CELEBRATING 50 Years OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
Message from the Acting Dean

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the School of Education at Pace University and we are taking the opportunity to look ahead to the future, examine the current state of the field, and honor the legacy of the school. In this celebratory moment, we salutate our previous deans and former colleagues for their contributions to our school and for laying the foundation for our continued success. Over the past five decades, we have educated thousands of outstanding K–12 teachers and educational leaders. Our graduates are reflective practitioners who promote social justice, create caring classrooms and school communities, and enable all students to be successful learners.

In this special publication, we are proud to showcase the recent achievements of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Our faculty has been continuously producing first-class scholarship and winning prestigious grants that have influenced the field at the local, national, and international levels. Our staff has always been supportive to the needs of our students. Our students have been working hard—both inside and outside of Pace classrooms. Our alumni have been making positive impacts on the transformation of lives. Together, these accomplishments are a testament to the importance of educators and teacher preparation programs.

Education is the foundation of a democratic society, and teachers have the lofty responsibility to educate future citizens. The School of Education will continue to be at the forefront of research, teaching, and community involvement in the years to come. We will continue to design programs that will best respond to the educational needs of all students.

We look forward to a bright future of the School of Education with optimism, gratitude, and anticipation.

Xiao-lei Wang, PhD
Acting Dean and Professor
School of Education
Pace University

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The Deans Speak: Past, Present, and Future

In preparation for our 50th anniversary, the School of Education reached out to all of the previous deans to get reflections on their time at the SOE. Here are their thoughts on the past, present, and future of the SOE.

Frederick Bunt
Dean from 1966-1983
Throughout the turbulence of the late 1960s and 1970s there were many transitions that took place within the school as it grew in numbers. “It was a wild, wild time and we had a wonderful time building the school,” says Bunt.

Jan McDonald, PhD
Dean from 1995-2006
During her tenure, she helped the SOE receive its first NCATE accreditation. “Every teacher preparation program had to be re-registered with the state and had to be in line with the new criteria. In an amazingly short period of time, we had to learn all the regulations and figure out all the new programs.”

Harriet R. Feldman, PhD, RN, FAAN
Interim Dean from 2006-2010
She helped to establish the research culture at the SOE. Feldman’s advice to future students and pre-service teachers is: “It is really about people. It is about students and peers and is about connecting with people. Once you lose that focus, you’ve lost the game.”

Andrea (Penny) Spencer, PhD
Dean from 2010-2014
Reflecting on the future of teacher education, Spencer says, “As teacher educators of the 21st century, we must prepare professionals who are highly competent, but who are also creative, compassionate, and committed to ensuring the success of every learner.”

David Avdul
Dean from 1983-1994
Remembering the transitions that happened during his tenure, Avdul says, “I have a sense of pride in reinstating all of the BA education programs on all of the campuses and creating the MST degree, which became the largest program in the SOE. These were paramount in my experience.”

Mary Versteck
Interim Dean from 1994-1995
Her advice for current teachers is: “There’s a line to walk between pragmatics and philosophy. Teachers need to be pragmatic but they also need to have a philosophical approach that will enable them to understand why they teach and who they are.”

Lauren Birney, EdD
Assistant professor and director of the STEM Collaboratory NYC, is the Principal Investigator for the National Science Foundation (NSF) grant “Curriculum and Community Enterprise for New York Harbor Restoration in New York City Public Schools” that enabled the expansion of the Billion Oyster Project’s teacher training program at Pace University. The $5 million grant is the largest research grant in the history of Pace University. In addition to the NSF grant, Lauren Birney is the Principal Investigator for the Time Warner Cable Foundation—STEAM Collaborative Project and the AT&T Foundation STEM Summer Camp.

Christine Clayton, EdD
Associate Professor, is the director and principal investigator for the Teacher Leader Quality Partnership (TLQP) grant funded by New York State. On May 13, 2015, the Pace Inquiry Learning Collaborative held its sixth annual Teaching and Learning Conference in White Plains to showcase the results of collaborative inquiry projects by area high school teachers to promote deeper learning and thinking among secondary students. Teachers from Millennium High School, Bronx High School for the Visual Arts, Sleepy Hollow High School, and Peekskill High School presented research made possible through TLQP and partnership with Pace.

