

Editor's Note: This is an edited version of an essay sent to the College of Education faculty by COE faculty chair Mike Charles just prior to the dedication of the new Berglund Hall on Feb. 1, 2008.

## **They Built This Place**

Thoughts before the dedication of Berglund Hall

By Mike Charles

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At the groundbreaking ceremony for Berglund Hall in the fall of 2006, Willard Kniep stepped to the microphone to tell the story of how the new hall came to be. A paraphrase of what he said might go something like this: "When I came to Pacific University, I found a School of Education that had a top flight faculty, outstanding programs, and prepared the best teachers in the region. What was missing was a 21<sup>st</sup> century facility." Under Willard's leadership first as Dean and then as Provost, Pacific University was able to build the first new classroom building on campus in many years.

The University's press release cites the gifts of key donors, James and Mary Berglund. It mentions funding that came from Gene and Evona Brim. It mentions the million-dollar contribution of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that established the building's Child Learning and Development Center. I note that this funding was secured through faculty initiative—certainly a first at Pacific University and unusual at any institution. Mark Bailey, Camille Wainwright, and interim Dean Nancy Watt made the presentation to the Gates foundation that secured this significant gift. The funds for Zane's Playroom came through the generous donation of Zane's grandparents, an inspirational response to the loss of their grandchild far, far too soon. The first year that I came to Pacific we began planning what was then called the new education building. More than six years later it is remarkable to me to be in the building with our students.

This dedication comes at a most important time for us as a college. A number of very important people have either retired or are in the process of retiring soon. These faculty have been pivotal in growing what was then the department of teacher education by a factor of ten. When some began, we prepared fewer than 25 new teachers each year. Now, between our Eugene and Forest Grove campuses we prepare about 250 new teachers each year, more than any independent university in the region. Yet we are not known for our quantity. We are known for our quality.

So as I packed my last box in my office in Carnegie this fall, preparing for our move to Berglund Hall, I started thinking about the contributions of these faculty, the living legacy that they leave in the College of Education. I took a walk at the Gabelnick Labyrinth, just outside my old office window, and I started thinking about just what built this place we call Berglund Hall.

I found my answer in the unsolicited comments of students, and my own experiences and recollections in working with these fine folks in the past six or so years. I would like to share a few of these, not because my ideas are the definitive ones, but in the hope that these comments might prompt your own reflections.

One of the very first student teachers I worked with was talking with me about a science unit she designed for her elementary students. This student had, on more than one occasion, been very critical of the University. So I was surprised to hear her raving about how well prepared she felt to teach her plants unit. "Everything I am doing here, really, I learned in Camille's class." I was a little confused. When Camille teaches science to elementary teachers, she emphasizes topics in physics and astronomy much more than anything in life science, and nothing at all about plants that I had seen. "Could you tell me how you learned to build this unit on plants from Camille? I don't think that was really part of the course, was it?" She looked at me as if I was stupid. "She didn't show me the specific activities. She showed me how to build an effective unit, one that would challenge student misconceptions and let them slowly build their new scientific knowledge." It is that kind of teaching that is foundational to our work.

In the halls of Carnegie, about a week before graduation, I was chatting with a student from one of my classes. She was about to graduate. In a couple of weeks she would have her first job. But at that moment she was thinking back over her academic career. "That one course with Elizabeth Arch . . . that was sooooo hard. I have never worked that hard in my life in a course. And I have never learned so much. I use what she taught us in the class everyday." It is a willingness to challenge our students with the hard work of growing to be a professional that is foundational to our work.

I also had the privilege of team teaching with Karen Nelson for a couple of summers. In the process we piloted the first efforts at developing professional portfolios with practicing teachers. I also advised a number of teachers who had returned to Pacific for their master's degree. They often had good things to say about Karen's advanced teaching and learning class, and how they were able to apply it to their own professional work. Although no one particular comment from any one student stays with me, what I do see is the way she would connect with these teachers, be it in a summer

classroom or the spring job fair where she would personally introduce students to district officials. It is this kind of connection with the schools that is foundational to our work.

There is no phrase more foundational to our work in the college than “learning community.” And on the Forest Grove campus, that phrase, that course, is closely linked to Daniel Duarte. For most of the years I have been at Pacific, the person invited by students to speak at the MAT banquet was Daniel. I recall that he often summarized his own work with the self-deprecating comment that, “Sometimes I don’t know what I am doing, so I am always amazed that you [and he meant faculty and students] seem to find it valuable.” Building a learning community, he would remind us, takes a lot of work and it is work that is really never done.

A couple of years ago I found myself heading up undergraduate advising. With over sixty advisees, I needed help to keep the advising experience personal, as befitting a small liberal arts college. In my second year I asked Tracy Faulconer to help me out. What I learned about Tracy that year is what I had heard in student comments—Tracy is thorough. A couple of times a week she would come to me with questions and suggestions to which my inevitable response would be, “That’s a great idea...why don’t we do that.” With the rush of events and responsibilities around us, it sometimes takes extra time to be thorough in a way that makes a difference to our students.

Not too long ago I wrote Anita McClain a thank you note for just one of her contributions—Tapalpa. In working with Susan Cabello, Anita pioneered this cross-cultural service learning experience led by Arts & Sciences and College of Education faculty many years ago. Working together in the schools of rural Mexico, up among the pine trees and mile-high mountains of Tapalpa, our students learn to see the teachers there as fellow professionals. The cultural workshops led by Guadalupe and her “team” give us insight into the history and culture of Mexico. The programs that Centro de Integracion (CITAC) conducts for schools and the CITAC philosophy is, as one of our student teachers put it, simply inspiring. The Menson de Ticuz is a beautiful place to stay and allows our group to build a strong learning community. This trip allows students and faculty to experience together the beautiful people and place that is Mexico. Tapalpa is truly *un pueblo magico*. And without Anita McClain’s efforts, we never would have known.

A few years ago the newly formed College of Education hosted a remarkable event on campus. Jane Goodall, internationally renowned anthropologist, came to campus as part of a statewide Roots and Shoots celebration of over 800 K-12 students and parents. It had been difficult to get University support for this but Nancy Watt, associate dean for the College at the time,

understood what a wonderful experience this would be for students, and how well such an event fit with the mission of the College and the University. We were both moved to tears as we listened to Jane, watched the kids, and celebrated what a wonder it is to work with people who are working on changing the world around them. No matter what building we are in, we must always remember the heart of education.

Thank you for indulging me in these recollections. I hope they helped you build some of your own. The dedication of Berglund Hall will be a momentous event, a watermark in the life of the College of Education as we go forward under the leadership of Dean Ankeny and in the company of new faculty who will work in this beautiful University facility. Thanks also to the faculty who preceded us in this work; after all, they built the place.

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