

Higher Education and Nonprofit Community Collaboration: Innovative Teaching and Learning for Graduate Student Education

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Current graduate student models of education reflect both traditional and contemporary pedagogical strategies. For professional degree programs centered on leadership and human services providing traditional instruction combined with experience-based and real-world learning is necessary. This paper shares a brief overview of graduate education pedagogy and a more in-depth description and review of a graduate course at a mid-sized private urban university. The course, Institutional Planning and Evaluation, marks a stark difference from most graduate courses: emphasizing practice-based learning and front-loading the materials so students can serve as consultants for a local nonprofit agency. The intentional design, based on accomplishing specific learning outcomes, was a positive learning experience for all constituents and is applicable to other graduate courses and programs.

As we consider student learning outcomes each semester, we naturally return to the core purpose of what we do as instructors of graduate student education. Stakeholders from all areas of higher education seek greater clarity for how to maximize student learning. Graduate instructors rely upon best practices from empirical studies while at the same time make efforts to respond to issues at their local contexts. Students possess access to an array of resources and information unrivaled now through the Internet and other sources. Family and community members share in their stake to have productive citizens and a skilled workforce. What instructional techniques add value to the educational process at the graduate level? Which ones now detract from it? These questions are both simple yet complex, and frame contemporary efforts to advance our collective knowledge base.

Connecting the web of varied stakeholder interests is a contemporary paradigm shift for educator production of data and practices that reflect theoretical and practical learning outcomes. Society members demand both more accountability from higher education and more applicability to real life problems. This is a driving perspective for these instructional endeavors, and many other studies and behaviors.

In examining various models on student learning, recent research models on student learning espouse the value of experiential learning for millennial generation students who now enter graduate education (Fisher & Finkelstein, 1999; Harrison, 2008; Lamb, Swinth, Vinton, & Lee, 1998; Osborn Daninhirsch, & Page, 2003). Representative examples are project-based learning and management (Barron et al., 1998; Knoll, 1997; Lehmann, Christensen, & Throne, 2008; Ojeda & Sahai, 2003) and jigsaw teams (Kouzes & Posner, 2004). Experiential learning becomes even more valuable when students work with the community solving real-life problems (Billet, 2009). Traditional models and methods of teaching and learning in higher

education include the lecture method, discussion method and laboratory instruction and demonstration. Although valuable, these methods are insufficient in preparing adult learners in graduate professional degree programs for their future professions.

In Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle reflective observation and abstract analytic knowing seem to be in line with traditional scholarship and learning. Reflective observation focuses on the ability to understand the meaning of ideas (Kolb, 1984). Abstract conceptualization involves developing theories to assist in finding solutions (Kolb, 1984). Traditional teaching methods anchor these types of learning (Kolb, 1984). For example, instructors expose students to leadership theories through analyzing case studies and reflective writing assignments. These foundational building blocks of knowledge help define our future leaders.

Graduate students preparing for leadership roles in professions such as human services administration, professional counseling, and higher education need real-world opportunities to apply theoretical learning into actual practice to be fully prepared to assume professional positions (Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004; Fisher & Finkelstein, 1999; Gronski & Pigg, 2000; Nandan & Scott, 2011; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). To achieve and integrate this theory to practice shift, the scholarship of teaching and learning proposes a shift from traditional teaching and learning to pedagogy that focuses on Kolb's dimensions of active practice and concrete connected knowing (Rice, 1996).

Teaching for active practice and concrete connected knowing involves a change of viewing teaching as a technique to "an enactment, rather, of our understanding of our disciplinary, interdisciplinary or professional field" (Shulman, 1999). Collaborating with a community organization provides the opportunity for graduate students and faculty to immerse in learning aspects of their

professional field through active practice and connected knowing. Billet (2009) proposed that the types of conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge necessary for effective and strategic job performance can be optimally learned through “authentic experiences in practice settings” (p. 829).

