

GOOD POLICY

(From: *Rivier Today*, Spring 2008)

In May 2008, Rivier will welcome some special candidates to campus—the first students in the College’s new doctorate of education program.



“It seems particularly appropriate that we’re launching our first doctoral degree during the 75th year of the College,” says Dr. Charles Mitsakos, Divisional Chair of Education. Rivier has offered degrees in education throughout its history, so the Ed.D. was a logical choice for the College’s first doctoral program. One of the first graduate degrees the College awarded was the master’s of education; Sr. Mary Jane Benoit, p.m. earned Rivier’s first M.Ed. in 1956. In 1997, Rivier awarded its first certificates of advanced graduate study—again, in education.

“We are delighted that Rivier College has this opportunity to expand our services to the educational community,” said Rivier President Dr. William Farrell. A Ph.D. in education typically focuses more on research and theory, while the Ed.D. is designed for practitioners and policy-makers in the field, he said.

Rivier’s Ed.D. requires 48 semester hours beyond the master’s degree. It has been designed as a cohort program, with up to three years of coursework followed by dissertation research on issues of pressing importance to educators, learners and their communities. Courses will focus on leadership, organizational development, research skills, data-driven decision making, best practices in professional preparation and development, assessment methods, and educational policy analysis. Students will also have the opportunity to focus on a specialized area of interest.

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Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Vice President for Academic Affairs Sr. Therese Larochelle, p.m. says, “In addition to our solid reputation in education and our faculty, changes in technology have played an important part in our ability to offer a quality doctorate at this time. Our strong library holdings are enhanced with many journals and scholarly publications available online, so that Rivier can offer students access to almost any sort of data or research materials that they may need. Also, our faculty will employ effective online instructional practices to complement face-to-face instruction in the program’s hybrid courses.”

Other factors also contributed to the College’s decision to introduce an Ed.D. The No Child Left Behind Act and other recent state and federal legislation have had profound impacts on education at the local, state, and national levels. A number of factors have compelled educational leaders and policy

makers to reconceive educational systems. These factors include the emergence of a global economy that has reduced the number of high-skill, high-wage jobs and an increasingly diverse student population. In addition, educational organizations have been called on to produce graduates with an unprecedented capacity for personal economic opportunity and societal economic well-being. The need for educational policy grounded in the best available research about educational practices has never been greater.

Dr. Farrell has said that Rivier's Ed.D. program will prepare students for applied action in the field—graduates will be able to develop educational policies at the organizational, local, state and national levels that foster replicating and scaling up those educational practices that their own and others' research finds are especially effective.

“In developing the program, we knew we wanted to balance leadership and learning,” says Dr. Mitsakos. “Students will explore the challenges schools face dealing with people from different cultures and with different needs, as well as the challenges that learning technology brings to the table.”

According to Dr. Mitsakos, in addition to the traditional audience of elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and superintendents, Rivier's program will help people in corporate training, in higher education, and in policy fields who need doctorates to advance professionally. He said that the new program will provide all three groups an opportunity to come together to enhance their knowledge and skills in leading and developing educational policy. Perhaps most importantly, students will be encouraged and assisted to design dissertation research studies that give them the ability to speak with authority about educational issues of deepest personal concern.

The Ed.D. won't just bring together students from different fields—it draws on the strength of faculty from different divisions at the College as well. “It's great to see that we've gotten support and assistance from other departments,” said Dr. Mitsakos. Faculty from other departments have contributed expertise on statistics, brain based research on how people learn, and student assessment in developing the doctoral program; some will teach in the program and serve as dissertation advisors.

“People have expressed interest in a doctoral program here in the past,” says Dr. Mitsakos. “We've developed a good reputation and people respect what we're doing.”

For more information about the Ed.D. program, visit www.rivier.edu/edd. Learn about admissions requirements and the curriculum, request a brochure, and more. ■