

# T N E

Spring  
2008  
Bulletin

## The Teachers for a New Era Project The University of Connecticut

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### A message from the Director...

Welcome to the Spring 2008 edition of the TNE Bulletin as we look back on five years of TNE and look forward to the next five years of TNE, and beyond.

As we look back at the last five years we have accomplished a great deal; too much to be listed here, but to highlight several of the TNE accomplishments:

- In December of 2007 the UConn Senate unanimously passed a motion to enable Neag School of Education students to obtain a 2<sup>nd</sup> bachelor's degree. This motion allows Neag students to double count their coursework for both degrees (See the article in this issue for more details).
- The establishment of a diversity studies minor, with the first group of students enrolled in courses this spring.
- Refining a culture of evidence at UConn for program enhancement and decision making.
- The establishment of a partnership among 9 school districts and the Connecticut State Department of Education to build a state-wide database linking teacher demographics and pupil achievement – a project called *Educational Expansions*.
- Systematic linkages between the Neag School of Education and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources and Fine Arts in the preparation of teachers.
- The systematic development of a program of induction for new teachers.

There are many more accomplishments that are just as important but these are some examples.

Just as important are the tasks that lie before us as we enter the next five years of TNE. We will continue to move forward guided by the three TNE design principles as we prepare the best possible teachers for the students in today's and tomorrow's classrooms.

Please take a few moments to read through this newsletter about some of our projects and people, visit our website for information about TNE and subscribe to the TNE podcasts of teachers, educators and researchers



*Scott W. Brown*

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2008 TNE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS!

### Ms. Ashley Gore

The Herbert and Sarah Gibor Charitable Foundation Scholarship  
*History Education*

### Ms. Nicole Smith

Lodewick TNE Alumni Scholarship Fund  
*Elementary English*

### Ms. Kathleen Pittman

The Arminio Effron Scholarship Fund  
*Secondary English/English*

### Ms. Jill Adelson

Friends & Colleagues of Francis X. Archambault, Jr. Fellowship  
*Educational Psychology*

### Ms. Anne Ewert

The Grace Yeagle Scholarship in Math and Science  
*Ecology & Evolutionary Biology*

“A great education begins with great teachers.”  
- Vartan Gregorian



## THE NEAG SCHOOL IS A LEADER IN TEACHER RETENTION RATES FOR ITS GRADUATES IN CONNECTICUT

Katherine Picho, TNE Research Assistant

In 2003, the Neag School of Education received national recognition for producing high quality teachers who stayed in the field much longer than many of their colleagues in the United States. In its report, *No Dream Denied*, the National Commission for Teaching and America's Future, a nonpartisan group of the country's leaders in education, government, and business, credited the high retention rate to the Neag School's five-year Integrated Bachelor's/Master's program.

Fast forward to five years later, the Neag School still leads other schools of education when it comes to churning professionals who stay in the field longer. It has successfully managed to retain its position as the school whose graduates have some of the highest retention rates in the country. Results released early this year from a study conducted by TNE shows that the retention rate of NEAG teachers in Connecticut over a ten year period is 76.7%, on average 18% greater than the retention rate of non-Neag graduates (58.61%) in Connecticut.

### A CONVERSATION WITH DR. JULIET LEE

Lwendo Moonzwe, TNE Research Assistant

*Dr. Juliet Lee is an Associate Professor in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology. She received her Ph.D. in Developmental Biology from the University of London in the U.K. She received a post-doctoral fellowship from the European Space Agency and spent a year and a half at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology to study the effects of gravity on immune function. She continued her post-doctoral studies in cell motility with Dr. Ken Jacobson at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she remained until joining the faculty of Molecular and Cell Biology at UConn in 1998. Her current research is focused on the biomechanics of cell movement and involves live cell imaging in combination with various biophysical and cell biological techniques. As a TNE Fellow Dr. Lee works with the Curriculum Design Committee to enhance the science preparation of prospective teachers. Dr. Lee's TNE Fellowship is funded by the Blue Skye Foundation.*

We spoke with Dr. Lee about teaching and science.