The teaching and learning method developed by one of the authors provides an experience that students might be involved in their work as leaders of a nonprofit agency (Dominato, 2009). Students are immersed in the operations and functions of a nonprofit agency. One intentional learning outcome was enabling students to use their critical analysis of the literature and previous learning to collaborate with professionals in an authentic work experience. The graduate course, titled Institutional Planning and Evaluation, acted as the tool for learning outcomes in strategic planning and program evaluation. Students read three texts and several articles exploring the steps of how to develop a strategic plan for a nonprofit organization, understanding the foundational differences between nonprofit and for profit organizations, and appreciating the importance of effective leadership in order to complete a useful plan or evaluation. We next review the relevant literature on graduate student pedagogy that incorporates the use of the community engagement practice, and then describe more particulars of the partnership and course design.

Literature Review

Although much of the limited research on graduate student pedagogy focuses on assisting graduate teaching assistants in developing their teaching skills, there are examples of teaching methods, usually called service learning, used by instructors of graduate students that attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice to enhance student’s learning of their profession (Burnett et al., 2004; Nandan & Scott, 2011; Ziff & Beamish, 2004). Billet (2009) provided a useful compilation of curricular and pedagogical behaviors that are necessary before, during and after engagement in “practice-based learning experiences” that ensure the learning success of the experience. For example, prior to the practice experience, Billet (2009) suggested engaging in activities such as establishing bases for experiences in practice settings, clarifying expectations about purposes, responsibilities for both students and professional partners, and developing the procedural capacities required for professional practice. Helpful practice during the experience included direct guidance by experienced practitioners, sequencing and combinations of activities, and active engagement in meaningful work activities or interactions. The processing of learning from practice-based experiences after completion of the project should include

facilitating sharing of experiences, making explicit links between what is taught in class and what is experienced in practice settings, and generating critical perspectives on work and learning processes of students (Billet, 2009). Billet’s (2009) suggestions provided a model for effectively integrating learning from the classroom to practice.

Scholars and instructors share comparable experiences about utilizing experiential, practical instructional techniques. Quinn (2006) examined her first experience with graduate students and service learning, a teaching method involving practice-based experience. She provided a summary and timeline of the service-learning experience listing some of the ingredients necessary for any practice-based learning. The first she called *community building* which involved building relationships among class members, identifying issues in the profession and identifying a community partner (Quinn, 2006). The rest of the timeline includes the processes of integrating learning by discussing theory and research, identifying community partner needs, analyzing needs and determining the focus of the collaboration project (Quinn, 2006). Similarly, Osborn et al. (2003) employed the Kolb model and noted that “this structuring assists in the intentional and systematic organization and implementation of experiential training activities (Cummings, 1992) in an effort to ensure that students obtain maximal benefit from such experiences” (p. 23). These careful, intentional strategies also allow for instructors to better examine more specific components such as student group work and peer feedback processes.

Working collaboratively involved creating the project and the last process called *culmination* is a self-evaluation of the service learning process (Quinn, 2006). Quinn (2006) listed relevant issues for others thinking about engaging in service learning, including “time restraints, planning, establishing relationships with a community partner, confronting difficult or uncomfortable issues and the importance of evaluation as well as celebration” (p. 109). In a discussion of whether the extra effort was worth the outcome, Quinn states that one of the most valuable learning moments occurred in thinking through the issues through the lens of the community partner. Quinn (2006) shared that “engaging in a high quality service related to those needs, puts the course learning into immediate action based on a disposition of empathy” (p. 107).

