

Alternative Learning Conference Teaches Educators About Paideia

BY JENNIFER MARSHBURN
STAFF WRITER

Educators from across the nation are gathering at the Friday Continuing Education Center for a conference on an alternative education method called Paideia. The conference began Wednesday and will run through next Friday.

Terry Roberts, executive director of the Paideia Center, said the Paideia concept centers around 12 principles that can be summarized in three groups.

"The first group basically says that all children can learn, and they all deserve the same quality of education," Roberts said.

The second group of principles focuses on the overall goal of the school, which under the Paideia system is to educate students so that they become functioning members of democracy, Roberts said.

The third group encourages students to partake in "lifelong learning," Roberts said.

"Schools should be assessed by how well students adapt to society after school," Roberts said.

"We have to teach students to develop characteristics and a willingness to learn for the rest of their lives just to survive the future. That's reality."

The Paideia system is not implemented in any schools in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School system, but is a possibility for the future.

Under the Paideia system, the didactic style of teaching which Roberts calls "the old fashioned lecturing style" works in conjunction with Socratic and coaching

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TERRY ROBERTS
Paideia Center executive director

methods.

The Paideia system does not focus on textbooks. Instead, the system uses textbooks as reference materials and centers on letters and other historical documents, such as the Gettysburg address, Roberts said.

"By giving students the raw facts we are challenging to create their own version of history instead of reading historical accounts," Roberts said.

Another difference between current teaching styles and the Paideia style is that the Paideia practice allows every student to access to the same material, Roberts said.

"Under our system all students, including gifted and talented and remedial students, follow the same track of learning, maybe not at the same speed," Roberts said. "Under our plan, there will be no AP or vocational tracks."

"Currently, if you are identified as remedial, then you are condemned to a life of poor education," Roberts said. "Under

Paideia, every student gets the same quality of teaching, this makes a lot of difference."

Community is also a valuable part of the Paideia system. The Paideia center strives to redefine the school as a community rather than an institution, Roberts said.

"In communities, people work together cooperatively, whereas in institutions, competition seems to be the goal," Roberts said.

"What seems to be the case is where the system is well implemented, quick improvement has shown up on tests scores in area such as writing tests," Roberts said.

"There has been some slow improvement on standardized tests, but we have to keep in mind that standardized tests don't measure the kinds of things we're trying to teach, which is the need to learn and not just memorize."

The conference is sponsored by the National Paideia Center, which is housed at UNC. The center was created in 1988, by philosopher Mortimer Adler, who developed the Paideia concept, and former UNC President William Friday.

There are about 20 schools across the nation that have adopted the Paideia principles and are striving to become true Paideia schools, Roberts said.

Another 30 to 40 schools are in the process of implementing the principles, including Durham's Githens Middle School as well as elementary schools in Charlotte, Eden and Laurinburg, Roberts said.

SELF-STUDY

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cents was being increasingly compromised by the University's relatively low student stipends," the report states.

For many graduate students, UNC's inadequate financial support and funding slows research and creates stressful situations.

Teaching assistantships are often unknown until classes have almost begun, and many graduate students also have to get outside, unrelated jobs, often at the expense of their studies and research, the report found.

"Given these pressures, it is not surprising that students who withdraw from the University cite inadequate financial support as a primary reason," the study states.

Because of inadequate funding, the study states that some graduate students are forced to study part time or even officially drop out of their program when they no longer need to be enrolled in classes and are able to conduct research indepen-

dently.

As a result, many of the departments that suffer from inadequate funding for graduate students are also the ones that have students who are slow in finishing their studies.

"Without vigilant monitoring of student progress toward the degree, students may get lost in the process," the study states.

Of course, students are not slow just for financial reasons.

Many students said increased guidance regarding research, performance feedback and career counseling from faculty would improve their experience.

The study found that some departments



Carolina Self-Study

had such unclear guidelines for completing a degree that students weren't sure what was expected of them.

"Although some departments have unambiguous guidelines relating to progress toward the degree, others are more casual about communicating expectation regarding student progress."

In response, the study calls for a campuswide review of program guidelines to ensure that students have a clear sense of what is required.

And individual students should face a yearly review of their progress that would "protect the student from unreasonable expectations of individual faculty members and make less awkward the task of providing feedback to a student who is not making reasonable progress," the study states.

