

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation: Reflections on Its Development and First Seven Years

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Background: The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) program at Western Michigan University (WMU) was designed and developed to address the increasing need and demand for highly trained and skilled evaluators. After only six and a half years, the program's graduates are serving in important evaluation leadership positions throughout the world.

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to provide readers with a historical overview and up-to-date description of the IDPE and is intended for those who are interested in evaluation curriculum and advances in the profession.

Setting: Not applicable.

Intervention: Not applicable.

Research Design: Not applicable.

Data Collection and Analysis: In this article each of the program's current and previous leaders reflect on their role in the IDPE.

Findings: The concept, design, and operations of this program should be of interest both to evaluation scholars and to those who administer graduate education programs in evaluation.

Keywords: *evaluation training, doctoral programming, interdisciplinary programming, evaluation history*

Evaluation's continuing value to society depends on sound graduate education programs that provide a continuing flow of evaluators qualified to serve in the full range of disciplines. While current evaluation master's and doctoral programs are producing some highly qualified evaluators, their perspectives and experiences are typically limited to a single discipline, such as education (Stufflebeam, 2001, p. 445).

Referring to the increasing need and demand for highly skilled evaluators, Donaldson and Christie (2006) wrote that "...societies all around the globe are embracing the values of accountability and professionalism, and organizations of all shapes and sizes are commissioning professional evaluations at an increasing rate" (p. 244).

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) program at Western Michigan University (WMU) was designed and developed to meet this world-wide need and demand for highly trained and skilled evaluation specialists. The program is unique in its engagement of students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines and many countries in experience-based study of evaluation that is not located in a single department or college of the University. Moreover, the training is occurring within the context of a leading university-based evaluation center. In its short history, the IDPE has taken root and been highly productive.

After only seven years of operation, the program's graduates are serving in important evaluation leadership positions throughout the world. Potentially, the concept, design, and operations of this program are of interest to evaluation leaders, generally, and, specifically, to those who administer graduate education programs in evaluation. Today, such programs are conducted at a wide range of universities across the U.S. and beyond.

The purpose of this article is to provide readers of the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation* (JMDE) with a historical overview and up-to-date description of the IDPE and is intended for those who are interested in evaluation curriculum and advances in the profession.

In 2001, Daniel Stufflebeam set forth his vision for "interdisciplinary Ph.D. programming in evaluation" in a paper of the same name which was published in *AJE*. Largely, his vision for interdisciplinary Ph.D. programming in evaluation was structured around two Ph.D. programs which are no longer active: The Evaluation Consortium Interdisciplinary Evaluation Ph.D. program of Lee Cronbach and his associates (1980) at Stanford University and the Model Training Program in Evaluation (M.A. and Ph.D.), which Stufflebeam designed and led at Ohio State University (OSU). Stufflebeam's vision for interdisciplinary Ph.D. programming in evaluation—as originally reflected in his OSU work in the early 1970s (The Oral History Project Team, 2008)—was reactivated in 2003 when the IDPE was established at The Evaluation Center (EC) of WMU. In large part, its operationalization was due to the joint effort of Stufflebeam and Jane Davidson.

The IDPE's mission is to develop thought leaders in evaluation who have: (1) deep knowledge of evaluation theory, methodology, and practice; (2) superior skills in practical and critical thinking; and (3) a knack for seeing opportunities for innovation and improvement. To accomplish this mission, the IDPE is based on the concept that the best way to learn evaluation is by doing it and the best way to develop thought leaders in a discipline is by exposing them to the best and brightest minds available. For

example, guest lectures, presentations, and workshops have been given to IDPE students by such evaluation luminaries as James Sanders, Jonny Morell, Michael Q. Patton, and Brian Yates, in addition to direct instruction from Daniel Stufflebeam, Jane Davidson, Michael Scriven, and Chris Coryn. As part of the EC's Evaluation Café series, students have also attended presentations by Robert Brinkerhoff, Rebecca Campbell, Tom Cook, Lois-Ellin Datta, Gene Glass, Arlen Gullickson, Jerry Horn, Robin Miller, Patricia Rogers, Robert Stake, and Mike Trevisan, among many others.¹