Chair and Associate Professor Bobbe Wiener, EdD, and Professor Leslie Soodak, PhD, are co-principal investigators of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 357 STARS Grant, which supports development of the Inclusive Education Program. This innovative program prepares students to be effective, dually certified adolescent educators able to teach students with and without disabilities. Through this OSEP 357 Grant, the department invited Douglas Fisher, PhD, a highly respected researcher in literacy instruction, to be a guest speaker at the SOE in June. Accompanied by his colleague, Nancy Frey, PhD, Fisher gave an inspiring and informative talk on Unstoppable Learning: Strategies for High Quality Teaching and Learning to an audience of teacher candidates, field partners, alumni, and faculty.
Recent Faculty Scholarship

Recent Books and Films


Fran Falk-Ross, EdD, professor, recently published *Language-Based Approaches to Support Reading Comprehension* (Rowman and Littlefield, Inc.).

Assistant Professor Tasha Darbes, PhD, co-produced *Admissions*, a documentary on the experiences of undocumented youth in higher education. It was awarded Best Amateur Film by AERA and screened in the US and abroad.


Xiao-lei Wang, PhD, professor and acting dean, authored *Maintaining Three Languages: The Teenage Years (Multilingual Matters)* and *Understanding Language and Literacy Development: Diverse Learners in the Classroom* (Wiley-Blackwell).

Assistant Professor Raquel Plotka, PhD, and Professor and Acting Dean Xiao-lei Wang, PhD, will be publishing “Adult Promotion of Children Narratives through Participatory Prompts: Educational Implications” in the *International Journal of Early Childhood Learning*.

Associate Professor Joan Walker, PhD, published "Realizing The American Dream: A Parent Education Program Designed To Engage Families’ Involvement" in *Latinos and Education* in 2017. Walker also serves as the assessment director for the American Dream Academy (ADA) program at Arizona State University, which was recently recognized by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics as a “Bright Spot” in Hispanic Education.

A recent paper by Gerald Ardito, DPS, assistant chair and assistant professor of STEM-D Education, entitled “Building Student Networks: Towards a Connectivist Analysis of Classroom Learning Environments” is on the final selection list for the National Technology Leadership Initiative (NTLI) Award. The John C. Park NTLI Fellowship, supported by the Society for Information Technology in Teacher Education (SITE) and ASTE, was established to recognize an exemplary paper and presentation on technology at the annual ASTE conference.

A 2015 article by Shobana Musti-Rao, PhD, associate professor of Special Education, was recently selected by the Research Committee of the Council for Learning Disabilities as a "Must Read" article published in the journal *Intervention in School & Clinic* (ISC). The article, entitled "Literacy Instruction Using Technology with Primary-Age and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners," received the highest average score by the reviewers on the Research Committee.

Global Advocacy and International Efforts

Professor Brian R. Evans, EdD, was selected by the University’s Center for Community Action and Research to receive a Jefferson Award for community service. Among Evans’ activities cited for the Jefferson Award were his travels to Uganda to teach mathematics problem solving and inquiry approaches with Educate Uganda.

Professor Peter Mccormitz, PhD, was awarded the Global Volunteer Award by the International Literacy Association for his dedication to the global advocacy of literacy in Sierra Leone and Kazakhstan.

Assistant Professor Katherine De Lawter, EdD, was elected Chair of the Committee on Teaching About the United Nations (CTAUN) Advisory Council, which advises CTAUN members, a group of Non-Governmental Representatives affiliated with the United Nations.

Patricia Brock, EdD, adjunct professor, participated in the 2015 TESOL Kuwait Conference. Brock was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to the American University in Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan and has received grants from UNESCO to present her research in Alexandria, Egypt.

Professor and Acting Dean Xiaolei Wang, PhD, with Doly Levi, PhD, director of the International School at Levinsky College of Education, discuss the future relationship between the SOE and Levinsky College in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The importance of cultural understanding between students and teachers. Through a relationship that was initiated in 2013, the two universities have developed a program that promotes the sharing of information, ideas and international communication.

Created by Lixin Tao, chairperson of the Computer Science Department at Seidenberg, and SOE Professor and Acting Dean Xiaolei Wang, PhD, this partnership began as a pilot program for Chinese faculty at GDUFE to come to Pace to learn more about teaching practices, specifically teaching courses in English. The program allows participating faculty to audit two courses of their choosing at Pace and also take a special seminar taught by the School of Education faculty.

Many of the participating scholars have maintained contact with Wang and SOE, as they have returned back home to use their new perspectives on their own classrooms. In addition, the visiting Chinese scholars have shown great appreciation for the SOE professors who continue to share trends and ideas pertaining to education.

Guangdong University of Finance and Economics (GDUFE) in the Chinese city of Guangzhou and Pace University are actively sharing thoughts on pedagogy, higher education, and the importance of cultural understanding between students and teachers. Through a relationship that was initiated in 2013, the two universities have developed a program that promotes the sharing of information, ideas and international communication.

Global Advocacy

Professor and Acting Dean Xiaolei Wang, PhD, and Professor Brian R. Evans, EdD, will be co-leading an international summer experience for students called Following in the Footsteps of Early European Educational Theorists, which will explore the home countries of educational theorists Piaget, Rousseaus, Montessori, and others.

Staff Spotlight

Director of Administration Anna Fishman, was recognized on November 19, 2015, at the Westchester Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony for 35 years of service to Pace University and the School of Education. Fishman also was recognized earlier in the year with a Your Excellence Shows (YES) Award.

Director of Technology Support Jermain Smith was recognized for the YES Award for his dedication supporting and helping to motivate students to succeed.

Assistant Director of Student Support Services and Certification Officer Linda Guyette Hamell, prepared freshman students in UNV 101 seminar this fall. Hamell also developed a college readiness summer course directed at supporting incoming freshman titled WIRED: Write, Inquire, Read, Explore.

Staff associates Donna DeAngelo and Liz Luongo were awarded for 10 years of service at the 2015 Employee Service Awards ceremony.

Program Coordinator Nancy Campoverde presented at the orientation for the incoming cohort of NYC Teaching Fellows. Campoverde was awarded for five years of service at the 2015 Employee Service Awards ceremony.
Faculty and Student Collaboration

Clinical assistant professor Ruth Guirguis, EdD, has helped to increase enrollment in the early childhood and special education programs through innovative efforts, and has received a grant to continue to grow the programs. Guirguis also has helped to promote enrollment in the dual certification in early childhood and special education.

Assistant Professor Jennifer Pankowski, EdD, works closely with the New York Teaching Fellows program, where she assists approximately 150 special education and 70 secondary science students as they navigate through their first two years as classroom teachers while simultaneously completing a master’s of teaching degree and obtaining initial certification. She uses avatar technology and video modeling to assist the Teaching Fellows develop skills for their class effectiveness ratings by offering students the opportunity to remediate instruction based on critique and self-reflection.

Sharon Medow has served as the Program Coordinator for the Childhood Program since 2006 and has assisted with the development of the first iteration of the Pace Path as it applies to the School of Education. Medow also coordinates a tutoring program with the parents association for the Spruce Street School in conjunction with the Howard Hughes Corporation.

Graduate students in the combined degree program for Literacy presented with Professor Fran Falk-Ross, PhD, at the New York State Reading Association (NYSRA) Conference in Saratoga Springs, New York. The title of the research presentation was “Approaches to Effective Comprehension Competencies for Diverse Students.”

Associate Professor Tom Higgins, EdD, coordinates the School District Business Leader program which prepares students for the New York State School District Business Leader certificate, a requirement for any certified position in a school district business office. In the past year, two students from this program have been appointed to certificated positions and three others have changed districts to move into positions with more responsibility.

Student Highlights

Sarina Vasta, Nicole Wallach, Jaimie Magneri, Maureen Gaynor, Andrea Bromberg, and Tolia Arnold, all graduate students from the Literacy program, along with Literacy Program Coordinator Fran Falk-Ross attended the Annual Rockland Literacy Extravaganza Professional Conference held at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, New York.

Professor Christine Clayton, EdD, and Dante Plesh '15, presented research on Civic Engagement and Advocacy: Exploring the Power of Comedy in Education.

Nicholas Wang and Lindsay Soto moderated the annual Principal’s Panel hosted by the Future Educator’s Association on November 19, 2015.

Teaching Fellow and recent graduate of the Childhood Education program Jennifer Czir '15, competed in the Golden Gloves Finals boxing tournament at the Barclays Center on April 2, 2015.

Trustee Award winner Charles Link ’15, accepted the Trustee Award from the School of Education for his academic accomplishments and positive contributions to University life.

Obiora N. Anekwe, EdD, currently a New York City Teaching Fellow and MST candidate, has a gift for expression. Born in the United States, but reared in Lagos, Nigeria, he moved back to the US when he was in elementary school. After recently completing a master’s in bioethics at Columbia University, he applied for the NYC Teaching Fellows Program and is currently seeking an MST in Adolescent Special Education.

