



Developing Culturally Responsive Urban Educators: The Urban Learning Program

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CSULA Snapshot



- One of 23 campuses in CSU the system, east of downtown Los Angeles (urban school)
- 21,000 undergraduate students
- [Hispanic serving institution](#)
- Large percentage first-in-family college students/graduates
- Low income, tend to be local
- Principally Latino/a, but growing Asian population
- First language other than English
- Large percentage working students

The Teachers California Needs



- Prepared to teach students:
 - from broad cultural mix
 - who are English learners (ELs)
 - who can support a range of disabilities
 - who have critical literacy and numeracy needs
- Awareness of other cultural influences: gender, LGBTQ, religion, inter-group tensions
- Enduring shortage of math, science, special education teachers

California Teacher Preparation



- Preparation standards legislated on a state level
- Tradition preparation: post-baccalaureate
- Cannot major in professional education, must select a related field
 - Child growth/development or liberal arts
- “Integrated” preparation: folds teacher preparation into baccalaureate degree program

What Could We Do?



- What is missing? Context!
- We recognized that:
 - CSULA is an urban school
 - We are urban teachers
 - Our students are urban students
 - **They are the students they will teach one day**
- We were in a unique position to examine the context of urban teaching and learning

The Urban School in Los Angeles



- Large: elementary schools have upwards of 1000 students in grades K-5 (ages 5-11)
- Lower income: leads to reduced funding
- Diverse: both first and multi-generational immigrant families
- Multi-lingual: 120+ languages in LA
- Complex relationships among groups
- Strong community
- Urban resources

Our Goal



- Create a degree program examining context of teaching and learning with focus on:
 - Nature and needs of urban schools,
 - Relationship between school and community
- Develop culturally responsive practices
- Emphasize critical reflection
- Develop collaboration and teamwork skills
- Develop professional identity and skills

CRT: Principles and Practices



- Broadening definition of diversity
- Make instruction meaningful
- Real v. “culinary/holiday” reflections of diversity
- Awareness of “cultural capital” in the classroom
- Looking for “hidden curriculum”
- Step out of one’s own group: African-American students
- Shared responsibility: children with disabilities
- Hidden groups: LGBTQ
- Critical reflection continuously challenges their ideas and practices

Program Goals



- Prepare culturally responsive educators
- Critical reflection
- Address the need for teachers prepared to teach ELs
- Develop a collaborative professional ethic via cohort placements
- Address shortage of special education teachers
- Allow early entry to job market

Curriculum



- **General education**
- **Major** courses emphasizing the context of teaching and learning in an urban setting. Topics:
 - Critical thinking
 - Impact of culture and diversity on learning
 - Field-based learning in literacy
 - Project-based (linked) learning in math/science/technology
 - Assessment and evaluation
 - Seminar on culturally responsive teaching

- **Depth** courses:
 - Inter-cultural communication
 - Critical race theory
 - Social structure of urban society
 - Historical/political structure of urban society
 - Urban child growth and development
 - Child welfare law
- Provides the “urban” component

- **Instructional methodology**
 - Literacy emphasis
 - Support for EL and special needs children
- Fieldwork embedded in courses; min. 45 hours plus directed teaching
- Teacher preparation coursework for elementary education or special education
- Infusion of skills needed by culturally responsive educators

Timeline and Expectations



- Eight ten-week quarters, soon to be six fifteen-week semesters
- Work and study in a cohort (small learning community)
- Register as required
- Manage deadlines and requirements
- Be an “informed” student
- Meet specific academic, professional and interpersonal standards

Cohorts



- Approximately 25 students/cohort
 - Mixes students preparing for elementary and special education
- Small learning community model
 - Scheduled as a group
 - Take classes together
 - Internal support mechanisms
- Peer leadership
 - Early identification and attention to problems

Challenges



- Student academic preparation before CSULA
 - Exposure to higher education
 - “Scholarly” bent, strength as a student
- Seeing beyond their own group
- Faculty:
 - Identifying and meeting student needs
 - Are we modeling what we teach?
- Semester conversion in Fall 2016