

GSU, area educators seek to find solutions via MILE

With the recent establishment of the Metropolitan Institute for Leadership in Education (MILE), Governors State University is collaborating with south suburban educators to help develop solutions to the educational issues and challenges facing schools.

Governors State University in University Park is no stranger to responding to the educational needs of the community. Numerous GSU programs currently serve school teachers, counselors and principals. MILE, however, will focus on assisting the educational leaders and policy makers, school district superintendents and board members.

"Our school district leaders run multi-million dollar entities with hundreds of employees, impacting large sections of our region, and affecting families, children, and the local economy," explained Alicia McCray, director of MILE. "We believe that district leadership sets the framework for a successful school system."

According to McCray, "Superintendents and board members cast very long shadows. They make the decisions and set the direction of school efforts. Our purpose is to give the decision makers the tools, resources, and access to assistance they

need to make effective and positive decisions."

Since its inception last year, MILE has sought the input of south suburban educational leaders. MILE's mission and focus was determined by the needs they expressed. Currently, MILE is assisted by an advisory board of regional superintendents and the dean of the College of Education, Dr. Steven Russell.

"The advisory board reviews the programs and initiatives of the Institute and provides feedback so we continue to move in the right direction."

The Institute has wasted no time in getting involved and fulfilling its mission.

MILE is co-sponsoring the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity Annual Regional Conference in Matteson from March 30 to April 1. It also sponsored a regional symposium with Healing Racism Chicago Southland on March 11 which addressed issues of identity and language in the pursuit of excellence. A three-part lecture series in the spring will focus on strategic leadership is education.

In addition to these events, MILE is also establishing a website that will link educators to the information and

resources they need to make effective decisions and create far-reaching education plans.

"We want to create a portal to the many resources available both at the university and elsewhere. GSU already has faculty members researching educational issues such as the digital divide, urban education, and the changing culture in the classroom. We have programs here that already successfully serve the diverse demographics in our schools. Now we are working to link our professors and programs to education leaders to help them improve school climate and the effectiveness of the education offered."

McCray noted that the problems faced by one district in the South Suburbs are not necessarily the same for another. "Riverdale and Kankakee face different issues, but we want to serve as a source of information and solutions for both."

In the future, McCray hopes MILE will forge a strong collaboration between GSU and the community. "I envision a partnership that investigates and explores the current problems faced by educators and develops and implements programs and methods to solve them."

More information about MILE is available by calling (708) 534-8451.