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Stockton Welcomes Inaugural Class to Doctorate in Organizational Leadership Program

Stockton Hosts Orientation for Students, Leaders in their Fields

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Galloway, NJ – Stockton welcomed the inaugural class in the University's new Doctorate in Organizational Leadership program for orientation this week.

This spring, Stockton admitted 24 students from throughout the region into the three-year Ed.D. program, which offers face-to-face weekend-long classes, as well as hybrid interaction between sessions, aimed to fit the schedules of current professionals.

"The Organizational Leadership program is designed to be flexible, practical and integrative," said Joseph Marchetti, professor of Education and director of the program. "The curriculum is structured to be applicable to each student's individual leadership environment so they can examine issues across organizational disciplines and then apply what they have learned in their environments."

The program emphasizes the integrity of leadership to promote and improve the students' respective organizations. The interdisciplinary teachings explore the unique core leadership understandings, the essential habits and mindsets of a leader, and the respective competencies embedded in the curriculum.

Courses will be taught by Marchetti and George Sharp, visiting assistant professor of Education Leadership, along with invited presenters and speakers prominent in their fields.

Students from northern New Jersey, military veterans and Stockton alumni make up a portion of the class.

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"Twenty-four practitioner leaders from the worlds of education, health care, business, non-profit organizations and government agencies will come together and begin their journey in personal and collective growth as well as work to attain a doctoral degree," said Sharp, who designed the curriculum, selecting each course's reading materials, homework assignments and guest speakers. "It is truly a fascinating, wonderful and interesting group of people."

Kathryn Suk of Bound Brook, N.J., in Somerset County, applied for the program 10 days before the application deadline.

"I saw the new program on Stockton's website when I was already almost enrolled in a different school's online program, 10 days before Stockton's deadline," said Suk, an assistant professor of Education at Raritan Valley Community College. "I looked at the course schedule and was so grateful to find an in-person, weekend program that fits into my work schedule."

The program also explores theory and methods of teaching for organizational transformation; evaluation, analysis and planning; and human resources and fiscal operations to aid in advancement into leadership positions.

Charles Dixon, 57, of Montclair, N.J., retired director of the Young Fathers Program at the former University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (now part of Rutgers University), now serves as a consultant to community and faith-based organizations.

"I chose the Organizational Leadership program to be more involved in interactive learning, and to use that knowledge to address critical issues, such as violence and bullying, within the community," he said.

Bill Perkins, a Stockton alumnus from Absecon, serves on active duty as the superintendent of the 177th Fighter Wing's command post in Egg Harbor Township, N.J. He coordinates air traffic controls to scramble fighter jets, and facilitates the air defense mission.

Perkins, who spent 27 years in the Air Force, also teaches Intro to Terrorism, discussing history and motivation theories, at Atlantic Cape Community College.

"Joe Marchetti was my mentor when I graduated from Stockton's [Master of Arts in Instructional Technology] program. He told me about the new doctorate and encouraged me to apply," he said. "I hope to enhance my leadership competency and broaden my leadership knowledge to move into academia. Leadership improves one's ability as an educator because you transform from coaching to delegating to facilitating, and being dynamic is all about leadership."

The Organizational Leadership's doctoral action research, a "dissertation-in-practice," is innovative and different from traditional dissertations. Stockton's program places more value on the relevance of the findings to the researcher and his/her local collaborators as well as the benefits to the organization.

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Brian McBride, another Stockton alumnus and nine-year Air National Guard veteran, currently serves as superintendent of Palmyra School District in New Jersey. He chose Stockton's doctorate program because it allowed him the opportunity to tailor his education to meet his specific professional needs in the public school system.

"I was enrolled in another university's hybrid program, but I wanted a more hands-on and organizational approach, which Stockton offered," McBride said. "I'm looking forward to 21st Century learning, in our global society, to better work with local, state, government and business interests."

One section of the three-year, 54-credit program, aptly titled, Adapting to Change and Complexity, may be relevant to two students in particular.

Jerry and Nicole Nelson, of Mays Landing, have been married for 10 years. They are both Stockton alumni and are both enrolled in the first class of the university's Organizational Leadership program.

Jerry, a director of communication network architecture and Coast Guard veteran, and Nicole, a K-9 sergeant for the Hamilton Township Police Department, together have a 5-year-old son, Andrew. Nicole's K-9 partner, Hunter, is 9.

"We wanted to earn the degree together," the couple said in unison, admitting a slight concern for work/life balance.

"This is the first time in our marriage that we've done something like this," Jerry continued. "We have two different styles of management. She's the harder worker. I'll coast, she'll excel.

"We'll see if we're divorced in three years," he joked.

Photo Caption 1: George Sharp (third from left), visiting assistant professor of Education, and members of the inaugural class of Stockton University's Doctorate in Organizational Leadership program.

Photo Caption 2: Jerry and Nicole Nelson, of Mays Landing, with son, Andrew, 5, and Hunter, Nicole's K-9 partner. Jerry and Nicole are both enrolled in Stockton's first class of the Doctorate in Organizational Leadership program.

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