As recently noted by Stufflebeam (2007), the IDPE is unique in its interdisciplinary nature. This feature of the program is especially reflective of the collaboration of various academic departments in Lee Cronbach's Evaluation Consortium at Stanford University during the 1970s. The IDPE'S involvement of students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines and service areas and its offering of Ph.D. degrees in evaluation from four distinct colleges currently is unmatched by other doctoral programs anywhere. Significantly, the program stresses that, beyond formal coursework, IDPE students should develop evaluation expertise by doing evaluation work; that is, carrying out tasks required to conduct evaluations, evaluate evaluations, train evaluators and evaluation clients, and help develop the evaluation discipline.

The concept of how the IDPE prepares its students is represented in a career ladder for accelerated entry of graduates into the evaluation field, a concept which Stufflebeam had embedded in the OSU Model Training Program in Evaluation. Following this concept, the IDPE provides students with progressively increased areas of responsibility and authority in

serious evaluation work, so that, upon leaving the program, they emerge as nationally and internationally recognized professionals with excellent preparation, significant experience, and a track record of publications or other noteworthy contributions.

The IDPE and EC have a symbiotic relationship and IDPE students are privileged to be associated with WMU's EC. It has a long history of advancing the theory, practice, and utilization of evaluation. In fact, the EC was founded by Stufflebeam at OSU in 1965 and was later moved to WMU in 1973. It affords students a rich set of experiences in research, development, service, dissemination, instruction, and leadership related to evaluation. IDPE students have access to the EC's national and international involvements, such as the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, the American Evaluation Association (AEA), JMDE (which was developed by Michael Scriven, Jane Davidson, and then IDPE students Chris Coryn and Daniela Schröter in 2004), collaborating universities, and a number of charitable foundations, government agencies, and other national and international organizations. The EC provides many IDPE students with funded research associateships in addition to other forms of financial support. By virtue of the IDPE being embedded in the EC, the EC is contributing significantly to the development of leaders for the evaluation field and, of course, the IDPE students are contributing much to the EC's services, scholarly activities, and accomplishments.

It is also noteworthy and important that the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education, Engineering and Applied Sciences, and Health and Human Services at WMU are providing the academic foundation for the program. The

involvements of their administrators and faculty help ensure that each student will graduate with specializations in both evaluation and a selected academic discipline, such as computer science, economics, educational administration, mechanical engineering, nursing, political science, school administration, social work, special education, sociology, or statistics. Together with the EC, the four colleges are providing IDPE students with major professors, other doctoral committee members, dissertation chairpersons, graduate assistantships, and internships.

The first cohort, consisting of five doctoral students, was admitted to the IDPE in 2003. Since then, an average of six full-time doctoral students has been admitted annually. These students are approximately an equal ratio of male to female and come from more than a dozen countries throughout the world and nearly half are international. Most enter with a Master's degree and some professional evaluation experience. However, neither is a requirement for admission. General admissions requirements include: excellent previous academic performance; high scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE); relevant work experience; a track record evidencing serious scholarship and effective job performance; letters of recommendation; fit with the program; and availability of a suitable advisor. Specific admissions requirements include: academic ability; ability to handle the nontechnical (e.g., logistical, peripheral) aspects of evaluation, including communication and project management; a strong desire to become a leader in evaluation; a proclivity to study and learn in an interdisciplinary setting; a desire to be challenged and spend time outside one's comfort zone; and a commitment to

