April 18, 2013

Professor edits scholarly book on off-campus teacher-ed movement

The idea of educational partnerships, with university students taking their teacher-preparation classes at inner-city public schools, is gaining traction across the nation, according to Jana Noel, a professor of teacher education at Sacramento State and editor of the book *Moving Teacher Education into Schools and Communities: Prioritizing Community Strengths* ($47, Routledge, 236 pages).

“About 80 percent of teachers are white, middle-class, English-speaking females,” Noel says. “Many of them will become teachers in low-income schools that are highly diverse, but when they come to a university and learn about the kind of place they’ve never been, they don’t quite get it. So teacher education is moving into schools and communities to prepare future teachers for the political, social and economic realities of urban schools.

“Our students who are future teachers in low-income schools generally fall in love with the neighborhood and the families. And many decide to teach and advocate for the children in low-income, highly diverse schools and communities,” she says.

In 2004, Noel founded a program called the Urban Teacher Education Center, and for five years, she taught dozens of Sac State’s teacher candidates in a classroom at what was then Jedediah Smith Elementary School in Sacramento. It’s the neighborhood school for two of the city’s largest low-income government housing projects and later was renamed to honor local activist Leataata Floyd.

Noel’s Urban Teacher Education Center earned the 2008 Quality Education Partnership Award for Distinguished Service to Children and the Preparation of Teachers, given by the California Council on Teacher Education. Her program was influenced by her involvement with the College of Education’s Equity Network, a group of 10 professional-development schools.

Two of Noel’s colleagues from the College of Education, Pia Lindquist Wong and Deidre B. Sessoms, also were active in the Equity Network. They contributed chapters to *Moving Teacher Education into Schools and Communities*, as did 20 other educators from across the country.
“It’s been a slow movement that’s grown over the past 10 years,” Noel says. “Every author in the book said, ‘You have to build trust with the community.’ It took three years for the community matriarch (Floyd) to take my hand and say, ‘You’re welcome here.’ ”

Sacramento State’s tradition of educating future teachers in urban classrooms continues with the San Juan Professional Development School Center, part of the Equity Network and the result of a decade-long partnership between the University and the San Juan Unified School District. Sac State currently has 45 student teachers and teacher candidates studying in four elementary schools.

“The basic philosophy is that children who have the least resources should have the most-qualified and best-prepared teachers,” says William T. “Tom” Owens Jr., a Sacramento State education professor. “And since the attrition rate for beginning teachers is so high, the center holds the belief that our teacher candidates are best served in the long run by being exposed to the reality of teaching under difficult circumstances.”

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156.

– Dixie Reid
dixie.reid@csus.edu

Sacramento State is making a difference in California’s Capital Region and beyond. We offer a life-changing opportunity for our 28,000 students, preparing them to be leaders in their professions and communities. Our professors are known for their dedication to great teaching. And our location in the capital of the nation’s most populous state allows students to pursue unique internships and research.

### 65-S13-DR