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Department of Dispute Resolution Annual Report 1996-1997

Nova Southeastern University

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NOVA Southeastern University

Department of Dispute Resolution

ANNUAL REPORT

1996 - 1997
The Department of Dispute Resolution is proud to be entering the fifth year of its master’s program and the third year of its doctoral program. The master’s program started with 13 students in the fall of 1992 and grew to 25 students by the end of that first academic year. By the fall of 1993, admissions had grown substantially with 23 master’s acceptances, and 13 additional students joined the program during the winter and summer semesters, making a total class size of 36 for the second year of the master’s program. At that time, the department had only two full-time faculty members.

In 1994, the Ph.D. program was launched and enrolled 12 new students; the master’s program held to 36 students, unable to grow without the addition of new faculty. Two new faculty members were hired during this year (1994) to teach in both the doctoral and master’s programs. Subsequently, anticipating increased growth from inquiries, letters, and increasingly successful local marketing efforts, another two faculty members were hired for the fall of 1995. In the fall of 1995, the Department of Dispute Resolution admitted its second doctoral class of 9 full-time students and its largest master’s class of 40 students.

Administratively, the department changed to a more centralized form of organization, and consolidated the directorships of the master’s and doctoral programs under one department director. Although this streamlined academic and operational administrative functions, the director could no longer carry a full-time teaching load. This factor, as well as increasing demands on faculty time by doctoral dissertation students and the pending addition of a master’s thesis track, required hiring one more new faculty member in January of 1996.

Currently, the Department of Dispute Resolution has seven full-time faculty positions and has tentative plans to expand to 10 faculty in the upcoming 1997-1998 academic year [see Future Plans]. Our rapidly expanding student body, as noted graphically in Figure 1, combined with our commitment to keep class size small (25 maximum), requires that we create multiple sections for a number of courses in the master’s program; whenever possible, doctoral students have a separate section of required courses, although this may not always hold true as electives are added.

The student body is changing in some significant ways [see demographics]. For the first time this fall (1996), more students are coming into the programs from out of state. We also have more international students this year, hailing from as far away as China, Armenia, and Canada. This creates a more integrated and dynamic learning environment for everyone, and brings the diversity and cultural experiences, so valuable to understanding conflict in all its many forms, directly to the classroom.
This year the department was able to offer both tuition discounts, to entering and continuing doctoral students, and a student support system, which is planned to soon extend to the master's program as well. We are also initiating several work-study positions within the department this year for both resident and international students. These positions will help students to earn necessary discretionary income, as well as to work closely with faculty and staff in teaching, research, training, and other administrative activities.

The faculty has worked diligently over the past two years to improve the curriculum, adding electives to the programs in response to student concerns, so that more specialization can be included in each student's individual program of study; we also shortened the master's degree program to 19 months, and improved the quality of student admissions. We have added a master's thesis as an optional feature in that program as well. Although we focus on training reflective practitioners, some master’s students will continue their studies in order to teach and conduct research or training in the field. This option allows them the ability to prepare for their future career goals in a flexible way. We continue to look for ways to improve the quality of life and scholarship for students in the program, and any thoughts, suggestions, and constructive comments are always welcome.

In keeping with a philosophy of seeing students as the school’s clients, faculty developed a comprehensive student survey to collect data on student demographics and attitudes toward academic issues and school/university policies and services. Although the overall data revealed that student were generally satisfied or more than satisfied with the programs and services currently offered by the school and department, areas of continuous concern and needed attention were identified for future planning. Some of these findings are discussed here in the hope that by working together, we will be able to develop new strategies for responding to student and faculty issues.

Cathie J. Witty, Ph.D.
Director
Department of Dispute Resolution
Our Mission ...... The School of Social and Systemic Studies

The School of Social and Systemic Studies focuses on academic excellence and leadership in the education of professionals who provide effective intervention in difficult and problematic human relationships. The school offers innovative and creative programs in professional training, practicum and community service, and applied research.

The School develops curriculum and teaching methods of undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, and continuing education. The cornerstone of academic education in the School is the teaching and learning of professional ethics and social responsibility. Students and faculty together integrate theory and practice through the free exchange of ideas in class and seminar discussion, applied research projects, and community service activities.

One of the perceived functions of the master's thesis is to allow students to engage in short-term research and/or community-oriented projects in South Florida. This opportunity to learn more about and interact with the local community is an important part of the department's goal for student and faculty focus.