(and interest in) engaging in hands-on evaluation learning experiences.²

The program's first graduates completed and defended their dissertations in 2007.³ These graduates have gone on to careers in academia, the non-profit sector, and independent consulting. Presently, the program has more than 30 full-time doctoral students. It is especially noteworthy that during their studies, IDPE students have served numerous leadership roles in AEA, such as chairs, co-chairs, and program chairs for many of AEA's Topical Interest Groups (TIGs), as members on special AEA taskforces, and as journal editors. Many have published peer reviewed papers, book reviews, and other types of scholarly contributions in journals such as the *American Journal of Evaluation*, *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *Chronic Illness, Evaluation and Program Planning*, *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *New Directions for Evaluation*, *Psychological and Educational Measurement*, *The Qualitative Report*, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, and *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, among others, during their doctoral studies.⁴ A few have authored book chapters during their time as graduate students in the IDPE. Combined, these students have also given dozens of presentations at professional meetings such as the annual AEA conference and conferences of the European Evaluation Society (EES) and Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). A few students have given workshops at AEA affiliate meetings (e.g., the Michigan Association for Evaluation [MAE]) as well as at institutions outside the U.S. (e.g., India, Germany, Switzerland), and several have taught evaluation courses for other departments

at WMU. Numerous IDPE students also have sought and obtained evaluation grants and contracts in areas such as international development, education, human and social services, health, and business. To date, IDPE students have been involved in evaluations, research, presentations, or workshops in North America (United States and Canada), Asia (Cambodia, China, Thailand, Nepal, and Vietnam), Africa (Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania), Europe (Albania, Germany, Switzerland, and United Kingdom), Latin America (Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru), and in Australasia (New Zealand). These accomplishments closely align to Stufflebeam's (2001) original conception of what prospective students could expect to experience in such a program (pp. 451-454).

In 2007, two annual awards were established to recognize excellence in evaluation scholarship. The first was established by WMU, at the behest of the University's President, Diether Haenicke. This award, titled The Daniel L. Stufflebeam Travel Scholarship, is presented to a promising doctoral student in the IDPE who has displayed outstanding academic performance in the early stages of graduate coursework. The winner of this award receives up to \$1,000 for travel expenses to the annual AEA conference. The second award, established by the IDPE, is The Michael Scriven Dissertation Award for Outstanding Contribution to Evaluation Theory, Methodology, or Practice. It is presented to a student whose doctoral dissertation represents a significant contribution to the theory, methodology, or practice of evaluation. The winner of this award receives \$500 and a certificate of recognition. Although only WMU students are eligible for the Daniel L.

Stufflebeam Travel Scholarship, The Michael Scriven Dissertation Award for Outstanding Contribution to Evaluation Theory, Methodology, or Practice is open to students in any discipline from any institution in any part of the world upon successfully completing and defending an evaluation-related doctoral dissertation.⁵

Reflections on the Development and First Seven Years of the IDPE

Although he played a leading role in establishing the IDPE, Stufflebeam never served as its director. Instead, he chaired the program's initial governing board. The board selected Jane Davidson to be the IDPE's first director, a position which she held from 2003 to 2004. Between 2004 and 2007, the IDPE was directed by Michael Scriven. The present director is the first author of this article. In the following, each of the program's leaders reflect on their role and experience with the IDPE.

Development of the IDPE: The Stufflebeam Years

In the wake of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty (launched in 1965), with its unprecedented heavy requirements for evaluation and accountability, public school districts in the state of Ohio—like those in all other states—experienced a crisis. They needed and wanted to obtain the huge grants for educational improvement being offered by the U.S. Office of Education. However, most districts could not qualify for the awards because of an inability to meet the government's strong requirements for acceptable evaluation plans. Moreover,

the school districts lacked staff members with the skills needed to conduct sound evaluations.

