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Linfield Center for the Northwest: Hands-on Hub and Diverse Learners

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Hands-on hub

Internships:

First Federal Savings and Loan

The First Federal Internship provides the opportunity for students to receive insight into McMinnville and Yamhill County communities by working with non-profit organizations.

2010 internships:

- Chehalem Youth and Family Services
- Yamhill County Commission on Children and Families
- Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE)
- McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce

James S. Kemper Foundation

The Kemper Internship helps students test drive their chosen fields by working in businesses or organizations. This program is open to juniors and seniors and qualified sophomores. Twelve internships were funded in 2009-10 and five were funded in 2008-09.

Selected 2010 internships

- Yamhill Community Action Partnership
- Duniway Middle School Counseling Center
- AQx Sports
- Habitat for Humanity
- Yamhill County Historical Society
- Wednesday Wines

Research pilot projects

2010 - Two grants funded four research projects with four professors and eight students focusing on collaborative research in the fields of biology, mass communication, education, history and sociology.

The Linfield Center for the Northwest is a new twist on how learning happens – at college and in the community.

At LCN, learning goes beyond traditional books, classes, lectures and theory. Students don't have to wait until getting into the working world to apply what they learn in class. Here, they can get their hands dirty by trapping insects or digging through boxes of historical papers. Students get a taste of what life will be like after college – whether they go on to graduate school or join the work force. And in between, the local community gets to use faculty expertise and student elbow grease to meet their own needs. It's a learning process for everyone involved. And everyone gains.

Read on for a glimpse of how LCN enhanced learning last summer...

Mission: To provide students opportunities to gain real-world experience and apply classroom learning through internships, community service learning projects and research projects based on issues important to the local community and the Pacific Northwest.

– Jeff Peterson
Associate Professor of Sociology

Grants awarded to center since 2007

THE JACKSON FOUNDATION, \$5,000

W. M. KECK FOUNDATION, \$50,000

JAMES S. KEMPER FOUNDATION, \$50,000

ERATH FAMILY FOUNDATION, \$10,000

FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN, \$5,000



Diverse learners

Growing up with a brother who was profoundly deaf gave Gennie Harris a different view of how some children learn. And, her childhood friendship with a classmate of a different race opened her eyes to different kinds of challenges that can confront children of color.

Those experiences led Harris, assistant professor of education, to focus on how to educate diverse learners – children who may require special education, are learning disabled, talented and gifted, English language learners, or those affected by outside factors such as race, culture and poverty.

In order to meet the challenges that elementary and secondary teachers face in teaching a more diverse student body, Harris is investigating what teacher education programs need to do to prepare future teachers to succeed in an increasingly diverse classroom.

“We haven’t made a lot of progress in the last 20 years,” Harris said, adding that the needs of diverse learners in the K-12 programs need to be examined, but it’s also critical to examine the needs of college students who will teach them.

Under a grant from the Linfield Center for the Northwest, Harris, Elissa Blackhurst ’11 and Stacey Van Blom ’11 (pictured) spent last summer researching how teacher education programs, including Linfield’s, can better address the needs of diverse learners in elementary and secondary schools. They researched the needs of diverse learners in Oregon and looked at hiring preferences at school districts to understand what schools are looking for in experience, endorsements and certification, and teacher attributes. They asked school districts what qualities they seek in teacher candidates graduating from Oregon colleges and universities. They stepped outside the school district to survey local social service agencies to get their view on what is needed from the community to help students succeed. At the same time, they surveyed current Linfield education majors and recent graduates to find out what changes are

needed in the Linfield curriculum to help them succeed in the classroom.

Based on what they learned, Harris has completely redesigned her multicultural education course. With the help of Blackhurst and Van Blom, she incorporated more technology, added more instruction in special education and included a service learning component to get students into the community.

“It’s important to learn what our students need and want in terms of teacher preparation,” Harris said. “Traditional teaching models of higher education are becoming less popular among college students for a variety of reasons. College students are demanding more options in instructional styles and delivery models that include face-to-face instruction, online courses or a hybrid of the two.”

Blackhurst and Van Blom developed the technology piece for the class that incorporates more use of video, online resources and blogs, which are becoming important tools in the classroom. In addition, Harris’s students will spend 20 hours a week this year partnering with local agencies, ranging from special education and English language learners to tutoring adults for the GED or volunteering at a homeless shelter.

Blackhurst and Van Blom, both student teaching this fall, said the project changed how they approach their students.

“The population is changing; we are getting more students identified as special needs and English language learners, and more students in poverty,” Blackhurst said. “We need to learn how to meet their needs.”

Van Blom said the experience has made her look more at the whole child and see how a student’s background plays into academics.

“Teaching just in the traditional lecture manner has become obsolete,” she said. “I believe there are better ways to do this. It’s important to be aware of kids’ background factors that influence their school work. This will remind me to look at the whole child.

“I’m going to diversify my teaching as much as possible to try and meet all those levels,” she added. “Even though it’s easy to just teach to the middle, you can’t neglect the lower and the higher students. You need to try to find a way to serve the students’ needs and get the resources you need to achieve that.” 🍷

– Mardi Mileham

