

The
Urban Initiative
QUARTERLY NEWS UPDATE
gsep.pepperdine.edu/urban-initiative



Building Knowledge, Inspiring Service, Creating Change

Summer 2009

From the *Director's Desk*



IT'S NO SECRET that inner city schools and community health programs are often underfunded and underserved. It's also no secret that the scores of idealistic and bright-minded new graduates that take on positions as teachers or administrators in these schools, or as professionals at public health agencies, leave their posts after approximately one year of service due to the challenging conditions. That is why the Urban Initiative (UI) is important. UI is an umbrella program developed by the Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) with the goal of preparing education and mental health professionals for long term work in culturally diverse, urban communities.

We have gotten off to a great start. This past year began with the selection of our Urban Fellows, who have provided hundreds of hours of services to our partners. In addition to providing student teaching and counseling services, they participated in monthly specialized trainings to broaden their understanding of the most pressing issues facing urban communities. We look forward to hearing about the Fellows' experiences at our end of year celebration on June 27. Other activities included the development of a partnership between the GSEP Counseling Clinic in Encino and anti-child prostitution agency Children of the Night, and continued partnerships between the Counseling Clinics in Irvine and West Los Angeles and homeless shelters Village of Hope and Union Rescue Mission, respectively.

Another highlight was connecting two of our partners, the National Senior Service Corp, which assists older adults with identifying volunteer opportunities, and Jenesse Center, which supports victims of domestic abuse. In this mutual exchange, grandparent volunteers were able to provide child care services to the

shelter clients while the mothers attended counseling sessions. Next year we intend to further support Get on the Bus, an organization providing transportation for children to see their parents in prison, by designing a counseling program that can better prepare these families for the emotional impact of such a visit, and provide aftercare for the children following the visit.

Finally, we look forward to hosting our first UI Community Conference in Spring 2010, at which our partners can provide workshops on best practices for their field, and students can showcase their dissertation research as it relates to urban concerns. Given the economic status of the nation, it is more important than ever to combine our efforts, streamline our overhead, and work more efficiently. This conference will allow us to address community building, program capacity, and sustainability issues.

The efforts undertaken by UI are a steadfast collaboration between our faculty, students, and partners, and we appreciate your support of our programs and the communities in

which we serve. As such, it is with great enthusiasm that we issue the inaugural edition of the *Urban Initiative Quarterly News Update*, so you may keep abreast of our progress, new partnerships, and upcoming events. Please contact me at urban.initiative@pepperdine.edu to offer your thoughts on the newsletter, share personal stories

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of how you are contributing to the community, or learn how you can participate in any of our UI projects. With your help, we expect to make great strides toward our goal of training the best mental health and education professionals for urban environments, and ultimately transform the lives of so many in need.

Warmly,

Rhonda Brinkley-Kennedy
Psy.D., MFT



Dr. Rhonda Brinkley-Kennedy and the Hope Gardens team.

Partner Profile: **HOPE GARDENS FAMILY CENTER, A HAVEN FOR THE HOMELESS**

Nestled at the base of the Angeles National Forest in Sylmar, California, Hope Gardens Family Center, a Ministry of the Union Rescue Mission, is a safe haven for approximately 110 women and children who would otherwise be living on the dangerous streets of Skid Row in Downtown Los Angeles. The 70-acre center offers long-term housing to senior women, and transitional housing for mothers and their children.

GSEP’s “Mental Health Interns” offer individual, child, couples, family, and group psychotherapy to the residents of Hope Gardens, under the guidance of the center’s mental health director, Dr. Paulette Melina. “As is the case with many community-based agencies, funding and resources are always scarce,” said Melina. “The interns provide the center the opportunity to expand its services and increase the number of clients served, and in turn the interns gain experience in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of a wide variety of mental health disorders classified by the DSM-IV-TR.”

As a part of their efforts, the interns developed psycho-educational process groups to address the specific needs of each population. “The Group” provides senior adult women with a therapeutic environment in which they can discuss topics associated with homelessness, aging, and community life. “Parents Anonymous,” “Turning Point,” and “The Workshop” help the mothers develop skills in the areas of parenting, addiction, and anger management, respectively. “Chop Up Game” is a forum for adolescents to explore the challenges of being a homeless teenager. Through these initiatives, the interns have expanded their community-based skill set in the area of advocacy, crisis intervention, and staff training.

While this is the first year that interns have been placed at Hope Gardens, Melina anticipates having future interns support the center. “While we will greatly miss this pioneering group of interns as they move on to new placements in a few months, we are also looking forward to meeting the next group of young professionals that will help Hope Gardens achieve its goal of offering a place of healing and restoration.” ☀



NEW INITIATIVES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We are pleased to welcome the following agencies to UI.

SOUTH CENTRAL TRAINING CONSORTIUM

Provides a system for supervising and training therapists working in underserved Los Angeles communities.

KOREATOWN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Provides counseling services to children ages 3-17 and children on probation, in addition to counseling services for West Adams High School students.

JENESSE CENTER

The oldest domestic violence intervention program in South Los Angeles which assists victims in addressing their immediate crisis and changing the patterns of their lives.

SHIELDS FOR FAMILIES, INC.

A Department of Mental Health and Department of Children Services contracted agency through which students engage in school-based mental health.

NATIONAL SENIOR SERVICE CORPS

Helps adults over age 55 find volunteer opportunities to solve problems in their communities.

GET ON THE BUS

Dedicated to providing transportation for children to correctional institutions across the state of California where the children’s mothers and fathers may be incarcerated.

