

Ed Studies Newsletter

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Dr. Brooks

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Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Marva Brooks

The Educational Studies (EDST) program is designed to attract educators, scholars, community advocates, and activists across multiple disciplines. Dr. Marva Brooks (Cohort 3), registered nurse and recent alumnus, reflects the program's range of experience and depth of knowledge as an exemplar who embodies EDST's mission. As program coordinator for an innovative early college for high school students, Dr. Brooks is preparing the next generation of health practitioners, educators, and advocates by creating a place where young people's healthy development is fostered.

Dr. Brooks credits the EDST program with helping refine her area of interest while sharing that, "I am more interested than ever in improving the opportunity of minorities in nursing, increasing the diversity of nursing, and ultimately having impacts on the healthcare disparities." She wrote

her dissertation, *Voices of Perseverance: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Life Histories of Female African American Registered Nurses*, in response to the lack of diversity in nursing that has been compounded by the high attrition rate of minorities in nursing education programs. The purpose of her study "was to gather understanding of the participants' lived worlds and experiences before, during, and after becoming registered nurses by examining how their childhood, K-12 education, nursing education program, and life and professional experiences influenced their journeys to become registered nurses." Significant themes that emerged from the participants' narratives were "violence, living in poverty, overcoming educational obstacles, paying for nursing school, grit and tenacity, lack of diversity, and support/lack of support." The dissertation itself attests to the many

structural barriers faced by students of color and pays tribute to the resilience of her participants on their paths to becoming registered nurses.

Dr. Brooks declares that, although "the dissertation process was challenging...the camaraderie among those in my cohort was incredible. The bond and support of having others going through the same experience was very helpful in my success." She advises future cohort members to "trust the process," adding that it can even be "enjoyable." She "loved engaging with the study participants and bringing their voices to light." By illuminating marginalized voices of African American nurses and the lack of educational equity, Dr. Brooks is making vital contributions to critical conversations concerning policy and strategy in an effort to increase the number of African American nurses.

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies

The Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies prepares educators from a variety of community organizations (P-12 schools, higher education and other community contexts) to engage in effective research and practice about teaching and learning within complex social, political and economic systems. A key underlying emphasis of the program is a focus on poverty and its specific impact on urban, as well as suburban and rural communities.

Kudos and Congrats!

The following have successfully defended their doctoral dissertations:

- Amanda A. Bell (Cohort 3)
- Chloe Wilson (Cohort 4)

The following have successfully passed their comprehensive exams:

- Tina Holtz-Thornton (Cohort 5)
- Gina Palombo (Cohort 5)
- Kimberly Tsukiyama (Cohort 6)

Ethan Lowenstein and Nigora Erkaeva (Cohort 4, ABD) published a chapter in [Eco-Justice: Theory and Practice in 2016](#)

Nigora Erkaeva's son Daler was born on December 22, 2016

Conference Corner

[Graduate Research Conference](#)

Proposals due February 8, 2017
March 24, 2017
Ypsilanti, Michigan

[Literacy Research Association](#)

Proposals due March 1, 2017
November 29-December 2, 2017
Tampa, Florida

[American Educational Studies Association](#)

Proposals due April 3, 2017
November 1-5, 2017
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Special Guest Edited Issue of *Taboo: The Journal of Culture & Education* [Call for Proposals](#)
Submissions due by May 15, 2017

Heather with her "super supportive" husband, Jay



Research Feature: Heather Nicholson-Bester

Heather Nicholson-Bester (Cohort 4, ABD) wears many scholarly hats. She is a secondary social studies teacher, a PhD candidate in the Educational Studies program area, and an activist-researcher who, in addition to these endeavors, dedicates herself to family and community commitments with an unparalleled level energy and passion. She has been a contributor at EMU's Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration, and has presented at Ohio State University's Hip Hop Literacies Conference. Her piece, "[Voices of Zero Tolerance](#)," was published in *PowerPlay*, a journal devoted to educational justice. In 2016, the College of Education acknowledged Heather's achievements and contributions by naming her a Scholar of Excellence.

In the final stages of the program, Heather is currently collecting and analyzing data for her dissertation. When reflecting on the program, she attributes her burgeoning research skills to the rigor of her coursework, and finds the guidance from faculty especially valuable. She explains that, "the coursework helped me to articulate my research in a way that is both accessible and can fit the so-called 'scholarly' model." And, she says, "without a doubt," the strongest

part of the program is "the relationships I've built with my Chair, other professors, as well as the other members of my cohort."

