

# Meeting the Policy Challenge in Urban Education

Brown University



Dear UEP Students, Alumni, Parents, Friends, and Prospective Students,

In two months, the Urban Education Policy Program will graduate its second class. This class will bring our total number of alumni to 24. While this may seem like a small number when compared to our peer programs, our UEP graduates are uniquely qualified to address the complex challenge of urban school systems. Their formal training enables them to think systematically and creatively to look for feasible policy options in the urban context. Ongoing mentoring from both the Annenberg clinical faculty and the Education faculty in social sciences have broadened their perspectives and deepened their analytical skills. Their first-hand experience through the nine-month internship has prepared them for the urban reality. In short, I believe that our alumni will be actively sought after by school districts, state and local governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community-based agencies, and even for-profit companies. Clearly, our strong placement record for our first class offers compelling evidence that our UEP Program can meet the policy needs in urban systems.

Given its small size and its strong sense of community among students and faculty, I envision that our UEP alumni will quickly grow into a professional network. During this second program year, our UEP first cohort has offered internship opportunities to the UEP second cohort. Several UEP alumni have returned to Barus Hall to talk about their career developments. *(continued on page 2)*

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## FACULTY UPDATES

Equally important, alumni have emailed us about their current work, made suggestions on what we should teach in the core courses, and offered to make connections to potential employers for the second class. We also plan to invite alumni to attend graduate fairs when they are held in their home town. Now that we have created the opportunity for our alumni to get involved, they will continue to be an important contributing factor to our program success.

Needless to say, UEP student have benefited from our first-rate, interdisciplinary faculty. This past year has brought several notable accomplishments. Warren Simmons was asked by the Rhode Island Governor to chair the task force on urban education. Cynthia Garcia Coll was named one of the most influential 100 Hispanic persons in the U.S. Marty West and Kenneth Wong have published their new books, [The School Money Trial](#) and [The Education Mayor](#), respectively.

Finally, the UEP community can only be sustained with a highly dedicated staff. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the hard work of our core staff. Ann D'Abrosca has tirelessly handled a wide range of administrative and student affairs. Tehani Collazo has already made a big difference in terms of providing support and guidance to our students in completing their internships. With a great deal of enthusiasm, Katie Wieland has traveled far and close to recruit students and has coordinated the lecture series and other projects.

As we conclude our second year, I am confident that our third cohort will bring an equally high level of passion and energy to the UEP Program. We are ready for another year of learning, challenge, and success!

Best,  
Kenneth K. Wong  
Director, the Urban Education Policy Program  
Walter and Leonore Annenberg Professor



**Dr. Rosa Cho**

Assistant Professor of Education, Dr. Cho is currently underway on a number of projects. One of her many research activities has her working in concert with Professor John Tyler examining the effect of prison-based education programming on earnings and employment. Their work concentrates on whether inmates who receive adult basic education or vocational education experience an increase in earnings or employment rates after release from prison. Dr. Cho is also in the midst of a study that examines whether there are differential effects of maternal incarceration on educational outcomes by the developmental stages of the child. I look at a number of child-level high school outcome variables including test scores, number of absent days, number of tardies, grade retention, and drop-out status.



**Dr. Cynthia García Coll**

Professor of Education and Human Development, Dr. Cynthia García Coll and Adjunct Professor Amy Marks were recently published in the latest installment of the *Journal of Developmental Psychology* for their work on early academic skill development among American Indian and Alaska Native youth. Dr. García Coll's research with colleagues Mitchell, McQuaid, et. al on urban youth and asthma-related-risks was also recently highlighted in latest *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*.



**Dr. John Tyler**

Professor Tyler along with colleague, Professor Tom Kane of Harvard, are the primary investigators on a two-year, \$470K project funded by the Joyce Foundation, "Identifying Effective Classroom Practice Using Student Achievement: Evidence from Cincinnati's Teacher Evaluation System." In this project, Tyler and Kane propose to study the potentially complementary relationship between value-added measures of teacher effectiveness and a well-developed  
(continued on page 3)

practice-based evaluation system in Cincinnati – the Teacher Evaluation System (TES).



