

Stockton Project Helps Veteran Teachers to Mentor New Teachers in Somers Point, Mainland Districts

State-Funded Program Aims to Retain 1st-Year Teachers, Build Leadership

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Galloway, N.J. - To help retain first-year teachers and build leadership and mentoring capacity among veteran teachers, faculty and staff from Stockton University's School of Education are partnering with two local school districts.

A \$200,000 grant from the New Jersey Department of Education will fund the second year of Stockton's innovative program involving 20 teachers from the Somers Point School District and Mainland Regional High School.

"The experiences of a new classroom teacher can have a critical effect on the individual's success and job satisfaction throughout his or her professional career," said Patty Weeks, administrative director of the project for Stockton. "Research has shown that more support is needed as novice teachers navigate the K-12 environment from pre-service practice through the first years in a classroom setting on their own. Each step along the way must be led by mentors who have the capacity to observe, discuss, and guide them through activities that will improve beginning teacher practices and improve outcomes for the students they instruct."

The program provides professional development workshops, one-on-one coaching, and online learning to strengthen veteran teachers' ability to serve as effective mentors to student teachers, beginning teachers, and even other veteran teachers in their own buildings, said Weeks, who is executive director of the Southern Regional Institute & Educational Technology Training Center (SRI & ETTC) at Stockton.

Stockton has introduced a model of teacher leadership called educative mentoring which emphasizes self-reflection and continued growth, as opposed to traditional mentoring which is often rooted in emotional support for the novice teacher.

"Teachers in the project have video-taped their own classroom instruction for the past year, learned to critically reflect on their practices, and to adapt instruction around the needs of

students,” Week said. “This experience will be invaluable in Year Two, as they are matched with pre-service teachers from Stockton University and serve as mentors for these beginning teachers.”

Claudine Keenan, dean of Education at Stockton noted, “Teacher leadership continues to emerge in the national conversation as one pathway to strengthening student learning. We are grateful to the participants in this program and to the N.J. Department of Education for adding our state’s input to that national conversation.”

The state grant was accepted at Wednesday’s meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Emma Byrne, who is resigning effective Oct. 1 after serving as a trustee since 2005, was honored with a certificate of appreciation. Byrne is a retired director of Corporate Communications and Federal Affairs for PSEG (Public Service Enterprise Group) who also served as state director for U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley and as press secretary to Gov. Jim Florio, later becoming director of the N.J. Division of Consumer Affairs.

President Harvey Kesselman praised Byrne for “her innovative approach to problem-solving and her financial acumen.” Board Chair Madeleine Deininger told Byrne: “You were my secret weapon and a pillar of strength” in helping her transition to her new role as chair.

Byrne talked about advice Mother Teresa had once given a young woman from America who wrote offering to help her in India: “Thank you for your interest in our mission, but find your own Calcutta.”

Byrne said many people at Stockton have made the university their mission. She cited Deininger, a 1980 graduate whose “own life story parallels all that Stockton is,” and added of trustee and 1979 alumnus Raymond Ciccone: “I think there’s a special box of Stockton Wheaties that he eats every morning.”

She praised the many trustees she has worked with, and said of Kesselman: “He is the Stockton story. How grateful are we that he will begin the next chapter of the Stockton story on Friday (at his inauguration.) He chose Stockton as his own Calcutta.”

Maryam Sarhan of Somers Point, who is president of the Student Senate, also received a certificate of appreciation for her service as student trustee and alternate over the past two years. Kesselman praised her engagement as a strong leader and advocate who is passionate about social and political activism. In her remarks, the Political Science major thanked the board and the Stockton community and stated, “Each of you has given me something on my journey.”

She will graduate in May and said she plans to give back to Stockton in return for the opportunities she has been given.

Ike Ejikeme, a Jersey City native, was sworn in as the alternate student trustee. Ejikeme is enrolled in a dual degree master’s program in Criminal Justice with a Homeland Security track. He served two terms on the Student Senate and is president of the Stockton chapter of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity. He also works for Admissions as a student ambassador, and in the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy’s Polling Institute. Cristian Moreno of Ventnor is serving as the student trustee this year. Moreno is enrolled in a dual degree program that includes a Political Science major with a pre-law concentration and Historical Studies major.

The board’s slate of officers was announced, with Deininger continuing as chair, Leo Schoffer as vice chair, Ciccone as secretary and Ellen Bailey, ex-officio.

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