

## **CEAP Opening of School**

### **Dean's Comments**

**August 12, 2015**

As we open this new year and recognize colleagues who have been tenured and promoted and meet our new colleagues, we have been challenged by Chancellor Belcher to dedicate ourselves to a new future, one that we know will change. And you have heard today from our Provost on the topic of diversity.

I remember my first semester at Western over 30 years ago. The College of Education and Allied Professions opened the year with a retreat at Lake Junaluska Assembly made possible by a US Department of Education Grant won by our former colleague and dear friend, Jane Schulz. The purpose of the grant was for the College to plan how to prepare our graduates, particularly in teacher education, to meet the needs of children with disabilities in what was then called mainstreamed classes. We embarked on a three year program to upgrade our knowledge and skills as faculty and staff and to revise our curricula significantly. As a new faculty member in the special education program, I was pleased that I was part of the college.

I have remained proud of the university and proud of the college. This college has been at the forefront of efforts at the university to embrace diversity and to prepare our graduates for the world. We had a long ways to go back then. We have come a long way but we still have a long ways to go.

We were the first college to have a diversity committee many years ago and for several years it was the only diversity committee at the university with members from throughout the campus. The college had a diversity plan before the university did. Like a lot of institutions, the university has had several task forces challenged with studying and addressing issues of diversity and people from this college have usually chaired them or been major members. The Diversity Committee is the only committee in the college to have its own budget partially signifying how important it is to College.

We have certainly been at the forefront where persons with disabilities are concerned from that initial retreat over 30 years ago to the University Participant Program today that offers individuals with intellectual disabilities a college experience while offering the entire Cullowhee campus real experience with persons with intellectual disabilities to the Inclusive Education and Birth

Kindergarten Programs that prepare teachers at the preschool and elementary levels to teach children with and without disabilities. In addition, we have recently instituted a Diversity Portfolio requirement for all teacher education students to complete and document diverse experiences in the curriculum.

The College of Education and Allied Professions has a proud 40 year history of teaching courses in Jamaica and we have a long relationship with several other countries in central and South America. We have also recently stepped up international activities with faculty led travel courses and other international experiences in Ireland, England, Finland, Germany, Japan, South Korea, India, Ghana, and Peru with an upcoming travel course in Kenya and ongoing discussions with representatives from Botswana about possible collaborative activities there.

This year we will celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the Rural Urban Exchange where we have partnered with NC A & T State University to provide 5 to 6 teacher education students with a weeklong experience in a different community. Western hosts students from A & T in the spring semester to visit schools, attend one or more classes and visit our rural, mountain community and A & T reciprocates by hosting our students during a different week in the spring semester to visit schools, the

Aggie campus, and cultural centers and events in Greensboro. When the A & T students are on our campus we have a panel discussion reflecting on the experience and invite students, staff and faculty to participate. I spoke to the interim dean just yesterday while we were both in Chapel Hill to confirm that we want to continue the partnership again this year.

Our College recently collaborated on a grant with Jackson County Schools and the Cullowhee United Methodist Church to provide an after-school program for English Language Learners at Cullowhee Valley School and to provide an opportunity for Western students to have authentic experiences with this population.

Several faculty and staff members of the College have had other significant and ongoing activities with schools and communities that provide us all with diverse experiences and our College purposefully and intentionally brings young K-12 students from diverse backgrounds to recruit into our programs and we seek opportunities to invite practitioners and scholars to campus to interact with students, staff and faculty. I can easily recall instances just this past year in every department of our College.

Finally, we have been persistent in our attempts to recruit diverse faculty and staff who contribute in a multitude of ways and add enormously to our curriculum and community.

We have come a long way but we have a long way to go.

- We recently received the off-site report for our upcoming NCATE visit and the two areas cited as problems were in diversity – a lack of diversity among our students and a lack of diversity among our faculty.
- Recent follow-up studies of our teacher education graduates indicate that they say they were inadequately prepared to teach exceptional learners and English Language Learners compared to graduates of other teacher education programs.
- Our teacher education graduates are overwhelmingly white females and the children they teach are increasingly diverse.
- Salaries for females in the college and the university are lower than salaries for males.
- Our leadership positions are disproportionately white males.

We have a long way to go. Our activities today are another step toward the future.

This is not an event that we check off. It is part of a process and I am happy that it

was faculty initiated. I am looking forward to the rest of the day, to the year ahead, and to our work together.

I want to recognize the College Diversity Committee for sponsoring today's activity and Adriel Hilton and Lisa Bloom, the co-chairs of the committee, for taking the lead. Thank you all.

Introduce Dr. Lisa Bloom who will introduce our visiting scholar – Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown.