

LEARNING TO LEAD: DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

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Judith Bennett

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- Dr. John Gleason, Director of the Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Learning



Rivier's first doctoral graduate, Audrey Green Rogers, is hooded by Sister Paula Marie Buley, IHM, President and mentor and program director Dr. John Gleason.

Four years ago, Rivier introduced the first Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Learning in the state of New Hampshire. A program based on the model of transformational leadership, it was designed to develop future leaders who can find new ways to create a shared process of change and policy.

The concept was new but it was a success from the very start. With more than 60 students currently in the four year program, the first doctoral graduate, Audrey Green Rogers, earned her degree this spring. “It’s an honor to be the first of many to graduate in the doctoral program,” says Green. “The past few years I have been able to pursue my professional interests and connect that to research and ultimately my dissertation. I’m grateful for the mentorship of the faculty, in particular the director John Gleason. I’ll be watching with great anticipation as the other cohort members complete the program.”

“The program leadership examined many different approaches for this doctoral program before selecting transformational leadership,” says Dr. John Gleason, Director of the Doctoral Program in

Education. “For us, it all connects because this form of leadership is deeply rooted in the original mission of Rivier.”

“Our goal is to prepare future leaders to transform the educational process through an understanding of social, cultural, economic and political influences that shape education and our organizations,” he adds. “This is in contrast to the transactional leadership that develops from position and role within a hierarchy.”

The Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Learning is designed for working professionals in many areas including public and private schools, colleges and universities, health and human services, as well as corporate development and training.

Classes are held one Saturday a month or on Thursday evenings. Most students complete their course work and examinations in three years and begin their dissertation advisement and research immediately. The program is structured so the students can continue with their current employment as they move forward with their doctorate study.

Dianne Proctor, LCMHC, CGP is a practicing psychotherapist who entered the Doctoral program in 2009. A graduate of Rivier’s undergraduate program, she earned her Master of Science from Northeastern University.

“When I started looking for a doctoral program,” she says, “I looked at other places but decided that they were all taking me in the same psychology direction. This program includes the field of psychology but broadens it into education. I am now teaching graduate students about group therapy and I love it.”

“I loved my undergraduate experience at Rivier, the professors were so supportive and so willing to help that it pushed me right back here for this doctorate.”

The Doctorate Program is based on a system of cohorts where students take a prescribed set of courses together as a group, forming a learning community of their own. In this way they can benefit from collaborative learning with other professionals in different fields.

The cohort model was a large part of the reason that Lisa Dias joined the program in 2010. The principal of World Schools in Nashua, she is a Canada native who first arrived in the USA through a soccer scholarship at the University of New Hampshire.

Dias went on to earn her Master in Education at Plymouth State University, but also took some master level classes at Rivier. The Doctorate Program was attractive to me because it was designed for a working professional with a family and the focus was on not just education, but leadership and research as well.”

“I found the cohort model very intriguing. In my cohort everyone has such different backgrounds—there are different ages, different cultures and we are learning so much from each other.”

Dias points to the focus on leadership to explain the value the program has already had for her. “As leaders we are learning how to guide change—no one is telling us what to do, we are using research. This brings great value to decision making.”

“In my case, we are building a new middle school at World Schools and through this program I am looking at the importance of creating a positive learning environment which focuses on more than just curriculum,” she says. “We want to shape an environment for each child to learn by developing classrooms where children can engage different learning styles that take into account gender, right and left brain, and all kinds of things. This program has already helped me bring value to this decision making.”

Linda Shaw is the Executive Director of the Revere Housing Authority in Revere, Mass. She manages a staff of 37 including administration, finances and maintenance workers to care for her 899 units of citywide affordable housing. She also manages 740 vouchers.

“It’s kind of like a small city,” she explains, “and I am the manager.”

Shaw credits the full range of faculty personalities as part of the reason for her interest in the program. “I chose Rivier because the program fit with the life I am living now. I work full time and the classes are on Saturdays–this is a big benefit.

“The program made allowances for the three of us who came from business backgrounds,” she says. “For the first assignment we did a study of my business instead of a school. We looked at changes that might need to be made in the Authority. It went so well that I was able to incorporate some of the changes already. They could have done a school study first, but they picked a business. I was very impressed.”

Shaw is already collecting resources and getting electives approved for her dissertation. The process she adds is representative of the whole program. “Everybody has been every accessible and helpful. They all encourage you to do well and to succeed.”

The learning process includes a lot of student-faculty dialogue that allows everyone to share ideas and perspectives, each from their own personal experiences.

“I find that most of our students are here on a personal quest,” says Gleason. “They are curious about how to affect change in their fields and what part research can play in doing things differently. These students will develop new models based on their own dissertation research and go about affecting change in their organizations and our communities.”■