Figure 1

![Student Enrollment Growth](image)
The Practicum Experience

The practicum experience is one of the keystones of the master’s and doctoral programs, and one of the hands-on, practice-focused series of courses which allow each student to hone his or her skills in a particular area of interest. The Department of Dispute Resolution faculty made a number of changes in the practicum sequence during the 1994-1995 academic year. At that time, Practicum I, for both master’s and doctoral level students, was re-designed to become a series of in-house simulations in preparation for practica in the community.

The Department then hired a new full-time Practicum Coordinator to design, explore, locate, and implement on-site placements for students in the program. With an excellent, dedicated person assigned to this task, the practica experience has been vastly improved for 1996-1997.

As a result of these efforts, there has been a substantial increase in the number and variety of community settings available to students for practicum placement. During the 1995-1996 academic year, 32 master’s and doctoral students were placed at a total of 19 sites, with placement in community mediation programs, schools, federal, state, county, and city governmental programs and offices, and other non-profit organizations.

The success of the implementation of a department program to enhance the number and variety of practicum placements may be seen in the statistics for the coming 1996-97 academic year. A total of 52 students will be eligible for practicum placements; 42 sites have confirmed a total of 220 available placements. These sites are not only in the same environments as were previously available, but now also include county court-related programs, private practices, businesses, and national organizations and associations. Such diverse settings as The Broward Regional Juvenile Detention Center, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Council for Broward and Dade counties, Ft. Lauderdale High School, and the Urban League form part of the potential practicum settings for ADR students. While placements were often not timely last year, as of June 3, 1996, 14 of 52 students had already chosen a site and were ready to start their practica on July 13, 1996.

In a survey completed in spring of 1996, 96 dispute resolution students were asked to choose a response to the following statement: "The practicums have provided an opportunity to learn and apply my dispute resolution knowledge and/or skills in real settings."

- 42% students indicated some degree of satisfaction with the practica,
- 11% indicated they were less than satisfied,
- 7% indicated they were satisfied,
- 22% indicated they were more than satisfied,
- 13% indicated they were very satisfied, and
- 46% not responding to the question.
Given the changes in the program, we are looking forward to much better results when we survey the students at the end of next year.

Minimum Technological Skills

The School of Social and Systemic Studies has invested both time and resources to create a technologically-equipped environment for faculty, staff, and students. All employees of the center, including faculty, administrators, and support staff have immediate access to a computer assigned to them. The school continually upgrades these computers with the necessary hardware and software to meet the growing technological needs of the employees. This past year, considerable resources were invested in purchasing new computers and a variety of research-related software (i.e., qualitative data analysis programs for the PC and the Macintosh) to be used by faculty and students, and also upgraded many existing computers. Students who enroll in the school’s academic programs are introduced to the school’s and university’s technological resources during the orientation process. Some information is presented at the formal orientation sessions, while some topics are covered during the first semester’s introductory classes. Students are also assigned e-mail addresses which allow them to use the university’s computer systems. In this way, students may access general university announcements and information, the electronic library, a wide variety of research tools, and Internet access from home or the university computer laboratories.

During the 1995-96 academic year, the university assisted the school in establishing an in-house computer laboratory, giving students computer access for word processing and research. This enables students who do not have computers at home to complete assignments in still another location, joining the other computer labs available both on the east campus, where the school is located, and on the main campus.
Technological training for faculty and staff is an on-going process. Formal training is available throughout the academic year from the university's academic computing department. Informal training occurs on-the-spot, with faculty, administrators, and staff guiding others in discovering new approaches to using software to its fullest advantage. The School also offers a variety of brief workshops each year, focusing on a specific use of the technology in place. During the 1995-96 academic year, the Dean presented such a workshop on establishing student-faculty discussion groups to supplement classroom teaching.

This year, 1996-1997, the department will implement a standard of minimal technological competence which students must achieve prior to graduation. These tests of skills are completed during the course of normal classroom exercises, such as computerized data collection and analysis for research, use of the electronic library services of the university for locating informational resources, and use of the Internet and World Wide Web for research purposes. Relating the skills to actual data or topics makes the technological aspects of the learning more focused and applied to ADR practice problems.

Scholarships and Tuition Waivers

For the first time, the department disseminated nearly $60,000 in tuition waivers for the 1996-97 academic year to eight new or continuing doctoral students; master's students from abroad were also eligible for waivers since they are not eligible for financial aid in this country; one master's award is included in this total.

Work-Study Positions

Also for the first time, the department will offer work-study positions to four students in the department; students will be paid $6.00 per hour and can only work a maximum of 20 hours per week, but the salary does help students cover incidental costs, and the jobs keep the student employees close to departmental activities. Master's students will have greater access to those jobs since they could not benefit this year from tuition waiver funds; international students will still have priority, since they are not eligible for any U.S. financial aid.

