

Educational Leadership Department



The first Educational Leadership Consortium at LBSU features former FOX Broadcasting Vice President and state assemblyman as keynote speakers.

Consortium offers collaboration and networking

Educational leadership offers challenges that leaders must face, but they don't need to face them alone.

Alumni, students, colleagues and faculty of the Educational Leadership Department (EDLD) at Long Beach State University came together Oct. 15 and 16 to collaborate on the problems facing education leaders today.

The idea came as the brainchild of Dr. Ben Dale, Alumni Fellow from Cohort 3 of EDLD and principal at Mira Costa High School. He got the idea from being a part of a national consortium of principals and superintendents from all over the US called 21st Century Consortium.

"We are a group that shares ideas, forms consensus on standardizing practices at schools and we try to face challenges together," Dr. Dale said. "I see the power of it nationally, the influence and impact we could have nationally, and I just think we can have a faster impact if we did the same model locally. I'm as interested in change as any other school leader, but I'm more passionate about changing faster, I don't think we change fast enough. I think it takes too much time for us to get things done and it frustrates me."

A committee of the Alumni Fellows Dr. Felicia Anderson, Dr. Rich Pagel and Dr. Dale and the Faculty Advisors Dr. Anna Ortiz, Dr. James Scott and Dr. William Vega, along with Kim Word, Associate Director of EDLD and Charline Carabes, Department Coordinator, were able to help Dr. Dale bring that idea alive and local at LBSU.

On the first day of the consortium, attendees were shuttled in two different groups to tour Millikan High School or Orange Coast Community College.

At Millikan, attendees explored the school that implements "Linked Learning" by cohorting students into small learning communities based on their interests and career goals. They observed classes and were given the opportunity to ask a panels of students and faculty about the Linked Learned programs.

Attendees who chose to visit OCC met with the President and several of the Vice Presidents of OCC and saw the programs and services offered to students. They discussed current trends many

community colleges are facing and how OCC is working through them.

Once all the attendees returned from the site tours, they heard the keynote speech from Mark Lipps, former Vice President of FOX Broadcasting.

Attendees stayed at LBSU on the second day to participate in roundtable discussions with college presidents and school superintendents. In one room, participants discussed problems in PK-12 such as Common Core implementation, AP courses and global citizenship curriculum with Superintendent of ABC Unified School District, Dr. Marie Sieu. In another room, participants discussed transfer student articulation, next generation students as consumers in higher education with six presidents of local community colleges.

California State Assemblyman David Hadley gave the keynote speech about putting the control of school districting into the hands of local communities and engaging parental involvement in education.

"The two central challenges I see are: empowering you in your respective capacities in the education world, and giving you the ability to engage and inspire parents to be involved," Hadley said. "Because this isn't going to happen without the parents and it is not going to happen based on a 2,300 page rulebook in Sacramento ... Does that mean I have it all figured out about which rules we get rid of and which we keep and how much local authority and how much state policy we involve? No I don't have that all figured out, but directionally, that's absolutely where we have to go."

At the end, the consortium sat in a circle to report out. Each attendee shared something that impacted them from the consortium that they plan on taking back to their schools. Dr. Dale led the discussion and they set goals for organizing next year's consortium.

"I think it was a good first year, I hope it met the expectations of the university," Dr. Dale said. "The feedback has been positive so far, but we'll only know if five years from now, we're still going."

Student Spotlight: Gabriela Castañeda

Doctoral student and mother of two is ready to give back and inspire to students like her.

As a child, Gabriela's parents just wanted her to go to college and get a good job. As undocumented immigrants, they never dreamed that their youngest would not only get a Bachelor's degree, but a Master's and be in pursuit of a Doctoral as well.

"When we talk, it's like: 'so how much longer?' and I say 'Oh a couple more years' and they say: 'Okay, you're eventually going to finish, right? Or what other degree are you going to get?'" Gabriela joked.

Gabriela was born in Mexico and her father worked in agriculture in California for part of the year and came home multiple times a year. But when she was 9 years old, he had a better job opportunity in a factory that would only allow him to come home once a year for about a week at a time. Her parents then made the decision to move to California and take her with them.

Later, her father petitioned for their legal status and they became citizens. The youngest of five, her older siblings stayed in Mexico because they were in high school and her parents didn't want to interrupt their schooling.

"It was lonely because my siblings were all back in Mexico and I didn't speak english and it was a completely different culture for me," Gabriela said. "... I didn't have many friends or relatives here. So I had to start from scratch."

It was a challenge to be in a classroom where the primary language was english, but she was able to make friends with other spanish speakers who were "in the same boat" as her, she said. Gabriela and the other spanish-speakers sat separate from the other students to receive teaching in spanish. Through high school, Gabriela was always looking toward college.

"[My parents] didn't want to see us getting low-paying jobs or labor intensive jobs like the ones that they had," Gabriella said. "So they were always using themselves as an example of like: 'I don't want you working in an assembly line, you can do better, you have the opportunity ...'"

"So I think that put some sense of responsibility in me of: I could not let them down. I saw their struggles, their efforts and their hard work that for me not to pursue an education, a higher education, I would've felt a tremendous amount of



guilt and been very disappointed of myself ... I took it as a very big responsibility."

As much as her parents wanted her to go to college, they didn't want her to go away to college, especially when there were so many local community colleges and universities. So, after high school, Gabriela went to Santa Ana Community College and earned two Associates degrees in Psychology and Liberal Arts. She credits her professors and counselor for helping her navigate through community college and later transfer to California State University, Fullerton to get her Bachelor's in Psychology.

One psychology professor in particular at SAC, Dr. Fernando Ortiz, was a major influence in Gabriella's schooling. Gabriela says that Dr. Ortiz helped her see what she could strive to and she took nearly all her psychology classes with him.

"What made a big impact was the fact that he was a Latino and that he understood my culture," Gabriela said. "And the way that he taught the class, it was welcoming and challenging too, but I think I was able to identify a great deal with him."

After Gabriela earned her Bachelor's degree at CSUF, she returned to pursue her Master's during which she became a mother, but that didn't hinder her pursuit of education. With a lot of support from her husband and family, she finished the program.

"That didn't become a challenge, it became more of a motivation to continue and finish along with my peers," Gabriela said.

Now a stay-at-home mom to a 6-year-old and a 5-month-old, Gabriela is focusing on school, looking forward to defending her research on "the experience of Latino males in community college" in the spring. Her main goal is to work at a community college in different capacities, while concentrating on equity. She wants to be able to open doors to support students in their educational goals and with work, she hopes to move up to a higher administrator position.

"Because of my own experiences and the struggles I went through and the successes I've experienced and the help that I've gotten from mentors and teachers and administrators, I want to give that back to students and I want to be able to be that support or be a contributing member of their experience of students going through the education system," Gabriella said.

"... I think that the support [the Educational Leadership Department] has given me personally, it just propels me to be wanting to give that back to students. Because I know that there is another Gabby out there that wants to pursue their goals and sometimes all you need is that one or two people that show that they care, that you matter, that you're not just a student number, that you're actually a human being, working hard to attain your goals."



Top photo: Gabriela and her older son at her Master's graduation. // Bottom photo: Gabriela says she exceeded her parents expectations when she got her Master's degree from CSU Fullerton. Photos courtesy of Gabriela Castañeda.