To address this dilemma, Ohio State's Head of Education, Dr. John Ramseyer, in 1965 assigned me (then, Ohio State's head of achievement test development) to "go into the evaluation business." In carrying out this assignment, I established The Evaluation Center (now at WMU) and also served as the lead advisor on evaluation to the federal Title I and III Programs (for school improvement and educational innovation) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

One outgrowth of this work (during the 1960s and 70s, at national and local levels) was the development, under a \$1.1 million federal grant, of Ohio State's Model Training Program in Evaluation (M.A. and Ph.D.). That program became the main model for WMU's current IDPE, including its engagement of students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines, its emphasis on learning evaluation by doing it, and its concept of a career ladder for students—so that they would leave the program as accomplished and recognized leaders, its stress on preparing graduates to advance the theory as well as practice of evaluation, and its being embedded in, and contributing to the full range of activities of the EC.

After its move from OSU, for nearly 30 years WMU embraced and supported the work of the EC. Its mission has been to steadfastly advance the theory, practice, and utilization of evaluation, through research and theory development, development of evaluation procedures and tools, dissemination of new knowledge, evaluation services, instruction, and leadership. The EC's accomplishments over this period have been extensive and influential, as is well documented on the EC's Web site

(<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/>).

However, it is noteworthy that the EC's instructional contributions were constrained mainly to offering institutes and workshops and providing project-based learning experiences for graduate students.

My repeated attempts to reestablish the Model Training Program in Evaluation at WMU, over a period of more than 25 years, were thwarted until 2002. At that time, with the strong assistance of WMU Provost Fred Dobney, the IDPE finally became a reality. I chaired the program's initial governing board, which included deans of the involved colleges. This board, first, moved the program through the University's gauntlet of approval committees, then, launched the program.

The board was extremely fortunate in selecting Jane Davidson to serve as the program's first director. She and her successors, Drs. Michael Scriven and Chris Coryn, have provided exceptionally strong leadership to the program. They have succeeded in recruiting outstanding students with diverse backgrounds. The students have performed admirably in their programs. Of no small note is the fact that administrators and faculty members from across the University, plus a few from other universities have coalesced in providing students with a rich set of learning experiences, sound guidance in tailoring the program to their individual needs, excellent assistance in planning and completing dissertations, and continuing collegial support beyond graduation.

No doubt, the IDPE's graduates are becoming a powerful force for advancing the theory, practice, and utilization of evaluation—across disciplines and abroad as well as throughout the U.S. As the IDPE's founder, it is indeed gratifying to

see that this program has taken root, has had outstanding administrative leadership, has been ably operated by faculty from a wide range of disciplines, has attracted a diverse group of outstanding students, has, after many failed attempts, finally surmounted the obstacles to innovation that are all too common in universities, is now efficiently and effectively moving students through the program to graduation, and, overall, is fulfilling its promise. It seems clear that the IDPE is an important milestone in the continuing development of the evaluation profession. It is a key resource for groups throughout the world that need to employ highly trained professional evaluators and it is an instructive example for universities that seek to establish graduate programs in evaluation or to strengthen their existing programs.

However, it must be acknowledged that the program is continuing to succeed largely because of the herculean efforts of its director and in spite of an inadequate investment by WMU. Dr. Coryn is the only full-time, tenure-track faculty member assigned to recruit, teach, and advise students—all of this while also carrying the main responsibility for administering the program and editing *JMDE*. The IDPE is truly one of WMU's outstanding programs, as is clear from its societal significance, its national and international visibility, its high standards, and—in its short existence—its impressive record of accomplishments. If the program is to mature and endure, it will be critically important for WMU to add at least two and preferably three tenure track faculty positions to the program. It is a no brainer that such an investment is fully justified, not only by the program's importance and success but also by the imperative of delivering the best possible educational service to the number of

students which has now reached almost 40. In quoting his friend, Charles Walgreen, Ralph Tyler once told me that many initially successful enterprises failed because they expanded beyond the resources required to support the expansion at a high level of quality. Let us hope that the IDPE will not suffer this fate. WMU has a wonderful opportunity to build on the IDPE's success. In these times of scarce resources, it is certainly in WMU's best interest to target needed funds to IDPE, one of the university's pockets of excellence.