#### 1. What are you currently doing to address the topic of teaching in science education?

"I am part of the curriculum design committee and most recently they assigned me the task of developing and individualized major, specifically for student teachers that want science in elementary schools. This is because there is a shortage of teachers at that level who are comfortable with teaching the sciences. I am also involved in administering surveys to juniors and seniors here at UConn, the purpose of the survey was to get an idea of how many biology students are considering a career in teaching. I plan on administering another one of these at the end of this semester."

#### 2. What is some advice that you can give to current teachers in the sciences or those that are interested in teaching science? What can be done to make kids more excited about learning about science?

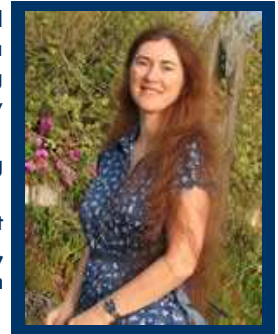
"I think teachers really have to do more to engage their students and design classes that are more hands-on or that have a more practical application. I think one of the more useful ways of teaching is the case method way of teaching, where you present information in such a way that the students think they are discovering things on their own. Often having students work in groups also encourages them to have to talk about the subject more."

#### 3. What are some ways that we can change the way we are teaching science to better suit students?

"I think it would start with the preparation of the student teacher. I think we must improve the way new teachers are trained; both in their depth of knowledge about the subject they want to specialize in, and in how to present that information. I think that science courses should be offered throughout the student's career, especially at the high school level, where a student might only take one or two science classes. The way science is taught should be changed from the traditional lecture style of class that involves a lot of memorization, to a more "hands-on" method where the teacher relates subject material to everyday problems or concerns. I think that if the subject is made to be too abstract, the student can't relate to it very well and then won't really care as much as when they can associate what they are learning to something like global warming, for example."

#### 4. What would your message be for principles, administrators, and parents; what role can they play?

"I think that administrators and principles should be willing to make changes in the science curriculum. I think that parents need to be made very aware of how important science education is for their children, no matter whether they think their child is destined for a career in science. It is important for children of all levels to be well educated in science and mathematics especially because we live in such a technological society. Parents should understand that it would give their son or daughter a competitive edge if they are well rounded in the sciences."



For further information about Dr. Lee's work with TNE or her research, please visit the TNE website at [www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu).



### ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTION:

Dr. Mary Yakimowski, Director of Assessment for the Neag School of Education and TNE Assessment Committee Chair was recently elected to Board of Directors for the National Association of Test Directors. This is a great honor for Dr. Yakimowski. Dr. Yakimowski has previously served as the President of the Association.

*Congratulations Dr. Yakimowski, your work is an inspiration!*

## NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND....HOW FAR ALONG HAVE WE COME?

Katherine Picho, TNE Research Assistant

On Wednesday, March 19, 2008, the Neag School of Education and TNE co-hosted a state wide conference, *No Child Left Behind: Positives, Obstacles and Solutions*, attended by some of the most highly esteemed National and State experts like Dr. Zollie Stevenson, acting Director of the Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA), US Department of Education.

The diverse and expert representation of various aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) sparked interesting debate on the impact of the NCLB Act on student achievement trends the progress Connecticut has made so far with regard to improving both student achievement and measurement and evaluation procedures to assess student progress.

So, exactly how far along have we come as a state? Is Connecticut improving? That depends on who you ask, and from which angle you look at it. Connecticut is not improving with regards to student achievement. At least not according to Dr. Rolf Blank, Council of Chief State School Officers, who pointed out that the student achievement trends in Connecticut, like Massachusetts, had remained relatively constant since 2003. He made note of the fact that despite this finding, even worse was the fact that Connecticut had not seen any significant gains in terms of closing the achievement gap for low income students.

However, the state has taken major steps to ensure its compliance to the regulations of the NCLB Act by improving accountability procedures. A great part of this process has seen educators and administrators working together towards operationalizing the concept of academic growth. Connecticut has since developed a growth index to monitor levels of growth in

student achievement, something the state did not have prior to NCLB. Gilbert Andrada, Education Consultant for the Connecticut State Department of Education, discussed the remarkable progress the state has made in this area, including the use of a student identifier (SASID) to track student progress. Other steps

made in this direction include the initiation of new science tests in grades 5 and 8 and the use of vertical scales to analyze student growth data. The vertical scales procedure presently spans all grades and content, and measures growth toward achieving proficiency in three years. It should be noted though, that growth calculations are only representative to 4-7 graders.