To say that Anekwe has been busy this past year would be an understatement. Having written several books in post-secondary education and bioethics, his first book as a children’s author was published earlier this year. Urged by SOE professor Kathryn De Lawter to expand his research on the topic of Thomas “Blind Tom” Wiggins into a book, Anekwe chose to write and illustrate The Adventures of Blind Tom himself. The publication focuses on recurring themes of racial identity and facing challenges in a way that younger children can understand and even relate to.

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Community Partnerships

Assistant Chair and Assistant Professor Gerald Ardito, DPS, created the Science Saturday program and has worked closely with school districts in Ossining, Croton, and White Plains to bring STEM-related instruction to students.

Pace University School of Education hosted and co-sponsored the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) Professional Development Conference on January 20, 2015.

The Delany Center for Educational Enrichment held a symposium entitled Unlocking the Puzzle on the Brain and Reading on March 7, 2015, featuring the work of Joanna A. Christodoulou, EdD, assistant professor at MGH Institute of Health Professions and BEAM team leader, and Tracy M. Centanni, PhD, of MIT’s GabLab and McGovern Institute of Brain Research.

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On May 13, 2015, Teacher Opportunity Corps (TOC) held the annual year-end gathering to celebrate and reflect on the accomplishments of current TOC members while introducing prospective members.

The School of Education hosted a professional development workshop on August 18, 2015, for educators to participate in the Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum (LVM) Transmedia Project.

The School of Education co-sponsored a Common Core Roundtable Forum in conjunction with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) – Westchester Branch and High Achievement New York (HANY) on October 28, 2015.

October 27, 2015, Professor Lauren Birney, EdD, and Jon Forrest Dohlin, Wildlife Conservation Society VP and director of New York Aquarium, participated in the third annual True Partnerships panel discussion at Pace University’s Helene and Grant Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship. Best Practices in Collaborations, A Conversation on Curriculum, Community and the New York Harbor focused on partnership and the Billion Oyster Project, a unique effort to restore the ecology of New York Harbor through education and engagement of our city’s public school students.

The School of Education was honored with the Community Partner of the Year award from the Pleasantville Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA).

Centers and Partners

The Delany Center for Educational Enrichment now carries the name of its founder, Sr. M. St. John Delany, PhD. In 1972, Sr. St. John opened the Center White Plains, New York, to address the needs of children who were struggling academically. She says, “I want the Center to go on forever because the need for individualized academic support for our children continues to grow, as does the burden on our parents and teachers.”

For more than 43 years, the Delany Center for Educational Enrichment has focused on providing all types of learners with support in education and, specifically literacy. Now, by broadening the scope to include educational enrichment, the Center will be able to provide 21st century services to students of all ages within a changing educational climate and technological landscape.

In collaboration with Pace University and with the assistance of New York City Department of Education and New Visions for Public Schools grants, Pace High School was founded in 2004 with a platform that stresses community, social justice, and the importance of being college-bound. The grassroots organizational tactics of current principal Yvette Sy and Assistant Professor Art Maloney, EdD, who was the then-chair of the department of the Pace School of Education in New York City, allowed the founders to really focus on building a successful school culture. During its inception year, Pace High School received more applications then they could have imagined and today it continues to be ranked as one of the top high schools in NYC.

An integral member of the Pace High School community is Vice Principal and SOE graduate Michael Sowiski'97. Along with newly appointed Principal Eric Glatz, Sowiski will be continuing the work that Yvette Sy and the founding members of Pace High School began more than 10 years ago.

The Center for Urban Education (CUE) consists of Upward Bound, which is a federally funded program, and Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) and Teacher Opportunity Corps (TOC), which are state funded programs. Regardless of the origin of the funding, these three programs work towards the common goal of providing support for students who do not have many of the advantages that most college bound students take for granted. A majority of CUE students are from ethnic or cultural minorities and aspire to be the first generation that is college bound.

Through projects that build confidence, integrity, and help outline the work that is required to form strategies about how to live your life in the most successful way, the CUE programs give students the ability to take charge of themselves and their realities.

On April 30, 2015, in honor of her dedication to the field of education, this date also marked the ceremonial renaming of the Center for Literacy to the Delany Center for Educational Enrichment. Additionally, St. John was inducted into the Westchester Hall of Fame and received the Ethics and Community Service Award from the Rotary Club of White Plains.