The Davidson Years

I was originally recruited to WMU by James Sanders to take up the faculty position he was retiring from in the College of Education's program in Evaluation, Measurement and Research (EMR). I had recently graduated with a doctorate from Claremont Graduate University, where I had been exposed to a wide range of evaluation approaches and methods including theory-driven evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, and the logic and methodology of evaluation. Although I had officially specialized in organizational behavior, my disciplinary background and work experience had roots from a far wider realm, including chemistry, astrophysics, horticulture, quality assurance, human resource management, industrial/organizational psychology, secondary education, English as a Second Language, and consulting psychology.

It was shortly after I arrived at WMU that Dan Stufflebeam had progressed the concept of an interdisciplinary doctoral program to a point where funding had been secured to turn it from concept into reality. A search had been launched for someone who could sell the concept to a

diverse audience, mobilize support for the program across the university, complete its conceptual and logistical development, and lead the task of getting it approved by all the relevant university bodies. I saw this as an exciting challenge, applied for the position, and began in spring 2002.

The next 15 months were spent generating buy-in for the program across the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Education, Engineering & Applied Sciences, and Health & Human Services. This needed to be done at multiple levels, with senior management, department heads, and faculty who would be listed as part of the IDPE. At the same time, a needs assessment was conducted to identify the nature and extent of the need for the new program. The program's structure, requirements and coursework also had to be conceptualized and developed in enough detail to pass formal approval hurdles at department, college, university and state level. These tasks were made far more challenging by the unique nature of the proposed program. Unlike other doctorates at WMU, it would not be housed in an academic department within a college; it would be offered by four colleges, have a physical home base in the EC, and would report to the Provost's Office through a board including the involved deans, the Vice President for Research, and The Evaluation Center's director.

By fall 2002, the IDPE had obtained support for the program and a list of available courses and participating faculty from 14 academic departments across the university's Colleges of Arts & Sciences (Departments of Sociology; Political Science; Economics; Statistics; Public Affairs & Administration), Education (Departments of Educational Studies; Health, Physical Education & Recreation; Counselor Education & Counseling

Psychology; Teaching, Learning & Leadership); Engineering & Applied Sciences (Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering); and Health & Human Services (Occupational Therapy; Social Work; Blind Rehabilitation; Community Health Services). In fall 2002 the program was officially approved by the curriculum committees of all four colleges, the WMU Graduate Studies Council, the Provost, and the university President. In spring 2003 it passed its final two hurdles—approval by the Presidents' Council, State Universities of Michigan, and the WMU Board of Trustees. I was appointed director of the new program and the first six students were enrolled in fall 2003.

I was particularly committed to the idea that the program should not just produce competent evaluation "technicians," but "thought leaders"—people who would help lead the discipline of evaluation by contributing substantially to the theory, methodology, and/or practice of evaluation. Accordingly, I made it clear that it was not permissible to simply "do" an evaluation and write it up as a dissertation; there had to be a demonstrated contribution to evaluation theory (not just to theory in the cognate area), evaluation methodology, and/or evaluation practice.

Along with Stufflebeam, I firmly believed that practice-linked learning was the key to generating the kinds of insights from which new theories and methodologies were born. To this end, not only was professional field experience a program requirement, but students had to complete two applied "research tools"—a needs assessment and a full evaluation—before being advanced to candidacy.

Thought leaders in evaluation needed not only to be well grounded in theory, methodology, and practice; they needed to be able to "think on their feet" and

communicate important concepts in real time. This led to the requirement for an oral as well as a written qualifying examination before advancing to candidacy.

