



Partnerships are crucial to teacher preparation, educational research and raising local student achievement

As a land-grant/sea-grant research-extensive college of education, we have a responsibility to serve all of Georgia and the nation by showcasing exemplary practices, disseminating research findings and supporting professional educators.

To do this well we must recruit the best students, recruit the best faculty, and we must provide them with the necessary resources to be successful.

Ultimately, our work must benefit the people we serve and the places where our students will be employed. This calls for new professional arrangements in a mutually rewarding compact between the college and sites where our students will intern and where a select number of faculty members can conduct research that has special meaning to our constituents. These partnerships are crucial to sustaining our current outstanding programs as well as launching new signature programs, and we are grateful to our school partners for their time, effort and cooperation.

In this edition of *EDUCATION*, we take a look at partnerships—past, present and future—in an effort to answer, “What makes a good partnership?”

In 2006, we concluded a successful five-year partnership with Clarke County Schools and the local community that resulted in students at the two partner schools posting higher increases in standardized test scores than any other school in the district. And these were schools whose students had, historically, posted the lowest scores in the district.

Drawing on the success of this school-based model, we have broadened our vision to a more systemic effort, working directly with Clarke County Schools’ Continuous Improvement projects and a group of hundreds of citizens, educators, community leaders and administrative professionals called The Partnership for a Prosperous Athens, whose goal is to break the cycle of poverty in Clarke County. Recently organizers formed a subgroup called OneAthens, which will follow up on projects aimed to help reach that goal.

One of the challenges in Clarke County is a dropout rate that is 70 percent higher than the rate for the state of Georgia. The results are alarming. In a population of about 113,000, there are 11,200 Clarke residents over 25 years old without a high school diploma.

With this in mind, our faculty members have developed a new partnership with an alternative high school in Clarke County that serves those who have dropped out of school. While our focus is on supporting teachers and students in this school and helping lower the dropout rate, we are also pursuing research on *why* these students—some of whom are very bright—drop out.

We also continue to work with one of our long-term partner schools, Gaines Elementary, in a new joint venture to help students achieve by getting parents more involved in their children’s education.

Amid all of the good work that is being done, we are also beginning to make big plans for next year’s centennial celebration.

If you are one of our College of Education alumni and have lost touch with the college, your fellow classmates and professors over the years, our centennial celebration will provide a perfect opportunity to renew old ties and forge new ones.

We take immense pride in the achievements of our alumni, students and faculty, both past and present. As we prepare to celebrate the college’s centennial next year, we hope to continue to reach for and attain the high standard of excellence set by those before us.

Louis A. Castenell, Jr.
Dean



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