**Dr. Martin R. West**

Assistant Professor of Education, Political Science, and Public Policy Martin West recently completed a study of the relationship between teacher effectiveness, mobility between schools, and attrition from the teaching profession. He presented his results in February at a conference

held by the National Center for Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University. In ongoing work funded by a grant from the Smith Richardson Foundation, Dr. West is examining the effects of class-size reduction policies on students' non-cognitive skills. He also is planning a national conference on the role of the courts in education policymaking to be held in Washington DC in October of 2008. The project builds on his work on the recently published book *School Money Trials: The Legal Pursuit of Educational Adequacy*, which Dr. West edited with Harvard colleague Paul E. Peterson.



**Dr. Kenneth K. Wong**

Dr. Wong's latest book, *The Education Mayor: Improving America's Schools*, has attracted a great deal of attention from the media and the policy community. His book was the subject in his interview by Smart City Radio (hosted by

Carol Coletta) and by A Voice for America's Youth, a global radio show. He was also invited by the Education Week to conduct a Live Online Chat on the book. Further, Dr. Wong was invited to share his perspectives on the education policy positions of presidential candidates in the Wisconsin Public Radio and Ideas Network Stations. Finally, Dr. Wong is the recipient of the 2007 Deil Wright Best Paper Award given by the American Political Science Association for his research paper, "Accountability and Innovation: New Directions in Education Policy and Management."

## Education Outreach

Read on for a letter from our Director of Education Outreach, highlights from our community endeavors and internship profiles from students working on the nonprofit, district and state levels of urban education policy. If you have a story to tell concerning community outreach or would like to host a UEP intern this year, please contact either Tehani Collazo (Tehani\_collazo@brown.edu) or Katherine Wieland (Katherine\_Wieland@brown.edu) for more information.

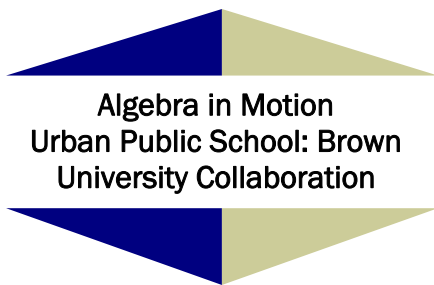
## Reflections from the Director of Education Outreach

As Director of Education Outreach, I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet with each of our UEP Master's students and learn from their aspirations to lead and create new schools, evaluate programs, and become members of district leadership teams. Through each of their stories, I see how they bring their multi-faceted experiences as teachers, students, and emerging leaders in the non-profit, arts and research realms to their academic work at Brown and the projects they have developed through their UEP internships. With each encounter, I have attempted to help them make connections between their coursework and their work in the community at their internship sites. At times this has meant supporting them with developing a research design for evaluation studies of their sites. And at other times, this has meant working with our students to consider how to make their internship experience more challenging or more relevant to their own professional interests.

During these first few months on the job, I have also enjoyed learning about the over 80 education outreach projects and systemic partnerships that Brown has developed through the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and various science, social science, and humanities departments across campus. As an undergrad at Brown, I was consistently inspired by my peers' sense of vision and possibility as they created new organizations on campus and exciting community based programs. Now as an alumna, returning to the university over 15 years later, I can see how so many of these student-generated projects were supported by the institutional culture and structure of Brown. At the same time as I have met (*continued on page 4*)

with multiple leaders and stakeholders in the local communities, I am becoming increasingly aware of how many educators and administrators have a strong interest in maintaining, building, or cultivating a relationship with Brown. While faculty members, and individual centers across campus are engaging meaningfully in the work of leveraging Brown's resources toward the local community, there is still work to be done in aligning some of these projects with to bring about a greater impact for our local youth. Thus, in the year ahead, I will look to the UEP faculty as well as incoming UEP class to think with me about how to continue our work with local urban communities, yet in ways that bring about even greater impact for youth and educators. I look forward to the challenge ahead!