Curriculum Changes

The faculty worked very hard during the past year to improve the curriculum, reduce redundancy from classes, add more flexibility to individual programs of study, and add options to master's students' final projects.

The department has added a number of electives to the curriculum, and it is anticipated that new courses will be added to this list in the coming year. For example, in collaboration with the Department of Family Therapy, ADR students may now select from Family Health Care
courses, Marital and Family Therapy, Diversity in Human and Family Development, and Theories of Personality and Psychopathology. We will also offer electives in public administration, gender and conflict, and peace studies.

Master’s Thesis

The department has added the option of a master’s thesis this year, for master’s students who wish to pursue further academic study or do a more intense research project than that normally required. Hopefully, many of these projects will be focused on local community needs and issues. The thesis is a two semester project undertaken during a student’s second year of study in the program; the process is supported by two faculty readers and requires a capstone lecture and public defense of the work [see M.S. student handbook for details].

Specializations

It is possible, in the fall of 1996, to plan for a specialization in Family Health Care within the ADR program. The Dispute Resolution Program Coordinator is prepared to provide, prior to registration, further details for new students.

A range of electives are sequenced to become an 18-credit hour specialization and this distinction is noted on your transcript from the University. In the future, we plan to include other specializations, such as public administration, environmental issues, international relations, and gender or community studies, to the program curriculum. We also allow students to take a fourth semester of practicum now if they wish to continue in a placement or do research or some other type of special work with their site.

Collaborations

The department continues to explore collaborative offerings with the university’s business, education, and law schools and hopes to have new courses and specializations in place by the fall of 1997. Collaboration with organizations outside the University are an important part of our community outreach mission, and although community exchange is partially achieved through the use of practicum placements throughout the tri-county area, we would like more linkages with individuals and groups in terms of curricula and teaching.

The department has initiated a Brown Bag Lunch Speaker Series this fall, and we look forward to bringing together University faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the outside community, in this informal way to discuss topics of mutual interest.
From the responses of the two continuing classes of students recently polled, we know that within the Department of Dispute Resolution, 46% of the master's graduates are employed within their field, another 15% have gone on to law school, 15% are doing volunteer work within their field; and another 15% were employed outside their field, but were using their practitioner skills in their employment.

Since dispute resolution is such a new field, it is more difficult for graduates to immediately find employment in this area, but new opportunities continually emerge; 46% of the master's graduates are members of professional organizations, 38% had obtained professional certification (not required nationally or in many states), and 8% had already been published or given professional presentations. This department expects to award its first doctoral degrees during the 1996-97 academic year.

The same spring survey showed that, with respect to gender, 33.3% of the department is male and 65.3% female. In the entering fall class that breakdown is 28% and 71% respectively.

The largest grouping or mode is group (1) 20-29 years of age (36%). However, the (2nd) 30-39, (3rd) 40-49, and (4th) 50-59 constitute 63% of our total student population. The mean age of students in both the master's and doctoral programs is 33 or 34; the age ranges 30 to 59 constitute 63% of the student population. In the fall entering class, the mean age is 32.
The department is diverse compared to national statistics on university enrollment at the graduate level. The previous class population is 66% white, 14% black, 6% Latino, and 2% Native American; remember this combines two class cohorts into one statistical group. Most of our current students have spent the majority of their lives in other states 58%. Only 30% have spent most of their lives in Florida. Students are also predominantly full time (79%), single or divorced (48%), and enter the program with a prior master's degree (74%).

The following graphics show the combined classes of 1994 and 1995 as compared with the new incoming class of 1996 in terms of ethnicity:

Figure 4

Students by Ethnicity
1994-95 versus 1996

In a skills related question, it was interesting to note that current students felt comfortable and solid in their mediation procedures and skills:

Figure 5

Feeling of Adequacy Related to Mediation Skills
1994-1995 Students
In terms of living arrangements the two groups look fairly similar:

**Figure 6**

![Residence Status Chart](image)

Almost all status categories (marriage, widowhood and divorce, and living with significant other) have declined; the only category to increase between these two cohorts is that of being single.

**Future Directions**

Although it was demonstrated that the student population has grown by more than 500\% during the past three years, the full-time faculty has grown by only 50\%. We have had some losses, a leave of absence, and a faculty member who was moved into administrative duties full-time. It seems reasonable that we will need to take a look at hiring two or perhaps three additional faculty in 1997-1998 to keep abreast of the expanding student population.