To learn more about these and other UI partners, visit:
<http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/urban-initiative/initiatives-with-community-partners/>

A father embraces his daughter during the Get On The Bus program.

Faculty Feature:
PROFESSOR PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH VIA URBAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Dr. Anthony Collatos, assistant professor of education at GSEP, has been actively supporting UI goals through his leadership of three innovative programs: the Urban Parent Teacher Education Collaborative (UPTEC), the Riordan Extreme Leadership Program (RELP), and the Youth Empowerment and Research Seminar (YEARS).

Collatos recently described his research on UPTEC—a program that includes urban parents and community members as teacher educators working with Master of Arts in Education with Teaching Credential (MAETC) pre-service teachers and graduate students—at the Athens Institute for Education and Research’s (ATINER) 11th Annual International Conference on Education, held from May 25 to 27 in Athens, Greece. As director of UPTEC, Collatos works with grassroots parent organizer and co-teacher, Mary Johnson, and a cohort of MAETC students currently teaching in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Local District 6 schools that serve urban students in southeast Los Angeles.

Collatos also presented on “Critical Teacher Education: Including Urban Parents, Families, and School Communities in the Teacher Education Process” at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2009



Students pulling their weight aboard the Tole Mour.

Annual Meeting, held from April 13 to 17 in San Diego, California. “Following our UPTEC presentations at AERA and ATINER, it is exciting to see a heightened interest in our alternative approach to teacher education,” commented Collatos. “Both nationally and internationally, we have met numerous educators interested in how they can develop similar programs in their community and schools.”

In addition, Collatos leads RELP, which promotes leadership skills in urban high school students by providing opportunities for the students to network with successful leaders and meet appropriate role models. The program maintains a partnership with Gertz-Ressler High School in LAUSD. Gertz-Ressler students participating in RELP recently took a trip on the ocean in the legendary Tole Mour sail training vessel. MAETC students mentored the high school seniors, and

engaged in tasks such as learning how to set sail, how to raise the sails, how to properly secure the sails, proper sailing

terminology, and the correct holds and securing the lines. “Our experience on the Tole Mour reinforced the power of collective determination,” remarked Collatos. “It allowed us a brief opportunity to realize what is possible when each of us completes our task and goals for the good of the greater community.”

“It is exciting to see a heightened interest in our alternative approach to teacher education.”

Twenty Gertz-Ressler students were also able to attend the 15th annual City of Angels Film Festival on February 27 at the Directors Guild of America Theatre in the heart of Hollywood. The students and their GSEP mentors viewed Oscar-nominated documentary *The Garden*, featuring an urban oasis developed by Latino farmers in South Los Angeles. “The festival shows the power of what happens when we provide young people with the space to explore the dynamics of their community,” said Collatos. “I was especially impressed with the students’ level of understanding and response to the call to action. They are transforming into the types of engaged citizens we want leading our community.”

As director of YEARS, a program designed to encourage civic



At the screening for The Garden.



Dr. Anthony Collatos and students at the California Republican Party Convention.

participation, Collatos spearheaded an excursion to Sacramento in which seven southeast Los Angeles high school students were able to attend the California Republican Party Convention held in February. Last summer these students attended the Democratic National Convention in Denver in advance of the momentous presidential election. "YEARS is based on the principle that when urban youth are provided the opportunity and tools to critically examine the education system and democracy, they will experience a transformation," explained Collatos. "Their experiences have so excited

them to become instruments of change that they have all made the commitment to pursue higher education, and many have been accepted to four-year universities."

Collatos sums up his ethos, underlining the mission of UI: "It is not only about having a presence in our academic community. It is about making a difference in our actual community, outside the walls of the classroom. Thus, the core of the Urban Initiative is not just to serve but to actually change the conditions that cause the need to serve." ✨

UPCOMING EVENTS

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

Urban Fellows will reflect on their experiences and lessons learned.

June 27, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
West Los Angeles
Graduate Campus

To RSVP, e-mail:
urban.initiative@pepperdine.edu

2009-2010 URBAN FELLOWS DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS

Open to current GSEP students.

July 30, 6:00 p.m.

For more information, e-mail:
urban.initiative@pepperdine.edu

URBAN INITIATIVE COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

Urban Fellows and research team will present their preliminary findings, and experts will speak on various issues affecting urban communities.

Spring 2010
West Los Angeles
Graduate Campus

For more information, e-mail:
urban.initiative@pepperdine.edu

Answering the Call to Serve: THE URBAN FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Urban Fellows program is a selective training program in which GSEP's students are integrated into service centers to gain hands-on experience and develop their professional skills. Fellows learn about common education and mental health issues that appear in urban settings, successful intervention methods, family dynamics, working with public and private agencies, and community building. In addition, UI has integrated a research component to evaluate the success of its efforts, refine its attempts to provide effective programs, and develop new methodologies for training students.

The 2008 - 2009 Urban Fellows in psychology included Rebekah Norton and Gohar Karen Amirkhanyan at the South Central Training Consortium; Rosa Moore at SHIELDS for Families; Lori Meono, Gianna Caterina Maunu, and Kevin Ramotar at Hope Gardens; and Karla Chavez at Koreatown Youth and Community Center. Urban Fellows in education included Jordan Gonzales, Aimee Marie Munoz-Lopez, and Ruben Valenzuela at South Gate Middle School; Megan Kearns, Mayanthi Imbuldeniya, and Joanna Li at Stanford Elementary/Bryson Elementary; and Kelly Buckman and Puja Lavingia

at Bryson Elementary. Researchers included Kimberly Smith and Alexis Bowles. ✨

A few of the Urban Fellows.