The potential of the IDPE program and its students was striking right from the start. All of the students who enrolled in the first year of the program came in with Master's degrees and some of them had some quite substantial evaluation experience already. They were diverse in many dimensions—disciplinary background, work experience, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and strengths. They were keen to be challenged, to work outside their comfort zones, to push and refine their thinking and practice, and to learn from the wealth of experience and expertise they had at their doorstep in the EC and across the university. The level of debate and discourse in classes and elsewhere created a sense of being part of something powerful, something cutting-edge, something that could change the world.

Ironically, the uniquely interdisciplinary nature of the program was one of the factors that led me to return home to New Zealand in May 2004. WMU had sponsored my application for a Green Card (U.S. permanent residence), and one of the requirements was to show that I was qualified for my faculty position. The position description had called for “a doctorate in a relevant discipline (e.g., sociology, social psychology, education, political science, public administration).” Unfortunately, the box on the Application for Alien Employment Certification was too small for the full list of possible disciplines, and the staff member in WMU Human Resources inadvertently abbreviated the list to read simply “sociology” rather than “relevant

discipline.” My doctorate was in psychology. Although the U.S. Department of Labor certified me as qualified for the position, the Immigration and Naturalization Services overruled this, insisting that I resign, reapply for the position, and start the Green Card application process again from the start. Having already been geographically separated from my husband for more than two years due to the lack of permanent residence status, we decided to move to New Zealand instead.

I was fortunate to be able to leave the program and its students in extremely good hands, with WMU successfully recruiting Michael Scriven to take over the directorship from fall 2004. I still maintain an involvement with the program from afar, Skyping into graduate courses as a guest speaker and serving on doctoral qualifying exams. It's always a highlight of my trip to the American Evaluation Association conference that I get to meet IDPE graduates and students, and the caliber is still as high as ever.

The Scriven Years

I had made many visits to WMU over the years when Dan Stufflebeam, Jim Sanders, and Arlen Gullickson (amongst many others) were making major contributions to the theory and practice of evaluation in a huge range of areas of human endeavor, and in fact worked under Dan on a federal contract to improve the evaluation of teachers in the United States, so I knew the situation there quite well. I was attracted by the idea of running a doctoral program linked to the EC, independent of any single department or college control, and focused around the theme of developing thought leaders, not just highly competent workers in evaluation. The position was,

as the saying goes, somewhat challenging, since it basically required teaching all the core evaluation courses (a normal full load), running the program administratively, recruiting and counseling students, serving on the doctoral committees of (eventually) 20 students, developing new contacts around the university, starting work on succession planning, and raising funds for fellowships (many thanks to the Gilmore Foundation of Kalamazoo for helping us with that, partly in exchange for internship work by the fellowship recipients). Did I mention that that job description is for the *half-time position* of director of the doctoral program; the other half time was to serve as associate director of the EC (no longer a requirement). I did not do a great job on everything in these two roles, despite great help from our supercompetent part-time administrative aide (Mary Ramlow), our technology expert (Joe Fee), and an extremely tolerant and helpful director of the EC (Arlen Gullickson), plus several other staff members of the EC. Many, many thanks to all those good friends and helpers; and above all, thanks to the many students who were also both friends and helpers.

I took the job on the understanding that I would stay for just three years, partly because my wife and I were hoping to get together back in California, given my absence in New Zealand for the previous two years, and partly because it seemed to me hard to justify the idea that one is competent and healthy enough after one's 80th birthday to avoid the disaster for the program of being unable to complete an academic year. However, I did not walk out on any student's committee and have been working with many of them in the many months since

my departure, via Skype, e-mail, and occasional visits to campus.

The two most important things I tried to do were: (1) to be highly available, meaning that you could make an appointment to see me any time 10 am to 10 pm, seven days, or drop in without an appointment whenever the door was open, which was most of that time, and (2) to accept no thesis proposal without a needs assessment that showed the research you planned would make a *large, demonstrably beneficial*, change to the world. This meant that during the thesis process, from idea to degree, you would develop contacts who would use and appreciate your results, not just need them. This is my interpretation of 'thought-leaders.' It's a tough standard and a long way from 'how can I do something respectable that will deserve a doctorate,' but, given our exceptional students, it proved feasible; and it is consistent with the idea of responsible use of tax money. I think the quality and completion rate in the IDPE program was not beaten by any other program at WMU, and if you divided the output by the resident IDPE faculty size, it is hard to match beyond our campus.

