The unique context of the University of La Verne is captured by its vision, mission, and values. Within the culture of our university and aligned with its vision, mission, and values, our College of Education and Organizational Leadership (CEOL) has built a foundation grounded in a philosophy that has illuminated the unit’s vision, mission, and guiding principles. This has provided focus for our program development, teaching, interaction with students, relationships with school partners, assessment systems, policies, and use of resources.

The following sections provide information regarding “knowledge bases, theories, research, the wisdom of practice, and education policies that inform the unit’s conceptual framework” (NCATE Precondition 4.3). This conceptual framework “establishes the shared vision for a unit’s efforts in preparing educators to work in P–12 schools and provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability” (NCATE Precondition 4). We begin this section with a discussion about our overarching philosophy and how it undergirds the belief on which our guiding principles are focused.

The CEOL concurs with Broudy’s (1979) statement that a philosophy of education is a “system of beliefs about life and schooling” (p. 3). Philosophical underpinnings drive our thinking about learning, teaching and leading. Prior to developing our four guiding principles, the CEOL discussed and expressed ideas about the direction of our college and its future. Further discussion allowed us to refine our vision, which rests on the shoulders of major philosophers. The following summary provides a rigorous discussion of the roots of philosophy in our guiding principles: leadership, excellence, caring, and diversity and social justice.

LEADERSHIP

We trace the roots of our first guiding principle, leadership, to the work of Plato. “It is well known that Plato, the Greek philosopher, can be defined as one of the most influential leadership-thinkers of all times” (Takala, 1998, p. 785). “Plato implements The Republic as a dialogue on the nature of justice: the ideal state is presented as social embodiment of justice. A just social order is one where order and harmony are maintained by each class of citizens carrying out the tasks for which they are suited and not interfering with the work of others” (p. 791). “Plato believed that individuals should be attentive to the search for truth, which is perfect and eternal and cannot be found in matter because it is uncertain and subject to change. In his famous “Allegory of the Cave,” found in The Republic (1958/360 B.C.), Plato implied that each of us lives in a cave of shadows, doubts, and distortions about reality. However, through education and enlightenment, the real world of pure ideas can be substituted for those distorted shadows and doubts” (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2010, p. 55).

In modern times, evidence of “Plato’s discourse surfaces in leadership debates. In the background is the idea that organizations are socially constructed systems of shared meanings. So, the task of management, especially strategic management, is to create symbolic reality and to facilitate action” (Takala, 1998, p. 796). “During the 20th century, Plato’s ideas have been further developed by many leadership theoreticians. First, Plato has put forth the theory of an
organization as a harmony-seeking entity, and in this way given a benchmark for modern organizational theoreticians stressing the unitary and well-balanced nature of modern complex organizations. Second, the concept of management of meaning, or leadership as the management of meaning, has been evolved. Putting focus on the way the meaning is created, sustained, and changed in organizational settings provides us with powerful means to understand the fundamental nature of leadership as a social process” (Takala, 1998, p. 797).

In the CEOL, we subscribe to the belief that “A leader must be a person who takes care of people and emphasizes in his professional activity the social psychology of an organization” (Takala, 1998, p. 786). “The key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable end” (Takala, 1998, p. 796). “In his role, he aids people to develop and grow up as individuals, he is a human constructor” (Takala, 1998, p. 786). Furthermore, leadership allows positive change to occur. “Creative leadership begins when a person imagines a state of affairs not presently existing. This initial creative insight or spark is elaborated into a broader vision of change, possible ways of accomplishing it are conceived, and ---in a fateful act of leadership—the vision is communicated to others” (Burns, 2003, p.153). As Burns (2003) states “Every human change begins with someone having an intention, taking an initiative” (p. 17).