Lu and Lambright (2010) investigated factors that influence the effectiveness of service learning projects in improving the professional skills of graduate students. They defined professional skills as interpersonal skills, problem solving ability, oral and written communication, and leadership skills. Using graduate student survey data from eight Master of

Public Administration courses that conducted a service learning project, the researchers found that students participating in service learning projects involving more in-class reflection time, more work outside the classroom, greater student influence over project progress, and greater contact with service beneficiaries reported greater development of professional skills (Lu & Lambright, 2010). One key finding, and one that is counter to the studies by Zeilstra (2003) and Gronski and Pigg (2000), suggests that students working in groups reported lower professional development than those working individually (Lu & Lambright, 2010). Upon closer examination, Lu and Lambright (2010) concluded that the difference seemed to be between those groups who developed greater cohesion and acted as a team and those that did not. Groups acting as a team scored higher on professional development of skills implying the need for team building as a prerequisite for successful learning (Lu & Lambright, 2010). Practice-based learning can be time-intensive for both students and faculty and is seen by some as an obstacle. Lu and Lambert's (2010) study, however, found that students reported greater development of professional skills when more time existed with the project. The authors concluded that "instructors who want to use service learning to improve their students' professional skills should be encouraged to find projects that involve a significant amount of meaningful work outside of the classroom" (Lu & Lambright, 2010, p. 123). This guideline remains consistent with the business disciplines as noted by Wei (2007), Coleman and Bandyopadhyay (2011), and Klink and Athaide (2004).

Model Design

During the fall semester of 2010, plans began for a graduate course in the fields of nonprofit leadership and administration. Intentional components of real world experience and key relevant literature formed the basis of the new knowledge to be shared with students (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Collins, 2005; Lencioni, 2002). Organized below by occurrence are sections of the model in order to best share details.

Pre-Course

A beginning. A fortuitous meeting between the instructor of the course, an executive director of a nonprofit agency, and a vice president at the local United Way in October 2010 set the stage for a course partnership. With both being newly appointed in August to organizations with a recent history of leader turnover, the instructor and the executive director intended to begin a strategic planning process directly. The instructor wished for an instructive and positive

site for learning and the Executive Director wanted to improve upon the current short and long term plans of the organization.

As stated previously, the instructor hoped for a mutually beneficial partnership so that students would have practical application of gained skills and knowledge. The central content of the course reflected Allison and Kaye's (2005) seven phases of nonprofit strategic planning:

1. Phase 1: Get Ready
2. Phase 2: Articulate Mission, Vision, and Values
3. Phase 3: Assess Your Situation
4. Phase 4: Agree on Priorities
5. Phase 5: Write the Strategic Plan
6. Phase 6: Implement the Strategic Plan, and
7. Phase 7: Evaluate and Monitor the Strategic Plan

The instructor considered the past year's syllabus for the course including student learning outcomes, texts, and assignments and believed that the students could best assist the organization within phases 2 and 3 (Allison & Kaye, 2005). Phases 1 and 4 require internal decisions and actions that cannot be assumed in planning a course schedule (Allison & Kaye, 2005). Phase 4 in particular is when agency leaders must agree upon priorities and the students do not have a complete understanding of the organization to truly help with these choices (Allison & Kaye, 2005). The instructor changed the syllabus and assignments to reflect focused work and learning within phases 2 and 3.

A few meetings between the instructor and the executive director to establish roles and responsibilities followed and the partnership officially commenced in January for the spring 2011 semester. During the second meeting, the instructor returned to the agency and reviewed details regarding the central text used in the course by Allison and Kaye (2005). The instructor also provided a copy of both the text and the draft syllabus to the executive director. The text offered a seven-phase model of strategic planning for nonprofit organizations with the initial phase of leaders determining that timing was appropriate to begin strategic planning. As this was already an affirmative decision from the executive director and others, conversations commenced on the second phase: reviewing and evaluating the mission, vision, and values of the agency.

The instructor and the executive director met a third time in late November to finalize initial plans for the partnership course. They agreed upon two assignments, a funding plan and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis (SWOT), which represented phases 2 and 3 and,

although other assignments existed in the course, these two represented one-third of the total course grade. Students, after initially becoming familiar with the agency, could then provide agency leaders with several internal strengths and external opportunities for funds, partnerships, and possible local, regional, or national threats.

