council of Academic Deans from Research Education Institutions (CADREI) and the Carnegie Foundation. With the help of this network, we hope to implement four related strategies for enhancing our Ed.D. program and meeting our goal of developing an outstanding professional doctorate for leaders in urban education:

1. *Coordinate through the Ed.D. governance committee.* The governance committee meets monthly and deploys working subcommittees on important topics. For example, we are quite sure that the issue of the next version of the Ed.D. capstone will need to be fully discussed, leading to a formal proposal that the Ed.D. governance committee will then take to the faculty council, the faculty, the Dean and ultimately the university-wide committee for approval.
2. *Engage in sustained program development once new program designs have been approved.* This development will be coordinated by the Ed.D. governance committee and the RSOE dean. The best historical example of this type of effort is the core curriculum committee, which was chaired by Professor Richard Clark. Over 18 months, teams of the faculty members comprising this committee worked extensively to develop the syllabi and instructional materials for each of the core courses from a general program design. For any new design—a new capstone design, for example—we will need this type of program development work. We also need a new round of improvement with our core courses.
3. *Take advantage of regional collaboration and impact.* We envision a statewide network of Ed.D. programs and a conference at USC that would involve either CADREI/Carnegie and/or the regional institutions. We have already established a network with two private universities in Southern California that offer cutting-edge Ed.D. programs. This network, the Southern California Leadership Association, has a mission statement and three-year goals that focus on two areas: networking with the best leadership programs internationally and supporting the enhancement of our Ed.D. program through critical friends, meetings, and evaluation.
4. *Seek out national collaboration and participate in the CADREI/Carnegie network.* National collaboration and participation in the CADREI/Carnegie network will be vital to our efforts to improve our Ed.D. program and contribute to the national scholarship on professional doctorates. We intend to send a team to each of the CADREI/Carnegie Foundation national meetings and to participate seriously in the work of the network.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

This curriculum endeavor was not easy; and even more importantly, it will never be completed. The faculty realizes that constant evaluations and adaptations are essential to maintaining the program. Nevertheless, we have clearly made extensive progress in five years, and will

continue to maintain a constant dialogue with members of the faculty and to use the Ed.D. governance committee to review, evaluate, and develop new policy for the program.

## REFERENCES

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- Shulman, L. S., Golde, C. M., Bueschel, A. C., & Garabedian, K. J. (2006). Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researcher*, 35(3), 25–32.



**APPENDIX A**  
**THEMATIC DISSERTATION THEMES: 2004–2006**

**SUMMER 2004**

- Equity in Postsecondary Educational Outcomes: The Accountability Side of Diversity, *Estela Bensimon*
- Large Scale Educational Reform: Assessing the Evidence, *Amanda Datnow*
- Teacher Evaluation and Student Achievement, *Stuart E. Gothold*
- An Analysis of a Partnership Between a School District and a Science Center to Enhance Science, Mathematics and Technology Learning in a K–5 Environment, *William McComas*
- Effective Practices in High-Performing Charter Schools, *Priscilla Wohlstetter*
- Pipelines, Pathways, and Partnerships: Linking K–12, Community, and University Intervention Strategies, *Alex Jun*
- Rethinking the Causes of Underachievement: A Focus on Learning and Motivation, *Myron H. Dembo and Robert Rueda*
- The Cognitive and Affective Effects of Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction on Gifted Students, *Sandra Kaplan*
- Features of Community Colleges That Support Student Success, *William Maxwell*
- Assessing, Preventing and Responding to Violence in Educational Settings, *Melora Sundt and Ron Astor*

**SUMMER 2005**

- The Role of the Academic Dean in Changing the Academy, *Karen Symms Gallagher*
- Creating Organizational Change in Postsecondary Education and in Schools: An Emphasis on Diversity and Urban Challenges, *Adrianna Kezar*
- Effective Leadership Practices of the New Principal: Making a Successful Transition, *Scott Price*
- Examining Effective Educational Environments Using a Social Capital Framework of Analysis, *Ricardo Stanton-Salazar*
- What Did I Read? An Exploration of Literacy and Language Development for English Learners, *Giselle Ragusa and Eugenia Mora-Flores*
- Sources of Impact on College Students' Development: Describing and Mapping Their Experiences, *Rodney K. Goodyear*
- Transforming Scholarship and Research Through Multimedia Literacy, *Michael Genzuk, Joel Colbert, and Eugenia Mora-Flores*
- The Effects of External Factors That Influence the Practice of Student Affairs, *Michael Jackson*
- Effects of Local Interventions on the School Achievement of English Language Learners, *Richard Brown and Dennis Hocevar*