Heather is using participatory action research (PAR) to explore the experiences of Black girls in schools, particularly as it relates to zero tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline and spends quality time cultivating strong relationships with participants. When describing her methods, she states, "I've really tried to adhere to principles of PAR and of feminist research, especially in terms of making sure that the relationship I have with my co-researchers is as reciprocal as possible." Heather offers academic support to the group of young women, and provides opportunities for them to interview her. Heather says the research process "has been very challenging but also rewarding." She adds, "As I've been working on this dissertation I have learned so much about the topic I set out to explore, and I've also been developing my research skills. Perhaps most importantly, I've learned a lot about myself and what I am capable of." A 2014-2015 recipient of [EMU's King Chávez Parks Future Faculty Fellowship](#), Heather's efforts exemplify the goals of the Educational Studies program, and her dissertation is sure to inspire.

What's Everyone Doing for Internships?

Students in the Educational Studies program complete a 45-hour doctoral internship, which might focus on research, teaching, program development, or community service. The [Educational Studies Doctoral Student Handbook](#) explains that internship placement “is based on a student’s interests and future professional aspirations, and is intended to provide experience in areas in which a student previously had limited professional experience. The intern is expected to engage in original projects or other activities related to research, teaching, administration and/or outreach.” Students have completed a variety of internships, and some of those experiences are shared below.

Kaia-Marie A. Bishop (Cohort 6)

I completed my internship with the University Writing Center (UWC) at EMU. The UWC offers writing support in a variety of ways to EMU community members. I worked as a writing consultant in the UWC helping clients improve their writing, and I attended a peer tutoring course required for undergraduates to work as tutors in the UWC. I met with a mentor and attended professional development sessions intended for UWC graduate assistants and a variety of meetings for different people involved with the UWC. This internship helped me to better understand how a writing center can function and be structured in a university setting, since I had no previous experience with any type of writing center. My experience was invaluable for several reasons. I was able to network with graduate students and instructors in the English Department, as well as people from other universities. My internship helped me to reflect on the composition courses I teach and think about my upcoming comprehensive exams and dissertation preparation. It also led to additional opportunities that are allowing me to get more involved on campus professionally. Although challenging, I recommend seeking an internship that allows for growth in an area where you have less experience.

Yasmin Snounu (Cohort 6)

During my internship with EMU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC), I worked closely with the DRC’s director and staff, attended meetings, and shadowed caseworkers. I also offered support in the evaluation process of current programs, drafted funding proposals, and collaborated on presentations and workshops. Under the supervision of DRC caseworkers, I oversaw the cases of two students and reviewed their accommodations. My internship was a fruitful experience because the type of work I did was relevant to my prospectus and comprehensive exams. For this work, I acquired a deeper understanding of how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is implemented in a university setting. I also had opportunities to meet, interact, and work with students with disabilities, professors, and staff. In addition to vast knowledge I gained during my time at the DRC, this networking opportunity will be valuable when I am recruiting participants for my dissertation research. My internship was a first-hand experience where I identified the challenges that the DRC faces, as well as challenges faced by faculty members and students with disabilities.

Monica K. Shields (Cohort 3, ABD)

For my internship, I co-chaired the EcoJustice and Activism Conference with Dr. Rebecca Martusewicz. I served on the planning committee and shadowed Rebecca through all the stages of the event. After several years of growth, the 2014 conference entered a new phase, and we began a peer review process for proposals. I helped establish a new submission system and organized a peer review team. I also coordinated a community-funded luncheon for conference attendees. Additional responsibilities included assisting with program design and advertising, managing volunteers, creating a timetable, and coordinating facilities. While time consuming, my internship was a valuable learning experience. Previously, I had worked at the K-12 level, so my skill set grew over the months of planning an event within the world of higher education. I gained practical knowledge and now understand how to operate as an academic within and across university departments. As co-chair, my time management improved, I’m better at resource allocation, and I gained a sense of business acumen. It was also a great networking opportunity. Co-chairing this worthwhile event will benefit my future work in a university department and as a community organizer.

Dr. Chloe Wilson (Cohort 5)

For my research-based internship, I assisted Dr. Valerie Polakow and Dr. Katja Robinson (Cohort 4) in researching and writing a submission for Oxford Bibliographies—which provides resources for academics from top scholars in their fields—titled [Child Homelessness](#). This involved reading and evaluating scholarly sources and writing short summaries of each attending to different aspects of child homelessness. I participated in meetings to plan out content and designate areas with which we would each take lead. I researched and wrote the section on homeless children and disabilities, and contributed in other areas, such as the resources section, journals and online sources, and homelessness and violence. Once the content was written, I assisted Dr. Polakow with editing the document and prepared the document’s formatting for publication. It was a valuable experience because I gained a better understanding of the ways in which one must be aware of publication-specific formatting and citation style preferences. I was also happy to be able to work with excellent writers and gain insight into the collaborative writing process.