The executive director started the second phase of strategic planning within the agency a week prior to the initial class meeting of the semester and invited the graduate students from the course to participate in a session for all staff on creating organizational values statements. Even though the session was not on the regularly scheduled course night, the instructor and five of the eight students attended and participated actively as small group facilitators.

Pedagogical concerns. Courses taught in partnership with other organizations are, at the very least, different, so how one teaches these types of courses must also be different. Ultimately, the experience of these partnerships should positively transform students, instructors, and partners alike (Mezirow, 2000). A simplistic perspective describes a course partnership as one might a research study where additional variables naturally create less certainty for actual outcomes. The instructor changed the syllabus, assignments, and weekly class materials from previous years based upon Kolb and other scholars advocating for non-traditional instructional efforts. In addition, clear expectations of reciprocity (Zeilstra, 2003) were present as partnerships begin.

The notion of reciprocity, for the benefit of all partners, is an important one for the partnering agency to consider. The partnership forced extra work and preparation for agency leaders, especially the executive director and the business manager. The executive director and agency leaders met with the students at night and prepared summary documents for their review beyond normal work expectations and established patterns. Although the instructor started the class sessions at 4:30 p.m. with the agency leaders presentations and discussions, these often lasted until 6:00 p.m. In short, there had to be additional commitment without the luxury of the students having had similar past experiences. By providing a real-life site for learning and development, agencies should have a reasonable expectation of both quality student products to aid the organization in a strategic planning process, and, at minimum, positive relationship building and word-of-mouth.

Naturally, both instructor and agency leaders felt anxiety about how the instruction could and would happen. The anxiety was not warranted. The instructor felt anxious about allowing external perspectives which might contradict the literature of best practice yet, at each stage, the information, style, and content reflected

appropriate choices. The agency leaders served as effective and efficient mentors and tutors in many ways throughout the semester, adding several new content pieces and practical examples of current strategies: sharing the current operational budget and budgeting process, participating in the values statements activity, and interacting with board of director members. Students, as will be shared in greater detail later, used this new information to compare to the course texts and other related literature in the field.

Time concerns. Possibly the greatest limiting factor was time. The semester spanned 16 weeks with time needed for introductions and basic trust building. Graduate students read approximately 750 pages of materials in the first eight weeks in order to be versed and effective in the substantive components of strategic planning. The agency had 52 employees and an operating budget spanning over two million budget dollars for staffing, programs, and services. It was simply not productive to ask students to gain in-depth knowledge of the agency and the literature on nonprofit strategic planning in less than eight weeks. The second half of the semester featured students sharing advice grounded in the nonprofit planning literature for the middle phases of a strategic plan (Allison & Kaye, 2005). Throughout, the semester differed significantly from most traditional graduate instruction and course interactions.

Leadership concerns. Literature on leadership established the foundations of leadership as being: trust, credibility, and authenticity (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Palmer, 1998). The instructor not only had to establish these for himself, but also allow time and the ability for the agency leaders to do so as well. Fortunately, the agency leaders, and most importantly the executive director, displayed professional leadership skills and quickly established that they were credible or knowledgeable and were authentic or personable and real. This partnership had the fortune of exceptional leadership.

All stakeholders must view the partnership as a positive opportunity and one that could possibly lead to benefits beyond the course. The instructor, being a new resident in the greater community understood the value of establishing self as credible. Additionally, he viewed the course and the students' impacts as one piece in the overall success in the community. In essence, it was a match to the African proverb of "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Students also had to demonstrate obvious investment and interest in having the partnership be effective for everyone. Disinterest or feigned interest would have only served to limit the efforts of the agency leaders and instructor.

During Course

Overview. Students and the instructor met five times during the 16 weeks of the 2011 spring semester.

They met on site at the agency on at least four of those weeks. Once, the business manager attended a class session on campus in order to share details of the agency budget and operating expenses.