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NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina ’88 is strongly present and the urgency of her work is evident in her passion and articulate way of discussing education. When asked about her Pace experience, Farina will say that at Pace she “majored in David Bickimer.” The late SOE professor’s combination of inspiration and curiosity was infectious to Farina and to other students and colleagues alike. Because of his teaching style and his theories on teaching leadership outside of the box, she took as many courses with him as she could. “It was the first time I had a professor that I had access to outside of the classroom. He was never too busy and I admired that.”

Reassessing the value structure of the teaching profession is important to Farina. She notes, “I always wanted to be a teacher. Being able to say that I was a teacher was a big deal for my family. They were really proud.” While raising the bar on education and teacher training is widely discussed in the media, the cultural shift required to change common misconceptions of the teaching profession is also imperative. “Ensuring our students view teaching and education as a desirable profession is critical,” Farina says.

The need to take teacher training to a higher level is necessary because raising the level of teaching to meet the needs of a changing world is vital. Farina says “Theory is great, but practice is also critical.” She stresses that getting teachers out into the field as early as possible and expanding content knowledge, in science and math in particular, is a necessary part of how the goal of raising the bar will be met. Farina articulates the importance and urgency of meeting these goals clearly and simply, “We don’t have time.”

Farimah Schuerman ’82

Going to study education at Pace just seemed to make sense to Farimah Schuerman, who graduated from the SOE with a BS in Elementary Education in 1982. At a time when the field of educational technology was in its nascent stages, she learned through experience how to merge her background in teaching with her understanding of technology and marketing.

Schuerman credits the Pace program for providing her with a foundational understanding of the process involved with teacher education and “insight to the policies and where the power lies for change.” With this in mind, Schuerman suggests that students “read and stay current in what is really happening in the field. Schools and employers are looking for hires that are flexible.” Additionally, she says that if you are “skilled, prepared, and able to travel” you will open yourself up to a world of opportunity in the job market. “The jobs are there, they just might not be in your backyard.”

Jessica Harris ’13

Jessica Harris ’13 truly has a passion for education. Recently accepted into the US Department of State’s English Language Fellows Program, she will find herself a long way from her native New York this fall—teaching English to university students majoring in the sciences in Cameroon, West Africa.

Her interest in global education was cultivated as a New York City Teaching Fellow at Pace’s SOE, where she was able to hone her skills in the classroom and gain insight into what it takes to teach science to students who are not native speakers of English. While at Pace, she worked closely with SOE professor Lauren Birney, EdD, through the STEM fellows program while she obtained her MST in General Science/Biology, Grades 7–12.

According to Harris, one of the most positive things to come out of her experience at Pace has been the networking within the SOE. She says that in her interactions with her Pace professors they were “always about the community and valued me as an educator. I felt I was treated as a professional and that the work I was doing was important.” At Pace, she found a learning community that “helped me step out, take risks, challenge myself and push my thinking.”
In Memoriam

David Bickimer

David Bickimer was a beloved professor specializing in Educational Leadership at the SOE who passed away in 1995. In his namesake, Dyson awards the David A. Bickimer-Promise of Learning/Academy of American Poets Prize. In 1994, The Waterways Project's Volumes and Volumes of Poetry Project merged with the late Professor Bickimer’s Pace Promise of Learning Awards.

Ruth Ferguson

Ruth Ferguson passed away in 2014. Ferguson was the third faculty member hired at the School of Education, where she taught on the New York City Campus for more than 30 years before retiring to The Villages in Sumter County, Florida.

John Di Natale

Students, faculty, staff, and members of the Pace Community gathered together on May 15, 2015, for a tree dedication in memory of John Di Natale who passed away in June 2014. Di Natale served as the director of Student Support Services at the SOE and was a beloved member of the Pace Community.

Ainsley Adams

The Pace Community mourned the loss of Professor Ainsley Adams, who passed away in his native Trinidad on July 11, 2015. Adams taught in the public school system for 34 years before joining the faculty at Pace, where he inspired the next generation of teachers to do great things.

New Faculty and Staff

- Lindsay Constantino, manager, Grants and Graduate Assistants
- Elaine D’Allura, interim director of School Partnerships
- Tasha Darbes, assistant professor in TESOL and Program Coordinator
- Frank Deluca, edTPA Coordinator
- Jeanne DeFalco, clinical faculty, Pleasantville Campus
- Damaris Sanchez, assistant director of Student Support Service, New York City Campus
- Elizabeth Ann Smith, clinical faculty, New York City Campus
- Craig Thompson, staff associate, New York City Campus

For more information about this year’s 50th anniversary celebration, visit www.pace.edu/SOE.
Shaping the future of education and the teachers of tomorrow.

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