Secondary School Reform, *David Marsh*

The Cognitive and Affective Effects of Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction on Gifted Students, *Sandra Kaplan*

## **SUMMER 2006**

Rethinking the Causes of Underachievement: A Focus on Learning and Motivation, *Myron H. Dembo*

Current Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Theory as a Focus of Learner-Centered Pedagogy in Professional Schools and Other Higher Education Venues, *Robert Keim*

Factors Influencing the Attrition and Retention of College Students, *Kim West*

Student Engagement in High-Performing Urban High Schools, *Stuart E. Gothold*

Large Scale Educational Reform, *Amanda Datnow*

Understanding and Fostering Effective Reflective Practice among Novice Professionals, *Rodney K. Goodyear*

Data-based Decisions in Education: What Data? Which Decisions? *Guilbert C. Hentschke*

Beginning Teacher Support and Induction, *Margo Pensavalle*

Investigating Promising Practices: Are There Innovations in Charter Schools? *Priscilla Wohlstetter*

Variability in Minority and Immigrant School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation, *Reynaldo Baca*

Innovative College Experience Study, *Gisele Ragusa and Melora Sundt*

Effects of Models of Teaching on Student Achievement of Gifted Students, *Sandra Kaplan*

School Wide Implementation of the Elements of Effective Classroom Instruction: Lessons from High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Schools, *Sylvia Rousseau*

Student Renewal and Remedial Instruction, *Estela Bensimon*

Schooling for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, *Nelly P. Stromquist*

Skills and Methods of Successful Urban District Superintendents, *Rudy Castruita*

Self and Peer Assessment in Distance Learning Contexts, *Harry O'Neil*

**APPENDIX B**  
**PROFILE OF PROSPECTIVE ED.D. STUDENTS**

This appendix contains a chart showing a profile of prospective Ed.D. students according to the new Ed.D. program's four concentrations: Educational Psychology, Higher Education Administration/Community College Leadership, K-12 Leadership in Urban School Settings, and Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies (TEMS). The profile is broken down into four areas: knowledge/skills, career experience, career objectives aligned with concentration, and professional competencies/skills to be gained in the program.

**Prospective Ed.D. Student Profile, by Concentration:**

**Knowledge/skills**

Educational Psych	Higher Ed/Comm College	K-12 Leadership	TEMS
<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Strong oral and written communication skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated leadership ability in diverse settings</li> <li>• Interest in improving the learning, motivation, achievement, performance, and retention of diverse learners</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry-level knowledge of learning and motivational constructs</li> <li>• Prior course work in basic psychology, educational psychology, or related areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree in higher ed, college student personnel, counseling, education policy, or related area</li> <li>• Strong oral and written communication skills</li> <li>• Entry-level understanding of higher ed curriculum, policy, and student development theories</li> <li>• Experience working in educational contexts within an institution of higher learning (two-, four-year)</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in urban university settings</li> <li>• Understanding of administration and policy in a variety of contexts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Strong oral and written communication skills</li> <li>• Experience in/with urban ed (K-12, policy, non-profit, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in the local community</li> <li>• Experience working with and in diverse positions/communities</li> <li>• Understanding of K-12 ed in a variety of contexts</li> <li>• Interest in and experience working in urban ed and school reform</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree (MS.Ed, MS preferred)</li> <li>• Strong oral and written communication skills</li> <li>• Experience working in and/or with schools</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of issues in urban ed</li> <li>• Knowledge of evidence-based practices</li> <li>• Knowledge of principles of curriculum and instruction</li> <li>• Experience as leader of professional development activities</li> <li>• Knowledge of literature supporting effective classroom practices</li> <li>• Significant course work and/or experience in subject matter field (literacy, science, math, etc.)</li> </ul>

