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ABSTRACT

The Hispanic Border Leadership Institute (HBLI) is a consortium of six Southwestern universities that promotes the improvement of education for Hispanics at all levels, K-16, particularly on the U.S.-Mexico border. HBLI seeks to bring about systematic change in education by designing new approaches to the doctoral preparation programs of educational leaders. These programs provide relevant leadership and policy training for trustees of public schools and community colleges as well as regents of Southwestern universities, and examine and influence public policy directly impacting Hispanic education in the Southwestern United States. HBLI offers new curricula for leadership preparation at the doctoral level, combined with doctoral fellowships and graduate assistantships of 3-year durations. Besides studying full-time during the academic year and participating in summer institutes and seminars, awardees may also complete internships on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Doctoral fellows are assigned duties as research or teaching assistants at any of the four participating doctoral-granting institutions. Other HBLI activities include a national policy conference, policy publications, presentations by national experts, education of state governmental agencies, network formation, collaboration with other professional associations, and encouragement of systemic change. Experiences of two doctoral students illustrate how their interests are linked with faculty research projects and enumerate the reciprocal rewards resulting from faculty mentoring. (TD)

**CHANGING THE FACE OF
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
A UNIQUE METHOD OF
MENTORING HISPANIC DOCTORAL
STUDENTS**

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**Changing the Face of Educational Leadership:
A Unique Method of Mentoring Hispanic
Doctoral Students**

The Hispanic Border Leadership Institute (HBLI) was established in 1996 by four U.S. southwestern institutions of higher education to promote the improvement of education for Hispanics in the United States. In 1998, two universities were added to the consortium. HBLI was born of the realization that while Hispanics have made some progress in achieving access and success in education; their status is not much improved over what it was in the past. Thus, the Institute seeks to address issues which affect the education of Hispanics at all levels, K-16, particularly in settings on the U.S. – Mexico Border.

The consortium recognizes that in order to significantly improve the educational conditions of Hispanics, bold new approaches must be taken. The Institute seeks to bring about systematic change in

education by designing new approaches to the doctoral preparation programs of educational leaders. These programs must provide relevant leadership and policy training for trustees of public schools and community colleges as well as regents of universities of the Southwest, and to examine and influence public policy directly impacting Hispanic education in the Southwestern United States.

The HBLI is a six-year initiative funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The project is headquartered at Arizona State University, administered by Leonard A. Valverde, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, as its Executive Director.

The Hispanic Border Leadership Institute improves the education of Hispanics in the United States by various means. The Institute offers new curricula for leadership preparation at the doctoral level, combined with doctoral fellowships and graduate assistantships of three-year durations, funded at \$20,000 per year, and awarded to 32 individuals. Each award requires full-time study during the academic year, as well as participation in summer institute

and seminars. The awardees may also serve in internships in educational settings on both sides of the U.S. – Mexico border. The 32 doctoral fellows are assigned duties as graduate or teaching assistants at any of the four participating doctoral – granting institutions (Arizona State University, New Mexico State University, University of Southern California and University of Texas Pan American).

The HBLI initiative provides broad leadership training for sitting and aspiring members of community college and public school board of trustees, as well as university boards of regents. Other means by which the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute improves the education of Hispanics in the United States include: a National Policy Conference, for the 32 doctoral fellows, board members, legislators, and U.S. and Mexican educators; occasional policy papers; presentation by national experts in “Platica” speaker series; education of state governmental agencies; network formation; cooperation and collaboration with other professional

associations; and encouragement of anticipated systematic changes.

At the University of Texas Pan American, doctoral fellowships were awarded to five public school teachers. All resigned from their positions to become full time doctoral students. The doctoral students are housed in the Center for Applied Research in Education (CARE), directed by Dr. Velma D. Menchaca. CARE provides computers, with the most extensive programs for their use. The doctoral students were also assigned to work with at least one or two COE faculty members. The doctoral students assisted the faculty with teaching a class, collecting data, or entering data. When possible, the doctoral students were given opportunities to select projects they were familiar with or which they could learn from. The faculty served as mentors for these doctoral students.

Linking Doctoral Students' Interests with Faculty Research Projects

Two of five HBLI fellows were assigned to work with Dr. Veronica L. Estrada, a doctoral faculty member

who specializes in qualitative research. These students were former bilingual education teachers who were interested in pursuing dissertation topics addressing bilingual education policies, practices, and pedagogies. Dr. Estrada's current research project is a program evaluation project for "Project Alianza: Biliteracy Development Through A Dual-Language Teacher Preparation Program."

Project Alianza is a bilingual/ESL teacher preparation program affiliated with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and funded through the Kellogg Foundation, The University of Texas-Pan American, and La Joya ISD. The goal of the dual-language program is to prepare biliterate/bicultural /ESL education certified teachers that can effectively meet the academic, linguistic, and affective needs of bilingual children. Specifically, this dual-language teacher preparation program is designed to prepare students to develop biliteracy in English and Spanish, develop cross-cultural understanding, and to develop an understanding of bilingual education issues and sound pedagogical practices.