The worst challenges for me were: (1) the turnover of presidents and provosts, at least six in my three years, with the new ones usually ignorant about evaluation or about the stellar record of The Evaluation Center/IDPE, or both; and (2) the succession problem, which I think turned out very well.

The Coryn Years

I had worked as a data analyst at The Evaluation Center for several years while completing my master's degree in social psychology, then later as a senior research associate. In 2004, I began my doctoral

studies in evaluation; first under Jane Davidson and later under Michael Scriven. One month after defending my dissertation and completing my doctorate in 2007, and following the retirement of Michael Scriven, I was asked by the IDPE Board if I could temporarily manage the program. This temporary appointment required me to teach the program's core courses and advise students while a search was conducted for Scriven's permanent replacement. The idea of running the IDPE was formidable given the caliber of its prior directors and also due to the fact that many students with whom I had formerly studied were still in the program. My primary concern was, therefore, how these students would react to my appointment. Their reaction, however, was supportive and, in fact, I ended up chairing many of these students' dissertation committees.

The next year, following a national search, I was permanently appointed as the director of the IDPE and given a tenure-track appointment as an assistant professor in Evaluation, Measurement, and Research (EMR) in the department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology (ELRT) at WMU. This appointment came with reservations from some at WMU (e.g., that I was too young, inexperienced, and shouldn't be directing a program from which I graduated). Fortunately, it didn't take long to alleviate most of these concerns.

My first task following my official appointment was to reevaluate the degree to which students were acquiring and demonstrating the program's required competencies (which are many). I spent considerable time talking to each of the program's current and former students to identify areas for improvement. What I discovered, or confirmed, was that many of the required competencies could not be

obtained through the courses currently offered in any college, department, or program at WMU. Based on this information, I began the process of developing and offering new courses that would specifically address some, but not all, of these deficiencies (e.g., cost analysis, needs assessment, standard setting, experimental, quasi-experimental, and nonexperimental designs for applied research and evaluation). Given that I could not realistically teach all of these courses, others at WMU have been engaged to teach some of them; for example, IDPE graduate and now director of research at The Evaluation Center, Daniela Schröter, teaches the course on cost analysis.

Additionally, I began recruiting recognized experts to provide full-day workshops on a variety of evaluation-related topics (e.g., Brian Yates on cost analysis, Brad Cousins on participatory evaluation, Jonny Morell on logic modeling, Robert Brinkerhoff on the Success Case Method, Tom Cook and Michael Scriven on causal inference) to expose IDPE students to a wide variety of approaches to and thinking about evaluation. During this period, the Daniel L. Stufflebeam Travel Scholarship and The Michael Scriven Dissertation Award for Outstanding Contribution to Evaluation Theory, Methodology, or Practice also were established to recognize outstanding academic performance and important contributions to the discipline.

In closing, I would like to mention that none of these accomplishments would have occurred without the dedication, hard work, and persistence of Mary Ramlow, the IDPE's program coordinator.

Notes

1. Streaming video of past Evaluation Café events can be found at <http://www.vimeo.com/evalcafe>
2. For more information on general and specific admissions requirements see <http://evaluation.wmich.edu/phd/application.html>.
3. Abstracts of students' dissertations and streaming video of their defenses can be found at <http://evaluation.wmich.edu/phd/graduates.html>.
4. A list of former and current IDPE student's publications is available at <http://evaluation.wmich.edu/phd/publications.html>.
5. Information about both of these awards, including past recipients and application instructions, can be found on the IDPE Web site at <http://evaluation.wmich.edu/phd/awards.html>.

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