Group work. Group work for students was an integral part of three assignments during the course and the partnership. The instructor facilitated class discussions with suggestions for how to translate what was read and what was observed and heard from the agency leaders into tangible documents related to one strategic planning model for nonprofit organizations (Allison & Kaye, 2005). Students spent classroom time deliberating on the central points for assignments and worksheets as well as deciding upon who would share specific parts and information during informal presentations with agency leaders. Additionally, as Quinn (2006) noted, students met and collaborated on the group projects outside of class time. These collegial group efforts were further enhanced by the physical surroundings at the agency's meeting room: a round table where all could be present and visually see each individual in the room.

A second partnership. In addition to the initial partnership, one also occurred between the agency and a member of the board of directors at the same agency. This board member worked with the agency leadership team translating the final guiding goals into an annual operational document near the conclusion of the graduate course. The new operational document served as the guide for how daily activities connected with the strategic planning initiatives. This document allowed leaders at the organization to better define daily job responsibilities while at the same time responding to the greater strategic initiatives. Additionally, the instructor continued to meet and offer supplementary advice throughout the usage of the operational document for the first six subsequent months.

After Course

Overall findings. Much reflection for all partners happened at the conclusion and after the partnership. As a whole, learners and stakeholders reported substantively more positive than negative statements. Certainly, issues existed. With the funding plan assignment, students duplicated some current knowledge and practices from the agency leaders. However, the partnership resulted in quite a few benefits for all and results from the separate stakeholders are expanded below.

Students. Students shared affirming responses throughout the semester. Excitement to have practical assignments outweighed lack of expertise fears. In terms of demographics, the students represented a diverse array of characteristics: two males, six females, as well as various ranges in age, ethnicity, and learning

preferences. Current professional status also ranged from full-time student to executive director. The instructor received numerous comments about how refreshingly open and transparent the agency leaders were. In addition, the leadership style and behaviors of the executive director established a warm and welcoming environment.

Formative and summative written evaluations echoed verbal and nonverbal communication. Albeit a self-report tool which may limit the impact, the final course evaluation process represented a 15-question document. The initial 10 questions used a 5-point Likert-type scale design from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and the remaining five questions provided students with open-ended response opportunities. On the several-item course evaluation instrument or tool, students scored it as a 4.49 out of a 5.0 composite score on the initial 10 questions in the Likert scale. The open-ended questions also demonstrated positive evaluations:

- “This course provided a valuable learning experience.” (4.71/5.0)
- “The faculty member was responsive to students.” (4.89/5.0)

Both highlight the value of the partnership as well as the necessary faculty commitment to student learning.

Supplemental and open-ended comments were more telling with students noting it was their favorite course at the institution with many having completed undergraduate degrees at the same university. Student comments elaborated: “The best part was the practical experience we received by working with CC. More classes need this component!”, “Love combining theory (book) with practical experience”, “Very interesting and valuable partnering with CC, very applicable to me as an individual and in life/career-wise”, and “The practical experience was awesome as well, really enjoyed partnering with a local non-profit org.”

The course evaluations were completed by the students on the final course instruction date and were done so without the presence of either instructor or agency representative. The last student to finish placed the total evaluations in an envelope and wrote her signature across the sealed envelope flap. In summary, students valued the partnership, integration of theory to practical experience and opportunity for an authentic, real work experience.

Agency leaders. Without doubt the executive director and other key leaders and members of the agency had some worries and doubts, at the very least initially, as to what and how the partnership might aid organizational planning. Even as far as asking the basic question of, “Why choose us?” There are a few public negative examples of when instructors and students fail

to recognize and to respond to the very real needs and purposes of the nonprofit partner (Dominato, 2009; Gronski & Pigg, 2000; Zeilstra, 2003). The students and instructor avoided any issues of meddling or damage to the agency and manufactured written and unwritten assistance. The course participants helped by creating evaluative assignments and statements from the lenses of current nonprofit scholars. For the organization, the benefits of the partnership surpassed the drawbacks.