In the end, however, the report returns to the theme of finances as the cause of delayed degrees.

With more money, the problem of students being around for too long might cure itself, Morell said.

New Funding Strategy Needed

To combat the funding problems in the Graduate School, the study recommends that the University make soliciting private, foundation and governmental funds their highest priority, but it is vague as to how this should be accomplished.

UNC must "encourage the establishment of a more adequate state budget for support not only of graduate teaching but also of graduate research," the report states.

The study recommends urging the N.C. General Assembly to make its funding appropriations on a more "reasonable schedule" so the University remains attractive to students.

Because the annual budget cycle does not coincide with the recruitment of students, the University usually can't guarantee reduced tuition to applicants, putting it at a disadvantage in recruiting top out-of-state students for most programs, Morell said.

SPRINGFEST

FROM PAGE 3

and uncontrolled that UNC Hospitals would use them as emergency training days for their personnel, Davis said.

Springfest was originally held in the Henderson Residence College (Connor, Winston and Alexander).

It grew to be such a big event that it became too large a financial burden on HRC, which was the sole sponsor.

Anne Presnell, an assistant director of housing and UNC graduate who attended Springfest in its original form, recalled the event's history in the early 1980s.

She described it as a huge outdoor party that lasted all day and well into the night. "It was sunshine and sunburn and a lot of beer and a lot of music and a bazillion people," she said.

At that time the legal drinking age for beer and wine was 18, so preventing alcohol consumption was not a priority for the University.

Its main goal was to take care of students suffering from heatstroke or excessive alcohol consumption, Presnell said.

"As a student it was a lot of fun," Presnell said.

"As an administrator, I would be terrified."

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HERO
FROM PAGE 1

Henry has started the first Vietnamese language class ever taught at UNC, taking on the extra load in addition to his three courses in Chinese literature. Here's the real kicker: he is not paid for the Vietnamese class.

Last fall, Henry noticed that more Vietnamese students were enrolled in his Chinese literature classes than ever before. He began making special handouts aimed at the Vietnamese students to help them connect with the course because Chinese and Vietnamese share many of the same words but with different pronunciations.

"I thought that if I would just make special handouts to show these relationships, it would be easier for the Vietnamese students to connect with the material," Henry said.

He began meeting with Vu Han and Phan Loan, two Vietnamese students in his class, twice a week to practice their Vietnamese conversation, but "they weren't getting any credit for it," Henry said.

At the request of his students and with Farquhar's support, Henry created the Vietnamese language class and opened it this semester.

"I saw that there appeared to be a need now, at this time," he said. "The only way it was possible to do this was to add a course to the ones I had already taken to do."

As if another whole class weren't enough, once it began, Henry found that his students were not all on the same level in their Vietnamese abilities. His one section then became two, intermediate and beginner.

Although he has three students, Han, Loan and Diem Thi Tra, helping him teach the class, Henry still must prepare for hours each week for the class.

He makes a rough translation from the

Chinese textbook his literature class is using and shows it to his three assistants. They then edit his translation, and Henry adds vocabulary lists and supplementary notes for the class.

Henry's involvement with East Asian culture began in the late 1960s. Faced with the prospect of being drafted into the Vietnam War, he decided to enlist and go to an army language training school for one year.

Henry was given a list of languages to choose from and asked to list them in his order of preference.

"There were a little more than 50 languages," Henry said.

"Russian was my first choice; Vietnamese was my last choice and was the choice I got. But you can't say the army doesn't give you a choice."

When Henry returned from Vietnam, he found himself deeply attached to East Asian culture and language, but the market for jobs teaching Vietnamese was extremely limited.

He went back to college for his senior year and crammed two years of Chinese into one and then was accepted into the graduate program at Yale University in the Chinese language and literature department.

He then taught at Dartmouth for two years and came to UNC in 1982. Ever since, he has earned the respect of his colleagues at the University for his exper-

ative and flexible programs of study are more actively encouraged and supported," the report states.

Morell said he thought that UNC had a very good record of interdepartmental cooperation but that it could always be improved.

"We would like to strengthen this even more and make it even easier for graduate students to engage in interdisciplinary research across boundaries," he said.

The study also recommended that faculty continue to pursue new teaching methods and incorporate new technology into teaching.

"Teaching and teaching methodology in general is in good shape, but we would like to encourage departments to consider new teaching methods," Morell said.

