

Spotlight on ILA Institutional Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change. We are pleased to shine an ILA spotlight on the programs of our members. If you would like to nominate yourself or another ILA institutional member to be featured on these pages, please contact ILA at ila@ila-net.org.

Spotlight on Renaissance College: University of New Brunswick's Leadership School

Leadership Education with a Vision



Learning Session at Renaissance College

Vision Quest and Learning Journey

On November 30th, 2006, Renaissance College (RC) – the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) leadership school in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada – celebrated its successful completion of a one year effort to create and implement a new vision and strategy. Many Colleges and Universities have developed vision and mission statements knowing that this can help to focus the educational efforts and increase the accountability of colleges and universities. So what is the big deal?

Focusing on and improving student learning is at the core of RC's values. Hence, engaging students in the process of vision development was used to learn *about* the process as a core element of effective leadership; through process checks, in-class discussions, and reflection papers these experiences became the "case-

in-point" (R. Heifetz) of individual, organizational, and community leadership education. On an exciting learning journey, faculty, staff, students, and community leaders in and around Renaissance College in 2005/2006 articulated their shared values, identified a joint mission, and developed their strategic objectives for future learning and teaching at the College. At the same time, they learned how to facilitate, engage in, and successfully conclude a visioning project. Student members have also been a major part of defining a process to monitor progress toward the College's vision.

The RC Story

In 2000, RC accepted its first students into the first – and still only – Canadian undergraduate degree program in interdisciplinary leadership studies. The selection process for the 25 learners accepted into the program each year is based on a carefully balanced set of criteria including academic performance, demonstrated leadership potential, volunteer and community service, diversity of backgrounds and skills in areas of arts, music, athletics or culture. Focusing on emerging leaders, UNB and RC continue "to mobilize its intellectual resources to help students make a positive difference in the world" (<http://www.unb.ca/renaissance/academic/overview.php>).

Renaissance College Values

- Active, holistic, and interdisciplinary learning culture,
- Leadership,
- Community,
- Mindful Openness,
- Excellence, and
- Congruence.

Renaissance College Purpose

- Our primary purpose is to nurture and develop leadership potential and engaged citizenship through the liberal education of our students.
- We are a learning community focused on experimenting with and modeling highly effective, innovative teaching and learning practices; citizenship; and leadership.
- We improve post-secondary education by engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

To learn more visit:

<http://www.unb.ca/renaissance/academic/RCPurposeValues.php>

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Graduating from this RC program, students will have received a *Bachelor of Philosophy (B. Phil.) degree in interdisciplinary leadership studies* with a UNB minor in a traditional discipline and will have been exposed to a multitude of perspectives and experiences. The curriculum consists of a variety of courses from different academic disciplines as well as of national and global internships, community research, and leadership projects. The learning processes are facilitated by faculty “integrators” (3 full-time and 10 part-time) from the College, the larger UNB campus, and beyond.

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Outcomes-based learning: Award winning collaborative approach

At RC collaboration is a way of life. Faculty and staff jointly developed an outcomes-based learning approach and crafted the overall program structure. In addition to the content related learning objectives of each course, students use the courses to help them develop in the six College learning outcomes: *Knowing oneself and others, Personal Wellbeing, Multi Literacy, Social Interaction, Problem Solving, and Effective Citizenship*. The outcomes, in an integrative way, feed into the students’ ability to be and act as effective leaders. They serve as a set of interactive standards by which progress can be assessed throughout the phases of a Renaissance College education. Students are required to demonstrate growth and competency in each outcome before they can graduate.

One of many examples of collabora-

tive design and delivery is the Learning Portfolio process used to assess student growth and competency in the learning outcomes at the program level. The portfolios are developed through the three years and contain evidence and reflection by students of their growing ability to demonstrate the learning outcomes in course, co-curricular and personal life situations. Among their many impacts, portfolios help students make connections between their formal learning and practice, links among the outcomes themselves and connections to leadership. All RC faculty members assess graduating students’ portfolios and attend public presentations held to have external assessors provide feedback to students on their portfolios. The integrators’ workshop held each spring evalu-



ates the portfolio work and proposes modifications and improvements. For its outcome-based learning approach on a whole program level, RC was awarded the prestigious *Alan Blizzard Award 2006* for collaborative teaching by the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (for award winning paper visit: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/stlhe/awards/alan.blizzard.award.html>).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The learning never stops at RC. Students, staff, and faculty thoroughly enjoy being involved in the continuous cycle of better understanding student learning, enriching our teaching, publishing the results, and engaging in the dialogue about new discoveries and possible next steps. For example, we recently implemented an *Under-*

graduate Research Lab for Leadership Education (URLLE), where students are introduced to and get involved in the research process, by reviewing existing as well as designing and conducting new research projects in leadership education as an optional for-credit component of their education (for details on the lab, visit: <http://v8nu74s71s31g374r7ssn017uloss3c1vr3s.unbf.ca/~tmengel/lab.html>). Furthermore, the lab will contribute to forming a learning community amongst undergraduate as well as graduate students, staff, and faculty and, experiment with innovative ways of learning about and teaching leadership. Finally, it will contribute to keeping the vision alive at RC and to enriching the field of leadership education.



Renaissance College “Integrators” at the 2006 ILA conference in Chicago. From left: Thomas Mengel, John Valk, Moon Joyce