Instructor. Based on several assignments, course discussions, presentations, and quizzes, the instructor believed that students achieved the defined course learning objectives as listed in the syllabus. The intended outcomes, for the most part, spanned the texts and readings due to a lack of certainty for how the partnership might actually proceed:

1. Understand and articulate planning and evaluation techniques as they pertain to nonprofit organizations.
2. Discuss the internal and external issues that impact the management of human service organizations.
3. Research and employ team-building strategies as a necessary prerequisite to strategic planning and evaluation.
4. Apply planning processes resulting in a comprehensive strategic plan.
5. Develop an evaluation mechanism that is applicable to the nonprofit sector.
6. Apply marketing principles appropriate for growth in the nonprofit sector.
7. Recognize ethical issues that affect the nonprofit sector.
8. Discuss and debate the issues that should be considered in leading organizational change.

In reality, the partnership site proved to be a powerful learning laboratory as well as expanded the learning opportunities. Discussions and assignments connected the literature and best practices with a concrete and functional work setting. Strategic planning results differ organization by organization which represents a difficult to define and complex situation. When possible, instructors allow for students to choose their paths through feedback and revision and ultimately to share their learning through more public presentations.

Instructors often hope for, but seldom list, several secondary learning outcomes in course syllabi related to student learning and dispositions. Similarly to the executive director's wishes, the instructor wanted students to develop more than a surface-level relationship with the agency. Although it was an optional night session, more than half of the students participated in a formal strategic planning session on

values statements offered at the agency site. Later, one student began volunteering Friday nights with her husband. Yet another student chose the agency for an unpaid internship location with countless other choices available to her. Finally, almost every student inquired as to the progress of the strategic plan and how their suggestions developed well after the actual course concluded. Students shared their time, talent, and treasure. This seemed to speak to real student engagement and true investment.

Conclusion

The Design Can Work

Initial results and findings indicated that the design of a partnership course can work. It was obvious that students in the course took their responsibilities seriously given that they respected the agency leaders and that they knew that their assignments had real-world, immediate, and critical value to the agency. Students realized that these skills and applications of knowledge would be necessary in their future careers. Receiving graded credit also likely had an impact. All involved in the partnership genuinely shared both an interest to help each other and a comfortable awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses.

The agency leaders maintained their ability to decide upon what options to pursue for the organization, reflective of the fourth phase of strategic planning (Allison & Kaye, 2005). They understood all factors related to their internal operations and used the students' assignments as advice and not solely as direction. Class discussions and presentations allowed agency leaders access to more details and reasoning behind submitted assignments.

Fortune and events being fortuitous is why the title of this section includes the word "can." Assuredly, an academic partnership course will not function well in all situations. Allison and Kaye (2005) noted that organizational leadership and staff members alike must first identify that they are interested in and ready to begin the strategic planning process. Without this key decision, strategic planning often becomes the 17th item on the agenda for agency leaders to accomplish and rarely receives needed attention. When not a priority for the organization's leadership, it seems logical that students will also not maintain appropriate discipline in order to assist.

Students Appreciate Experiential Learning Opportunities

For a program which emphasizes leadership nearly as much as more definable skill sets, students appreciated the experiential learning opportunities

most. Textbooks and supplemental readings established the needed background and beginnings of the discussions of practice. Conversations and activities in course sessions and one-to-one meetings among students and instructor tended to shift the learning to more local contexts so that students could attach new knowledge, skills, and dispositions to existing information and examples. Partnerships such as these offer the rare ability to tie these threads together and share a truer picture of future employment.