Change is not a simple process. “It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character, as when a frog is transformed into a prince or a carriage maker into an auto factory. It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership” (Burns, 2003, p. 24). “Nothing offers so clear—and urgent—a challenge to leadership, nothing tests it so decisively, as human wants and needs. Leadership has its origins in the responsiveness of leaders to followers’ wants and in the followers’ responsiveness to leaders’ articulation of needs, empowering both leaders and followers in the struggle for change” (Burns, 2003, p. 146). “Leadership itself must persist in its transformational task—its central causal purpose—of turning all such continuities and contingencies to the aim of achieving real change. Leadership is the X factor” (Burns, 2003, p. 222).

In the CEOL, we concur with Burns (2003) that “A leader not only speaks to immediate wants but elevates people by vesting in them a sense of possibility, a belief that changes can be made and that they can make them” (p. 239). Burns distinguished between two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. “Transactional leadership refers to the bulk of leadership models, which focus on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers. In the classroom, teachers are being transactional when they give students a grade for work completed. In contrast to transactional leadership, transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential” (Northouse, 2010, p. 172). The term Transformational Leadership was first coined by Downton (1973). Its emergence as an important approach to leadership began with a classic work by political sociologist James MacGregor Burns titled Leadership (1978). “In his work, Burns attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership” (Northouse, 2010, p.172).
Bass and Riggio (2006) suggest that Transformational Leadership is popular due to its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and follower development.

“Transformational Leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational Leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what it usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership” (Northhouse, 2010, p. 171).

EXCELLENCE

It is this: I insist that a man who intends to be good at a particular occupation must practice it from childhood: both at work and at play he must be surrounded by the special ‘tools of the trade’. For instance, the man who intends to be a good farmer must play at farming, and the man who is to be a good builder must spend his playtime building toy houses; and in each case the teacher must provide miniature tools that copy the real thing. In particular, in this elementary stage they must learn the essential elementary skills….we should try to use children’s games to channel their pleasures and desires towards the activities in which they will have to engage when they are adults.

(Plato, as cited in Curren, 2007, p. 27)

The importance of excellence in postsecondary education is becoming increasingly evident. In the CEOL, this second guiding principle transcends all areas of teaching, learning, and leading. Dewey’s work, traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, provides a modern explanation of excellence. One facet of Dewey’s work focused on constructivism. The CEOL references Dewey’s view of constructivism as “the organism interacts with the environment through self-guided activity that coordinates and integrates sensory and motor responses. Knowledge and learning are thus produced through active manipulation of the environment” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 5). In our college, constructivism is highlighted and incorporated into the teaching of courses, student learning, and leadership. Furthermore, the faculty values the notion of reciprocity in teaching and learning. According to Dewey, “with respect then to curiosity, the teacher has usually more to learn than to teach. Rarely can he aspire to the office of kindling or even increasing it. His task is rather to keep alive the sacred spark of wonder and to fan the flame that already glows” (Dewey, 1910/1991, p. 32-33).

As the CEOL trains teachers and leaders to become experts in their fields, the faculty continuously examines the curriculum to create a space, as Dewey believed, “where students were actively encouraged to pursue their interests in conjunction with other people pursuing their own interests, in cooperative fashion and toward collective goals. Pedagogical activity,
organized in this way, Dewey believed, is the best preparation for a responsible democratic society” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 8). As Darling-Hammond (1997) supports, “Teaching and learning are reciprocal, with learning experiences continually reshaped by students’ changing needs and understandings” (p.118). The CEOL faculty frames all areas of the curriculum to connect with the background knowledge and experiences of the students. According to Darling-Hammond (1997),

Teachers’ insistence on attending to students’ experiences, interests, and prior knowledge were once thought to result from tenderheartedness and a disregard for scientific methods. Now, however, these considerations are supported by cognitive research demonstrating that learning is a process of making meaning out of new or unfamiliar events in light of familiar ideas or experiences. (p. 74)

Research has shown that “teachers who plan with regard to students’ abilities and needs and who are flexible while teaching are more effective, especially at stimulating higher-order thinking, than teachers who engage in extensive preplanning that is tightly focused on behavioral objectives and coverage of facts” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.72). This ongoing discussion transcends all areas of the college.