Tehani Collazo, '91  
Director of Education Outreach



In late 2006, Ruth Simmons, President of Brown, encouraged members from higher education, district, and business communities to engage in a thoughtful conversation around the achievement gap and its effects on mathematics accomplishments for students in Providence. What was born, came to be known as the *Algebra in Motion Pilot Program* that brought together members of the Hope High School Math Department, faculty, and staff from Brown University as well as Texas Instruments Instructional Experts to participate in a math initiative aimed at enhancing teaching and learning in the school's Algebra 1 classes. This localized initiative placed mathematical technology, namely TI-83 graphing calculators, a resource in most suburban high school math classes around the country, in the hands of urban educators in hopes of galvanizing classroom discussion and increasing mathematical comprehension. Becky Coustan, Hope's

**"...a way to both engage students and facilitate their mathematical understanding."**

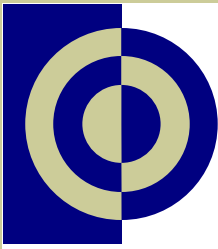
Lead Coach who supports the school's individual department chairs, explained that: "Most students arrive at Hope with math skills much below grade level, and developing students' basic math skills while at the same time tackling [the] complex mathematical theory required by high school math courses is a challenge for Hope's math teachers. This lack in a solid foundation of basic skills is what keeps students from achieving state standards and enrolling in higher level math and science courses." Hope High School, according to Michael Werth, Mathematics Faculty member,

saw the graphing calculators as a way to both "engage students and facilitate their mathematical understanding."

During the pilot phase, both educators and students had access to graphing calculators. Teachers had the ability to engage in five professional development sessions led by a Texas Instruments instructional expert, as well as classroom assistance from undergraduate student volunteers recruited through Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service. This past January the Education Department, in concert with the President's Office and Providence Public Schools released the evaluation report for the three month *Algebra in Motion Pilot Program*. According to the report, "The seven participating Hope teachers uniformly spoke highly of their TI-provided trainer, and those with little or no experience using the latest generation of TI graphing calculators appreciated the opportunity to expand their professional knowledge and begin to consider future classroom applications." With only 32% of Providence eleventh graders scoring at the proficient level in mathematical skills compared to 57% statewide, this intervention comes at an apt time.

There is clearly interest on the part of Hope faculty to create additional professional development opportunities that look to personalize learning opportunities and supports for students while at the same time improving professional supports for and the practice of educators. With continued support from the Brown community and through TI technology, professional and curriculum development, Hope will continue on the path to creating additional opportunities for growth for their student and teacher communities as they engage in high level conceptual learning in algebra.

## INTERNSHIPS IN FOCUS



### NEIGHBORWORKS BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION WOONSOCKET, RI

This spring our UEP interns will wrap up what has been an outstanding year long policy experience in locals across the country. This opportunity has allowed them to synthesize both the theory and practice of urban education reform. Three of interns have had the opportunity to work with some of the leading nonprofit, district and government agencies in Rhode Island and provide a special look into the life and times of education efforts across the state.



Photo by Karl Dominey

Remember that CDC's are not just units, but communities says an impassioned, yet focused Kim Eisenreich, UEP Class of '08. Each day when UEP classes are not in session, a dedicated Kim travels 20 minutes to the north of Brown, to the often forgotten urban center known as Woonsocket. Since graduating Gustavus Adolphus College in 2005,

Kim has worked with the trailblazing *NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley Community Development Corporation (NWBRV)*. For over twenty years, NWBRV has been dedicated to urban revitalization efforts around abandoned housing as well as the creation of new constructions in and around the region. Over the years, NWBRV's efforts have grown to include a multitude of projects that embrace a unique approach to community building. Blackstone has come to utilize an out of the box model for change that encourages strategic collaboration to cultivate "...safe, violence free streets, access to jobs and economic opportunity, quality affordable childcare and after school programs, and responsive and effective government, education, social and cultural institutions."