Mentoring: A Reciprocal Process

There are numerous rewards in mentoring doctoral students-too numerous to discuss in this limited amount of time-however, one such award is the reciprocal nature of the process. I learn as much from my students as they do from me. Working alongside Christina Cavazos and Diana Ramirez is undeniably on my list of “highs” for this academic year. I have expressed to my dean, and fellow colleagues, on numerous occasions, my sincerest appreciation for having been given the opportunity to mentor these women. Their expertise in the Spanish language, their commitment to scholarship, and their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn has literally propelled the research. I am grateful for their assistance.

On the other hand, this study has also provided them with firsthand experience as educational researchers. As students in my Introduction to Qualitative Research course, they learned about the origins of qualitative methods, major paradigms and perspectives, and about the current landscape of qualitative research in the social sciences. By participating in this project, they put theory

into practice by studying the design of the project, collecting data, and conducting preliminary analysis. Particulars will be discussed by Christina and Diana.

Experiences from two Doctoral Students

Each doctoral student received two assignments, either as a research assistant and/or teaching assistant. Faculty mentored the doctoral students. Doctoral student, Diana Ramirez' first assignment, was as a research assistant to Dr. Leo Gomez. Dr. Leo Gomez is the Assistant Dean and directs the Rio Grande Valley Two-Way (dual language) Consortium. Diana's duties included collection of data, data entry, literature searches and participation in all of the consortium meetings.

These Hispanic doctoral students' duties are meant to complement their classroom learning. They are enrolled in 12 hours concurrently and it seems to have provided the "transfer" of their classroom content. When Dr. Carlson, statistics professor, was teaching variables, frequencies and descriptive statistics, the doctoral student happened to be entering data for the Generational Language Attitudinal Survey. This assignment provided the application level for

the variables, frequencies and descriptive statistics presented by the statistics professor, Dr. Carlson. The data entry gave the doctoral student practice with and exposure to the SPSS 10.0 Program. When the RGV Two-Way Consortium decided to begin collection of data on the schools implementing the dual language program, the doctoral student was assigned to design the data collection forms. With guidance from the consortium members, the forms were perfected and the doctoral student learned about the creation of such forms. The second assignment of the doctoral student was to conduct literature searches on dual language. The doctoral student had not been “actively researching” anything since completion of her Master’s Degree. This was most valuable because it provided opportunity to become comfortable with using the Internet, microfilm and microfiche. Finally, Dr. Gomez involved Diana Ramirez in all of the consortium meetings. This provided her with experience in the “leadership” aspect of the consortium. The consortium was in its early stages of development. During this time, the student’s Topical Seminar class was teaching and discussing the topic of

leadership styles and skills. Involvement in the consortium provided firsthand experience with developing vision and mission statements. It is clear that the research assignments have provided mentoring and experiences that could not possibly been learned from a lecture or reading assignment.

These mentoring experience have provided more than skills. They have provided “focus” and motivation for the dissertation topic. The experience with data entry will allow for a student to pursue quantitative research without fearing statistics and SPSS Programs. The involvement in the creation of forms and surveys gives the students confidence in creating their own forms and surveys. The assignment of literature searches gives the students an idea of what in-depth research entails. Finally, the involvement in the consortium provided doctoral student Diana Ramirez a network of people to look up to. The consortium, composed of University professors and superintendents, is a “ library” of information itself. During one of the meetings, Dr. Ascension Garza (Superintendent for Progreso I.S.D.) said, “ I wish your dissertation would address the “affective” part of a child involved in a dual

language program. I'd sure like to serve on such a committee." Where else would such "networking" of Hispanic doctoral students take place? It can only happen where students are assisting professors who are actively involved in research. "We learn by watching, listening and talking to them." stated Diana Ramirez.

Christina Cavazos' first assignment was working with Dr. Veronica Estrada. As a first year doctoral, female, Hispanic student from a small town, affective and cognitive initial experiences from mentors proved to be the most crucial experiences of the entire program. These experiences have helped shape the intellectual as well as the emotional readiness for the doctoral program. Dr. Veronica Estrada has been instrumental in the healthy development, awareness, and continuous inquiry regarding personal and professional endeavors. Dr. Estrada shares not only her intellectual passion and knowledge; she also shares the experiences that only another female Hispanic can understand.

The cognitive or intellectual stimulation that is derived from a person that shares the same vision and

philosophical standpoints can be truly powerful. Sharing a research project entitled “Project Alianza” with Dr. Estrada has allowed me to learn from the methodology that she has utilized in her previous research. We began working together in the project Alianza by brainstorming, planning, and following the process that researchers utilize in the early stages of the study. The terms thick description, focused group interviews, transcription, data entry, triangulation, coding, themes, etc. finally began to make sense. The books, articles, and other readings made sense when they were applied in a real life situation: real research with real subjects! Our subjectivity was explored in every step of the process; the researcher became aware of the other issues that accompanied the subjectivity of the researcher. In addition to mentoring in the “field”, Dr. Estrada also offered a wide array of resources such as articles, books, and various writing from known authors. She encouraged field experiences based on the different research paradigms that we studied during class and in her office. She always made time to explain further any inconsistencies, questions, or misunderstanding regarding

my paradigm. The cognitive and affective areas were explored and exposed throughout the semester; both are woven and closely related in the life of the student and researcher.

Dr. Estrada motivated me through her actions not just by lecturing and offering words of advice. The fact that she is a Hispanic female was motivation enough, but her passion and enthusiasm were also contagious. She offered encouragement and always kept an open mind accompanied by a positive comment. She continues to empower me and allows me to explore while guiding me when necessary.

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