Extra Time and Consideration Required

Without surprise, new partnerships necessitate new communication and time on task. It was extra work. This is especially true for the instructor and the agency leaders. Three planning meetings between the instructor and the executive director preceded five with the instructor and students during the course. Agency leaders spent resources and gathered information, data, and reports for the students so that they, in turn, could provide the best possible advice. Certainly, numerous phone calls and e-mail messages also maintained contacts throughout the partnership. Consideration and response to the needs of the community agency partner must also exist (Gronski & Pigg, 2000). There is a necessary application of the reciprocal “win-win” concept.

Consider Additional Use of this Model

Efforts should take place to duplicate this model when content and other factors allow. Graduate education often represents students learning complex knowledge that is also difficult to implement in practice. A collaborative partnership model of graduate instruction offers several benefits with a few challenges such as the need of more time on task for instructors and partnering leaders. Students repeatedly displayed positive energy with practical interactions and applications of new knowledge and skills during this course. Following the conclusion of the semester, several students independently requested that other courses in their degree program match this model if possible. The instructor and one student designed one such new independent study course with this same model during the next year. In short, students enjoyed the practicality of the model and clearly demonstrated the course learning outcomes. Often, it is only one of the two parts of this equation. Finally, the nonprofit agency realized several benefits: external insights, connections to highly qualified potential employees, practical assistance, and additional volunteers and interns. This model should be explored further and results shared so as to better establish instructional choices and designs.

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- CHRIS M. LUCAS is an assistant professor in the Department of Leadership in Education, Human Services and Counseling at Bradley University. Dr. Lucas has begun his third year as a faculty member, following nine years of administrative and volunteer efforts in the fields of human services and higher education. Most recently, he was a lecturer for the Undergraduate Honors Program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Residence Manager of Briscoe Residence Center at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Dr. Lucas remains actively involved with local community nonprofit agencies. He received a bachelor's degree in English from Hanover College, a master's degree in guidance and counseling with an emphasis in student affairs from Southeast Missouri State University, and a doctoral degree in educational administration with a specialization in higher education from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- NANCY E. SHERMAN is a professor in the Department of Leadership in Education, Human Services and Counseling at Bradley University. After six years as director of the Counseling Research and Training Clinic, Dr. Sherman has assumed the role of clinical coordinator for the Human Development Counseling program. Dr. Sherman is a National Certified Counselor, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (Illinois), and an Approved Clinical Supervisor. Prior to joining the department in 1992, Dr. Sherman held positions as a professional counselor at Denison University, at The Women's Tri-County Help Center, Inc., CompDrug, Inc., and in private practice. Her APA-approved doctoral internship in psychology was completed at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine. In 2008, Dr. Sherman was awarded her second Fulbright Lecturing/Research Award to teach career counseling at the University of Oradea in Oradea, Romania, and to conduct research on the vocational identity of Romanian University students. Her first Fulbright Award was at the Higher

School of Social Work and Social Pedagogy “Attistiba” in Riga, Latvia, in 2001.

CINDY FISCHER currently serves as the Executive Director of Crittenton Centers located in Peoria, Illinois. She is the former associate superintendent for Peoria Public Schools, having served D150 as a teacher, principal, and Director of Career and Technology. She retired in 2008 following a 34-year career with the district. In her last two years as associate superintendent she had the opportunity to work with community leaders and educators researching choice schools and in specific, those focused on math, science and technology. She holds a doctoral degree from Illinois State University in educational administration. Dr.

Fischer is an active community volunteer. She has served on boards and volunteer leadership positions for Peoria NEXT, Pediatric Resource Center, Heart of Illinois United Way, Salem Lutheran Church, Illinois Coalition for Education of Children At-Risk, Easter Seals, WTVP/47, Workforce Development, and Renaissance Park Commission. Dr. Fischer is the past recipient of the Outstanding Young Educator from the Peoria Jaycees, Illinois State Board of Education Award of Excellence, National Dropout Prevention Network Truancy Prevention and Alternative Education National Award, YWCA Arts and Education Leadership Award, Paul Harris Community Service Award – Rotary Club, and 25 Women in Leadership Award.