Just creating interesting tasks for students is not enough, however. Work that results in deep understanding has at least three features: it requires the use of higher-order cognitive functions, taking students beyond recall, recognition, and reproduction of information to evaluation, analysis, synthesis, and production of arguments, ideas, and performances. It asks students to apply these skills and ideas in meaningful contexts, engaging them in activities they have real reason to want to undertake. And it builds upon students’ prior learning but presses toward more disciplined understandings. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.109)

CARING
The faculty is committed to a framework of caring that is integrated into all areas of teaching, learning, and leading. From a historical perspective, Kant illuminates the difference between ethical and natural caring.

Recognizing that ethical caring requires an effort that is not needed in natural caring does not commit us to a position that elevates ethical caring over natural caring. Kant has identified the ethical with that which is done out of duty and not out of love, and that distinction in itself seems right. But an ethic built on caring strives to maintain the caring attitude and thus is dependent upon, and not superior to natural caring. (Noddings, 2003, p.80)
It is well known and widely reported that education has encountered turbulent times and “In reviewing the forms of care, it becomes clear that there is a challenge to care in schools. The structures of current schooling work against care, and at the same time, the need for care is perhaps greater than ever” (Noddings, 1992, p. 20). The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1962) described care “as the very Being of human life. From his perspective, we are immersed in care; it is the ultimate reality of life” (as cited in Noddings, 1992, p. 15). In education, relationships that provide a caring environment allow learning to take place. As Darling Hammond (1997) explains, “relationships matter for learning. Students’ trust in their teachers helps them develop the commitment and motivation needed to tackle challenging learning tasks” (p.134). Therefore, “teachers not only have to create caring relations in which they are the carers, but they also have the responsibility to help their students develop the capacity to care” (Noddings, 1992, p. 18).

Curriculum is an important space to demonstrate care. Dewey (1963) argued that teachers begin with students’ personal experiences and interests to create connections to the content area. Interestingly, Dewey admired “Plato’s educational scheme in which children should be educated according to their talents and demonstrated interests” (Noddings, 1992, p. 44). In contemporary work, Noddings provides several working definitions for the role of caring in education.

I use caring to describe a certain kind of relation or encounter. Parenting and teaching both require long periods of time-continuity in relations. If our main purpose as educators were to encourage the development of caring in our students, we would begin to look more attentively at the need for continuity in place, people, and curriculum. (Noddings, 1992, xii)

We’ve explored several theoretical perspectives, as discussed above, to inform our pedagogy of Caring. A primary message of Caring is that we cannot justify ourselves as carers by claiming “we care”. If the recipients of our care insist that nobody cares, caring relations do not exist (Noddings, 2003).

DIVERSITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

We trace the guiding principle of diversity and social justice to the work of the Frankfurt School whose theorists attempted to “develop a theory and mode of critique that aims at both revealing and breaking with the existing structures of domination. Crucial to this perspective are an analysis and a call for the integration of the processes of emancipation and the struggle for self-emancipation” (Giroux, 1983, p. 4). There was a common attempt in the Frankfurt School to “assess the newly emerging forms of capitalism along with the changing forms of domination that accompany them. There was also an attempt on the part of all the members of the Frankfurt School to rethink and radically reconstruct the meaning of human emancipation, a project that differed considerably from the theoretical baggage of orthodox Marxism” (Giroux, 1983, p. 7). In order to pursue its agenda, “the Frankfurt School stressed the importance of critical thinking by arguing that it is “a constitutive feature of the struggle for self-emancipation and social
change‖ (Giroux, 1983, p. 9). “The questions it pursued and the forms of social inquiry it supported represent both a particular moment in the development of Western Marxism and a critique of it. Reacting to the rise of Fascism and Nazism, on the other hand, and to the failure of orthodox Marxism, on the other, the Frankfurt School had to refashion and rethink the meaning of domination and emancipation” (Giroux, 1983, p. 10).