As the International Training Institute (ITI) begins with Dr. Femenia’s guidance, we will find an even greater need for faculty who remain at the NSU home base and cover the essential course work.

Admissions will be more streamlined next year, with the faculty taking a more active role in the interviewing of master’s students as well as the doctoral candidates. This should mean that the admissions process will finish sooner, releasing both faculty and staff for other duties.
We anticipate great expansion in the area of Practicum placements, and hope that with the help of personal and computer networks, we can all combine forces to create a solid placement service for students graduating next year.

We will be keeping alumni, continuing and new students, and staff aware of our growing opportunities through a departmental newsletter which should come “off the press” early fall. We welcome contributions to the newsletter, including any piece of news which students would want to share with us about the community, their job, or their life.

We have started a new Brown Bag lunch series on the second and fourth Tuesday of each week. We will soon distribute flyers to request that everyone join us for some lunchtime discussion.

The new student orientation this year includes two days of writing and computer-based skills classes. This new procedure will continue, since the faculty and staff believe it is such a wonderful addition to our programs. These classes are brief, but they will make students more aware of the resources on campus, and will go through some fundamental issues about descriptive and analytical writing that every student will need to know. It is intended to help students gear themselves to faculty expectations, and to give them an opportunity to review illustrations of different student writings, which faculty consider to be of good and poor quality. Participants will then be asked to edit the poor quality papers to bring them up to a better caliber.

## Faculty Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Evaluations - 1994</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above box illustrates the students’ evaluations of their courses, averaged by department. Over 92% of students in all programs reported that they learned useful, interesting, and significant ideas in their courses. Some students in each program stated that they had some concerns about their classes.

The most repeated concerns were:

- Too much material in too little time
- More examples and practical techniques
- Cramped classroom space
Faculty Activity and Interests

Full-time Faculty:

**Bryne, Sean, Ph.D., 1993, International Relations, The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Interests: International relations, children, violence and war, comparative politics, and peace studies.**

Recent presentation and/or publications:


- *Dividing Societies: Turning Points in Understanding Conflict and Peaceful Change* (With Paul Dixon and Cynthia Irvin), in process.

- *Northern Ireland, Israel, South Africa and Urban United States at a Crossroads: The Role of Integrated Education In Conflict Resolution and Peace Building*, in process.


**Femenia, Nora, Ph.D., 1993, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse. Interests: Latin America, cross cultural disputing, collaborative problem solving, consulting, and communication models in ADR.**

Recent presentations and/or publications:


Recent presentations and/or publications:


Recent presentations and/or publications:


“The Influence of Regulatory Negotiations on the US EPA as an Institution”, (Forthcoming), Book Chapter title TBA, April 1995.
Witty, Cathie J., Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 1975; M.P.A., Harvard University, 1976. Interests: cross cultural dispute resolution, ethics, research, community studies, and comparative law.

Recent presentations and/or publications:


Anthropology and ADR in Community and Regional Conflicts: Didn’t We Learn this in the 60’s?, Society for Applied Anthropology, Annual Meeting, Baltimore, 1996.


Anthropology and ADR in Community and Regional Conflicts: Didn’t We Learn this in the 60’s?, presented at the Annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Baltimore, March, 1996. Submitted to Practicing Anthropology, June, 1996.


Warters, Bill, Ph.D., Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1993. Interests: Research, the human communication factor in ADR, training, and violence prevention and intervention.

Recent presentations and/or publications:

Alternatives to Violence Prison Workshop Leader, New York Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers), Trained as community volunteer to administer 25-hour nonviolence workshops to prison inmates in New York State prisons, Provide occasional prison workshops, 8/87.

Domestic Violence Prevention Project Educator, Women’s Crisis Support & Shelter Services, Santa Cruz, CA., assisted in the development and presentation of 3-part workshops on domestic violence and its prevention for high school and junior high students throughout Santa Cruz County. Also designed and implemented workshops on violence in dating relationships for college students, 1983-85.


**Visiting Scholars:**


Recent presentations and/or publications:


**Sweedler, Marcia**, Ph.D., 1984, Educational Policy, Planning and Administration, University of Maryland. Interests: gender issues in ADR, mediation in multicultural settings, cooperative learning in schools, and peer medication models in schools.

Recent presentations and/or publications:


Fairfax County Public Schools Third Annual Student Mediation Conference - Facilitator Training Manual (with Marjorie Bleiweis and Robert Harris), Springfield, VA: Fairfax County Public Schools, 1995.