Like many metropolitan CDC's across the nation, NWBRV is looking to reinvigorate its urban center with the introduction of original programming that best suits the distinctive needs of Woonsocket residents. Take for example their *Youth RAP* program that makes use of the exceptional talents of local teachers, artists, poets, and musicians to create ongoing out of school time learning opportunities year round. *Youth RAP* offers developmentally appropriate tutoring, college preparation and entrepreneurship courses, art, music, and dance classes as well as sports programming for the youth of Woonsocket. Kim has been an integral piece in coordinating and devising these daily workshops and her efforts seem to be paying off. In the last two years, NWBRV's 'Sure Track to College' program boasts 100% of its participants not only completing the course, but also gaining admittance into four-year colleges, with financial assistance in

and around Rhode Island.

For Margaux Morisseau, Community Building Director, Kim is an "indispensable asset" to Blackstone, and has become ever the more so since entering the UEP program this past summer. With UEP, Kim notes that she has gained a specialized tool set that has allowed her to become a skilled community ambassador and voice in her work with local schools and CBO's.

As NWBRV continues on its path as a community developer rather than simply a housing provider, Kim's conviction and concrete skill set will certainly serve her well in their future endeavors. For more information on the NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley Community Development Corporation, and their community projects, please visit, <http://www.wndc.org/>.



Photo by Karl Dominey

### PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF OPERATIONS PROVIDENCE, RI

With a district, that boasts nearly 2,074 teachers, 142 administrators, 25,000 students, and 45 schools, Deputy Superintendent of Operations Tomas Hanna is poised to make meaningful change in the Providence education system, one hire at a time. Hanna comes to Providence after years in Philadelphia, a city ravaged by high teacher attrition rates, with some stories to tell, but more importantly, lessons applicable to the Providence context.

Like any urban metropolis, uncertainties to questions such as to how to attract the best and the brightest teaching talent to the city, while being able to place system educators where they were needed most, plagued Philadelphia during Hanna's tenure. According to Mr. Hanna, the crux of the issue was how to create a culture that meant that the district was an "employer of choice, and not a last resort." Though Providence does not face the same grim teacher turnover rates as its sister city to the south, it does present the Deputy Superintendent and his colleagues on the Executive Council with a host of new issues to contend with as Providence moves forward in its *Realizing the Dream* initiative. According to Hanna, first and foremost, "We must have a laser light focus on student achievement," (continued on page 6)

*"...employer of choice and not a last resort."*



Photo by Karl Dominey

is a statement that drives the HR Department in Providence. This 'laser light' requires Hanna to take a leadership role in fostering practices and policies with the district operations that will allow

for strategic planning when it comes to the hiring and maintaining the Providence teaching force. To Hanna, this means establishing alignment between learning standards amongst district schools while creating meaningful professional development opportunities for district educators that will allow great teacher mobility. The result will see students achieving greater feats than ever before in Providence because of this strategic alignment.

To many, like Titus DosRemedios, UEP '08, such strategic efforts seem like a chess game that requires patience, foresight, and more importantly experience. Titus has spent the last year working hand in hand with Mr. Hanna looking at the pieces needed to move Providence from a transactional to a strategic oriented Human Resources Department. Titus came to PPSD with a number of years of teaching experience, but lacked the institutional and operational knowledge that is required in coordinating district operations. The once ambiguous operations piece in central office no longer remains a mystery for Titus, but what does linger are the larger systemic reform questions the plague urban districts from Philadelphia to Providence. Titus has learned that "everything matters" when it comes to central office operations which makes the task of creating alignment between district office stakeholders difficult to say the least. Like his mentor, Tomas Hanna, Titus agrees that a focus on the students and their learning lives is crucial. As Titus explains, "You shouldn't have to limit your chances because of the street you live on." With the intensity, knowledge, and brokering skills that Tomas Hanna offers Providence, we are sure to see that in fact your address will not determine the quality of your education, simply the bus you take to get there.

buttons," she is without doubt a critical piece in the everyday decisions made in the State House. Dr. Dominguez's role goes beyond providing a foundation of analysis to inform state legislators' decisions: she must also keenly understand the local nuances that impact policy creation and implementation.