**Prospective Ed.D. Student Profile, by Concentration:**

**Career experience**

Educational Psych	Higher Ed/Comm College	K-12 Leadership	TEMS
<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership experience in current position</li> <li>• Minimum 3–5 years of work experience in educational/related positions</li> <li>• Employment in K-16, counseling, special ed, social services, higher ed, human performance, instructional technology, military, or business-related professional development position</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in a variety of: K-16 (special and/or general ed) <b>OR</b> social service pertinent to counseling or educational psych <b>OR</b> human performance</li> <li>• Experience with diverse learner populations and urban settings</li> <li>• Experience in: developing or providing training; developing, delivering, or evaluating training materials or programs (including study skills); assessing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership experience in current position</li> <li>• <i>Higher ed:</i> 3–5 years of work experience at two- or four-year college or university, providing direct services to students or working in an academic or administrative unit of a higher ed institution <b>OR</b> <i>Community college:</i> Minimum 3 years of full-time teaching experience in an academic discipline at a community college</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-level administrative and managerial experience in a variety of higher ed settings <b>OR</b> experience in a variety of student service-related fields equivalent to university or college environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If in K-12 school/district setting:</i> minimum 3–5 years of teaching experience</li> <li>• <i>If pursuing an administrative position:</i> experience in teacher leadership and Tier I (current or in progress)</li> <li>• Leadership experience in current position</li> <li>• Formal responsibility for the success of other adults</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in a variety of K-12 related positions, which can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy development/implementation</li> <li>- K-12 teaching/administration</li> <li>- Public-/private-sector work in an educational context</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 3 years full-time (public or private) K-12 teaching experience with diverse populations in urban settings</li> </ul> <p><b>Preferred:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in professional organizations</li> <li>• Leadership experience at school, district, and/or state level</li> <li>• Experience with diverse learner populations and urban settings</li> <li>• Participation in curricular implementation or design</li> </ul>

and providing intervention for learning and motivational problems			
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**Prospective Ed.D. Student Profile, by Concentration:**

**Career objective aligned with concentration**

Educational Psych	Higher Ed/Comm College	K-12 Leadership	TEMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership positions in K-16, higher ed, and business, military, and government organizations that focus on improving learning and motivation, especially with diverse learners in urban settings, which may include: instructional design/technology specialists, human performance personnel, school/community counselors and social workers, school psychologists, school district curriculum specialists and teacher leaders, specialists in formal educational settings, and higher ed faculty in educational psych and teacher ed programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior administration and/or leadership positions at two- and four-year colleges (vice president/dean of student affairs)</li> <li>• Senior academic executive positions in two-year colleges (president or academic vice president of a community college)</li> <li>• Leadership position in education-related professional development organizations or counseling centers and agencies</li> <li>• Leadership position in education-related non-profit organizations</li> <li>• Key leadership positions in higher ed policy-related organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-K-12 administrative positions (site or district level):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- superintendent</li> <li>- deputy/assistant superintendent</li> <li>- district director/coordinator</li> <li>- site principal</li> <li>- other administrative positions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Leadership position in education-related non-profit organizations and foundations</li> <li>• Leadership position in K-12 policy-related organizations</li> <li>• Leadership position in K-12 related social services agencies</li> <li>• Higher ed: teaching and/or administrative position in K-12 administrative or teacher ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University faculty member in teacher ed</li> <li>• University-school liaison</li> <li>• Professional development specialist for K-12 schools and other settings (e.g., museums, district offices, subject matter projects)</li> <li>• Curriculum developer in K-12 settings</li> <li>• Content expert at district, county, and state education settings</li> <li>• School site instructional expert, curriculum-related administrator, and/or department chair</li> </ul>

**Prospective Ed.D. Student Profile, by Concentration:  
Professional competencies/skills to be gained in program**

Educational Psych	Higher Ed/Comm College	K-12 Leadership	TEMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of current research and theory in learning, motivation, and related areas</li> <li>• Knowledge of strategies based on that research and theory to improve learning, motivation, achievement, performance, and retention of diverse learners</li> <li>• Ability to use the gap analysis model to diagnose, assess, and solve learning- and motivation-related educational problems and implement innovations to attain educational goals and objectives</li> <li>• Ability to implement performance-based professional development training programs</li> <li>• Ability to assess and improve efforts through strategic use of data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrable skills to ensure effective management of an academic, administrative, or organizational unit at two-/four-year colleges/universities</li> <li>• Ability to effectively advocate for university students and develop an academic culture conducive to student learning and development</li> <li>• Ability to employ current accountability models to resolve both student developmental issues and instructional and administrative challenges in colleges and universities.</li> <li>• Advanced understanding and application of higher ed policy at national levels and ability to put theory into practice at local level</li> <li>• Ability to implement performance-based professional development in multicultural contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning, supported by community</li> <li>• Advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth</li> <li>• Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, effective learning environment</li> <li>• Collaborate with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources</li> <li>• Model a personal code of ethics and a developing professional leadership capacity</li> <li>• Understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify patterns and trends in the research on preparation of teachers for diverse and underserved populations</li> <li>• Recognize patterns and trends in the assessment of teacher competence for diverse and underserved populations</li> <li>• Create a line of research with potential to contribute important new understandings to the field of teacher ed</li> <li>• Use knowledge of socio-political sources to influence curriculum for a multicultural society               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design a framework for teacher development that accounts for the different conditions under which teachers work, the diverse populations they teach, the research on learning how</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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