Note from the Director

DR. JENNIFER FISLER

This is my first newsletter as the Director of the Graduate Program in Education, and there is much to share. As always, our students and faculty are engaged with coursework and the challenge of using what we are learning to make meaningful changes in our practice. We have eight students completing capstone projects and theses this spring with topics ranging from class size for student with learning disabilities to supporting English learners in Family and Consumer Science to identifying and meeting the literacy needs of refugee populations. Our faculty are also busy with scholarship and dissemination—Jan Dormer spent much of the month of February teaching and leading workshops in Nigeria and Kenya, Maude Yacapsin is coordinating an educational technology conference on campus, and I’m headed to Toronto in April to present my research on co-teaching in the student teaching semester.

The opportunity and imperative to continue to learn and adapt to new ideas and circumstances is one of the most challenging and positive aspects of working in the field of education. I trust that we are all pushing ourselves to think critically about our scholarship and coursework and the implications for our educational contexts in an effort to become more effective practitioners, more respected collaborators, and more courageous leaders.

Warmly,
Jennifer Fisler

Community-based ESL Gathering

JAN DORMER

On Saturday, Jan. 26, the Graduate Program in Education hosted a gathering for those involved in Church-based ESL. Held at the Winding Hill campus, over 50 participants gathered to connect and learn. Many churches and several different programs were represented. Dr. Jan Dormer provided sessions on second language acquisition and English ministry, with ample discussion time for reflecting together on effectiveness and mission. All indicated that they would appreciate more such gatherings, and our program is looking at how we can continue to serve churches that are stepping into the gap to meet the needs of the immigrants in our communities.
WHAT'S NEW IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATION?

Online Instruction
ROCKY ALLINGER & BONNIE SYPOLT

This is our first year offering the Online Instruction PDE Endorsement. We had our first class in the fall and have our second finishing up this early spring session. The online teaching classroom provides an opportunity for students to have experience with everything involving online instruction, both asynchronously and synchronously. The course requires students to address the four pillars of online instruction: technology resources, instructional strategies, communication with families and students, and building relationships with students. Students focus on all components of online instruction, including curriculum, learning management systems, and live classroom lessons. In addition to learning theories and principles about best practices in online instruction, students work alongside teachers in a virtual school for their field experience. The final assignment has students teaching online synchronously with students from an online school. This course is a great example of learning practice, collaboration, and leadership—the three foundations of our program.

TLC
JAN DORMER

Our first cohort in the new “Teaching Language and Content” program, affectionately called our “TLC” program, has gotten off to a great start this year! Ryan, an elementary school math teacher, said “I find I am being much more reflective on how I can use simple, repetitive sentence structures to convey information in order to better meet the needs of English learners. I have included more opportunities for students to write, which is helping students make connections to vocabulary.” And Miley, a 4th grade language arts teacher, shares “Based on my newfound knowledge from this course, I am getting more comfortable in sharing with my colleagues what I see working for my ELs. What research states is best and effective, and how we can all work together as a district team to set our ELs up for success.” Dr. Jan Dormer adds, “English learners spend the majority of their day in regular classrooms, and the teachers in these regular classrooms, teachers like Ryan and Miley, must be equipped with strong skills to further their content and language learning. This program helps to achieve that goal!”

WHO'S NEW IN THE DEPARTMENT?

In addition to 69 enrolled students, we’ve welcomed several new faculty and staff to our community this year. Most of you have met (mostly via email or phone) our Administrative Assistant, Rebecca Yohe. Rebecca handles much of the behind the scenes work that gets students admitted, registered, and progressing to meet their academic goals. We also have a new work study student, Gretchen Clemens. Gretchen is building our social media presence and supporting the work of managing information and files.

Additionally, we have added several new faculty and instructors/ supervisors for our capstone and internship courses this year.

Rocky Allinger is an instructional designer at Messiah College. She taught Issues and Ethics in Online Teaching this fall.

Bonnie Sypolt is Principal at Commonwealth Connections Academy. She taught Online Teaching and Learning this spring.

Deb Wickwire is supervising a special education internship. She has extensive experience as a teacher, Special Education Supervisor, Instructional Advisor, and Professional Development Specialist.

Steve Kirkpatrick is an Assistant Superintendent in the Cumberland Valley School District. Steve is teaching Educational Leadership this spring.

Jeanne Temple is supervising a Capstone Project. She has extensive experience as a teacher of special education, Supervisor of special education, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Assistance Superintendent.

Milton Gaither is professor of Education in Messiah’s undergraduate department of Education. He is supervising the Curriculum and Instruction Capstone Project.

Tina Keller is supervising TESOL Capstone Projects. She is associate professor of TESOL in Messiah’s undergraduate department of Education.