More Than Money and Books

Nonacademic concerns of the graduate and nonacademic students also need to be addressed, the study states.

To encourage communication within the University, the study recommends establishing a "student affairs" committee composed of graduate and professional students, faculty, and administrators.

Elizabeth Gibson, another author of the study, said a student affairs committee could be a valuable forum.

"Graduate students feel isolated and that they cannot cross departments and speak out," she said.

The lack of health insurance provided by the University for graduate student employees is another concern, Gibson said.

Because some other graduate schools offer health insurance in a benefit package to students, "its unavailability here places UNC-Chapel Hill at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting high-caliber students," the study states.

Morell said he thought that while undergraduate students might realize the benefits of a good graduate program — such as good TAs and an exciting intellectual environment — the community should also appreciate its presence.

"Very often, the public may not realize how valuable our graduate programs are to the state and undergraduate programs," he said.

"Very many of graduate students stay in the state or at least the Southeast and contribute their specialized skills to the local economy."

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"We have demonstrated that the demand for Vietnamese language at UNC is high; the numbers are there."

ERIC HENRY
Asian studies lecturer

tise in his field.

"He's extremely knowledgeable of the ancient Chinese literature and culture," said Gang Yue, an assistant professor in the Asian studies department. "Sometimes I feel ashamed of myself, being a native Chinese, not knowing some of the things he knows so well."

Farquhar is also impressed with Henry's knowledge. "He is extremely richly educated in his field of Chinese literature," she said. "He knows how to bring out the humor, and he brings it to life."

But Henry is not merely an academic. He possesses an intense desire to help students learn and grow in any way he can.

"I think he loves being able to share what he knows, and he wants to open the opportunity for others," said Grace Chu, a sophomore from Cary. "He goes in, gets a feel for the class and makes sure people understand."

He does more than teach, too. Henry has been the faculty adviser for the Asian Student Association since it began in 1989. David Liu, a senior from Raleigh and president of the ASA, said that Henry was always willing to help and that he came to meetings when invited.

Yue said he had seen many examples of Henry's commitment to his students in the two years he had known him, as Henry had patiently encouraged them and worked with them one on one.

Tra said Henry's opening the Vietnamese class had touched Vietnamese students and shown them that he cared.

"I'm so happy because some people on campus will learn more about Vietnamese culture and language," Tra said. "It makes me so proud because he is an American and he knows my language."

Henry's involvement with the Asian community extends even beyond the University.

For about seven years, he has been involved with the Chapel Hill Chinese School, which meets once a week to teach Chinese language and culture to both Chinese and non-Chinese children.

His son began attending the school when he was 6, and, because the school is parent-run, Henry was asked to serve as vice principal in 1990 and as principal in 1992.

"I think it's impressive for anyone to serve as principal at this dynamic school, and I think it's even more impressive for Dr. Henry, who is not Chinese, to be involved," Liu said.

Despite his busy schedule during the school year, Henry does not use the summers as a time to rest. Instead, he uses them to work on manuscripts he is researching and translating.

"My strategy has been to use my summers to the max," Henry said. "The moment my finals are turned in, I go into a daily writing schedule."

He has six books recently completed or nearing completion, and he published a book in 1982.

Henry believes that the interest shown in his class reflects the interest in Vietnamese language on campus.

"I figured (when we started) that, at most, there might be a dozen students; there are now 24," Henry said.

"We have demonstrated that the demand for Vietnamese language at UNC is high; the numbers are there."

TEST SCORES

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Not only were parents able to enroll their children for tutoring, but parents were also given the opportunity to become volunteer mentors to troubled students, Royster said. In addition, several parents offered to help other parents with their children, he said.

School Board Chairman Ken Touw said he was pleased at the willingness of the parents at the meeting to help. Touw said the parents who offered to help other parents would be an encouragement on occasions such as parent-teacher conferences. "It's useful to have another adult on your side."

Touw said he was encouraged about the influence volunteers would have on the students.

"They can have a real impact on the lives of the students in our school system," Touw said. "It's another step, it's an important step."

Both Royster and Touw said they were more encouraged about the possibility of positive change for African-American students.

"I'm more encouraged, but there's a long way to go," Touw said. "I don't want to belittle the problem."

"I think this is just a beginning," Royster said. He told the group Wednesday that this was the beginning of the end of disparity."

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