There has been tremendous impact on education due to the important work of the Frankfurt School. They provided “a discourse that illuminates the social, political, and cultural totality in which schools develop, the various analyses of schooling provide a referent point from which to assess both the strengths and limitations of such work” (Giroux, 1983, p. 5). This body of work greatly influenced Paolo Freire’s work in literacy. Freire was deeply concerned with education and deficit models of teaching including banking education. “Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (Freire, 1997, p. 64). There is tremendous concern about the impact of banking education in the classroom. “Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (Freire, 1997, p. 53).

The new sociology of education emerged in full strength in the US in the early 1970s as a response to the discourse of traditional educational theory and practice. Its focus had Freirian roots as it sought to determine how to make education emancipatory. According to Giroux (1985),

Radical critics, for the most part, agreed that educational traditionalists generally ignored the question, and avoided the issue through the paradoxical attempt of depoliticizing the language of schooling while reproducing and legitimating capitalist ideologies. The most obvious expression of this approach could be seen in the positivist discourse used by traditional educational theorists. A positivist discourse, in this case, took as its most important concern the mastery of pedagogical techniques and the transmission of knowledge instrumental to the existing society. In the traditional world view, schools were considered merely instructional sites. That schools were also cultural and political sites was ignored, as was the notion that they represented areas of contention among differently empowered cultural and economic groups. (p. xiv)

An example of the politicization of schools, and another important guiding principle of diversity and social justice, involves the outcome effects of the civil rights movement.

The roots of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s lie in the transformed conditions and experience of Blacks during the Second World War. Large numbers of jobs previously closed to Black
workers were suddenly available. Thousands of Blacks were drafted into the army. More than three million Black men registered for the service, of whom 500,000 were stationed abroad (Marable, 1984, p.14).

After the Second World War, there were dramatic changes to Black employment. According to Robinson (1990),

Black employment in manufacturing had increased 135 percent over its 1940 proportion, and under the auspices of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), Black workers joined industrial unions by the tens of thousands. One hundred thousand Black workers joined the aircraft industry organized by the United Auto Workers (UAW), 5,000 Blacks joined the National Maritime Union, and in one Baltimore local of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, Black employment went from 5 percent of the workforce in 1941 to 20 percent by 1943, and even elected a Black shop steward.

Having fought for “democracy” abroad, Blacks returning from the war believed they ought to have some rights at home—and they intended to fight for those rights.

It was against this backdrop that several legal challenges to segregation, largely initiated by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), were to prove successful. The most famous of these was the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which ordered the desegregation of public schools and struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine that was at the core of segregation in the South. (p. 129)

According to Nieto (2000), “Both multicultural and bilingual education were direct outgrowths of the civil rights movement and they developed in response to racism, ethnocentrism, and language discrimination in education. These inequalities continue to exist, especially for Native American, Latino, and African American youngsters” (p. 5). “The term multicultural education is usually associated with race and ethnicity, although, as mentioned above, many educators address additional forms of diversity. Terms themselves reflect differing conceptions of how to deal with different forms of oppression” (Sleeter, 1991, 17-18). Unfortunately, “The responses by schools and educators were hurried with little thought in regards to institutionalizing them within the educational system” (Banks, 2010, p. 6-7).

It is for this reason that we’ve drawn on several theoretical perspectives, as discussed above, to inform our pedagogy of diversity and social justice. Today’s literature on the subject informs us that there are many perspectives on what we call what we do, but the constant and consistent emphasis is on how we, as a college of education, focus on the Praxis (Praxis=Reflection+Action). Freire says that "Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor
is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion" (Freire, 1997, p. 53). According to Freire, freedom will be the result of praxis--informed action--when a balance between theory and practice is achieved.

References