While the progress in student growth has been somewhat stagnant, the NCLB Act has had positive outcomes; an increase in the focus on special groups of students like English language learners, Special education students, as well as students from low income and other ethnic groups. The act has also spawned an increase in professional development resources available to school districts and a great improvement in accuracy of school district data. Importantly, with an emphasis placed on monitoring growth and achievement levels, the NCLB has sparked a renewed interest in new methods to analyze



Dr. Rolf Blank, Dean Richard Schwab, Dr. Sue Rigney, Dr. Zollie Stevenson, and Mr. Gene Wilhoit.

## SPOTLIGHT ON A FUTURE EDUCATOR: Allison Laturnau—TNE Graduate Assistant

Katherine Picho, TNE Research Assistant

After years of lobbying, the TNE committee successfully managed to get the dual degree program approved by the University Senate late last year. This program, which is done in conjunction with the Neag School of Education and other colleges and on the UCONN campus, gives students the opportunity to earn both an education degree and another degree in a specific discipline. For the most part students elect a degree in the areas which they will ultimately focus on teaching when they graduate. This degree will enable double degree students to have a deeper understanding of a content area because they will be taking additional higher level courses in the major.

Dr. Mark Boyer, who has been involved in the process of implementing the dual degree from the start, is optimistic about what it will do for students. "We expect that dual degree students will over the long term do better as teachers, given their stronger context knowledge. They should also have greater opportunities for advancement and salary within their profession as a result of the stronger credentials."

Dean Richard Schwab of the Neag School of Education states, "The dual degree program is a very important addition to the Neag School because our program is built around a strong belief that a major area of academic study in the Liberal Arts and Sciences is an important foundation for successful teachers. Some of the strongest programs at the national level are built on a foundation of strong collaboration between Schools of

Education and academic content areas in Liberal Arts; I believe this is the trend that will continue in the future."

Allison Laturnau (left), one of the graduate assistants at TNE, is among the first students to join the program, pursuing degrees in education and English.

### 1) Why did you choose to pursue a dual degree?

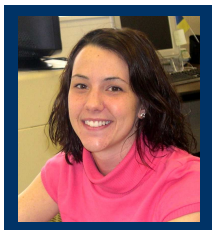
"I chose to pursue the dual degree because some schools prefer specialization in a content area over a degree in education; the dual degree allows me to have both as a highly-qualified teacher. For some students having a degree in a field other than education keeps doors open for other careers in the future."

### 2) What's the best part about being in the program/benefits?

"NEAG's IB/M program is nationally recognized as a program that prepares teachers academically as well as through experience for their own classrooms. This gives NEAG applicants an edge in the application process. The dual-degree is another accomplishment that could make one candidate more appealing than another."

### 3) What are the requirements for the dual degree and in your opinion, how rigorous is it?

"The requirements for the dual degree are different for each department, but generally speaking the requirements of both NEAG and CLAS need to be fulfilled. For me, this meant taking a math winter intersession class to fulfill the third "Q" class requirement that CLAS has, but NEAG does not. Students completing the dual-degree who have already been accepted into NEAG or who are currently enrolled in the program might find it a little more difficult to schedule missing requirements because of the rigorous coursework of NEAG. The earlier students start to pursue the dual-degree the better."



## The 6th Annual GlobalEd Project Face to Face Event



Over 175 Middle School students from across New England gathered for simulated international negotiations on April 7th.



Congratulations to the faculty, students, staff and administration of the Neag School of Education for your recent ranking of #21 nationally as a graduate school of education by *US News and World Report*! These rankings are based on opinion data from program directors, senior faculty, school superintendents and deans in combination with statistical information provided by each of the schools of education.

This is a great achievement and TNE is proud to be a part of this nationally recognized educational program.

For up-to-date news and information about TNE, please visit: [www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu)



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**The University of Connecticut**

**Teachers for a New Era Project**

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