A former teacher, researcher, and consultant, Dominguez brings a singular perspective to the legislative proceedings of this highly urbanized state. However, even with the wealth of experience and knowledge that Paula brings to her position, discerning the 'signal from the noise' can often prove difficult when a host of contrasting needs and competing interests must be balanced. It is in instances like these that having the skill set that allows one to be a critical consumer of policy, research, and data is crucial. Dr. Dominguez sees the UEP program as an incubator

for such insight: its use of multiple perspectives provides students with grounded, strategic approaches to resolving the issues confronting the next generation of urban education leaders.

As Paula points out, this field is not for the faint at heart, a statement to which UEP intern Michelle Gleason, '08 can attest. This past

*"We need to have a laser light focus on student achievement."*

year, Michelle shadowed Paula through beves of state level committee meetings and hearings, while providing data and analyses to address legislative requests. As Dominguez says and Michelle agrees, "In this job, you need good shoes to wear on the long road ahead." If anything, Michelle takes away from this experience the requisite need for an unflagging passion to push through policies that support urban youth. Policy making at the state level means remaining focused on a vision for change, even when the process itself is drawn out and, at times, disheartening. Dominguez notes that, as in any complex organization, change can be incremental in state government. But, she adds, it is the relentless pursuit of incremental change over time that lead to better opportunities for urban schools and the students they educate.



Photo by Karl Dominey

### RHODE ISLAND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDENCE, RI

**G**o up to any education leader in Rhode Island and odds are they not only know Paula Dominguez on a first name basis, but also will have a kind word or story to tell about her. Though Paula – the Senior Education Policy Advisor for the Rhode Island House of Representatives – sees herself as one of many who "help the people who push the

*"In this job, you need good shoes to wear on the long road ahead."*

*~Paula Dominguez*

## Brown University Announces Commitment to Urban Education and Providence Area Schools

**10** *Urban Education Fellows* will receive full tuition support for 2008-2009 in the form of *loan forgiveness*.

**8** *Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT)* candidates will be named as Fellows.

**2** *Masters of Arts in Urban Education Policy (UEP)* candidates will be named as Fellows.

Fellows commit to serve low-income schools and districts in Providence and other Urban Core communities for 3 years upon graduation.

These commitments were developed from the report to the University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. For more information please contact, Katherine Wieland, Project Coordinator, at [Katherine.Wieland@brown.edu](mailto:Katherine.Wieland@brown.edu).

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ Please join us, Thursday, May 15, 2008 for our *UEP Intern Conference* where our current students will share some lessons learned from their year long experiences with education reform organizations across the country. For more information on this event, please contact our Director of Education Outreach, Tehani Collazo at [tehani\\_collazo@brown.edu](mailto:tehani_collazo@brown.edu).
- ◆ Please join us Sunday, May 25, 2008 for our *UEP Graduation Ceremony* beginning at 10am on Brown's Lincoln Field.
- ◆ We welcome UEP III to campus Monday, June 23, 2008.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Ruth J. Simmons Fellowships in Urban Education Policy

Thanks to a generous gift from the Oak Brook Bank Charitable Trust, we are proud to offer the Ruth J. Simmons Fellowship in Urban Education. These Fellows are expected to work in the greater Chicago for one year following their graduation from the program in exchange for tuition support. Fellowship placement can range from public sector education organization or non-profit entity residing in the greater Chicago region.

For additional information on this prestigious opportunity, please contact Ann D'Abrosca, UEP Administrator, at [Ann\\_D'Abrosca@brown.edu](mailto:Ann_D'Abrosca@brown.edu)

### Do you have news that you would like to share with the UEP Family Network?

Whether it be a personal update, career or professional development opportunity, or news in the field of urban policy, please email [Katherine\\_Wieland@brown.edu](mailto:Katherine_Wieland@brown.edu) with your thoughts and comments today!

This news letter is brought to you by your colleagues in the Education Department at Brown University. For more information on the Urban Education Policy Program, please visit [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Education/uep\\_](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Education/uep_)

