What is the purpose of a master’s degree? What does earning it signal in a professional’s practice? At the Upper Valley Graduate School of Education (UVGSE), in creating master’s degrees for practicing teachers and leaders, we adopt the meaning of a master’s degree quite literally: advanced study to improve one’s practice towards mastery. How do our three master’s programs – Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) with a Concentration in Instructional Practice, MAT with a Concentration in Teacher Leadership, and Master of Education (MEd) in School Leadership – create the conditions for practicing teachers and aspiring leaders to accomplish this?

First, what do we mean by practice? In our MAT and MEd programs, learning is centered on the core activities in which teachers, teacher leaders and school leaders engage on a daily basis. The deep conversations we have, the research texts we read and the performance tasks we assign all directly inform and help us reflect on the practical and intellectual work of teaching and leading. In fact, to further our mission to improve schools through teaching and leadership, we help all master’s degree candidates develop the dispositions to collaborate and reflectively engage with their colleagues and to address complex problems in their practice.

Next, what do we mean by improvement towards mastery? We believe, and research suggests, that the only way to truly improve teaching and leadership is to engage in continuous, deliberate practice. This means cycles of practice, feedback and reflection. At UVGSE, no matter where candidates are in their practice, they will advance their practice. How? As masters candidates, they develop new knowledge with one another, practice skills in their classrooms and schools with both colleagues and students, bring data back to our seminars to discuss, and then practice more with written reflection. Culminating with each cycle of learning is a performance task that advances their learning and provides the faculty with evidence of their competency. Throughout these cycles, candidates receive specific, regular and guiding feedback from a personal faculty coach who challenges their thinking.

Continued on page 4
Coaching: Weaving It All Together

“T
didn’t expect this to change me as a person,” a graduating teacher intern said to me in gratitude for the transformative experience he had at UVEI. There are a lot of pieces to learning at UVEI: profound experiences in the classroom and at the school site, learning from experts, practice, demonstrating competency, collaborating with colleagues, and more. But what makes all of these learning opportunities hang together? What makes them add up to more than a collection of isolated experiences?

The answer to this is complicated, but both feedback from UVEI participants and education research indicate that one important component that can hold these threads of learning together is coaching. Since the early days of UVEI, the core work of learning to teach through experience has been supported by the guidance of experts. Mentors, supervisors and coaches have featured prominently in educators’ learning experiences; helping candidates to see things differently, solve problems, find new techniques, and improve their work step-by-step. In surveys of program graduates, participants routinely list their coach as one of the most important parts of their learning experience at UVEI. This lead the faculty at UVEI to wonder, what is it that coaches do that is so important to participants’ experiences?

Greg Renner, a long-time coach in the Teacher Internship Program, stated, “I love my role as a coach... Coaching is a wonderful way to share the experiential knowledge, insight and wisdom that comes from decades of teaching in the Upper Valley.” He believes that coaches at UVEI play the role of “agents of unification” in the challenging task of helping developing teachers in “relating their experiences to the theoretical foundations of teaching practice.” Greg relishes the opportunity to guide candidates through often challenging, always changing, unpredictable and sometimes perplexing “real world in real time” teaching experiences.

Research on coaching confirms Greg’s perspectives. Coaching in learning-to-teach programs has the potential to support learners’ abilities to pull together the different strands of learning to teach, helping learners to integrate the overwhelming amount of information and practice that are needed. Interestingly, the need for this type of support does not go away, and even experienced educators benefit from guidance that makes new concepts relevant and applies to their work in classrooms and schools.

Over the course of the next year, the faculty at UVEI will be engaging in a self-study, seeking to further explore some of these questions. We want to more deeply understand what great coaching at UVEI looks like. Our goal is twofold: We hope to improve what is already one of the most valuable and critical parts of our programs, and we want to offer new thinking that will improve teacher and school leadership in UVEI partner schools. I look forward to sharing the results of our study with the UVEI community. If you are interested in knowing more about coaching, please let us know.

With best regards,

R Page Tompkins, EdD

Twitter @pagetompkins

Note: Greg Renner has more than 34 years of experience teaching science at the secondary level. His leadership work included time as a department chair, a mentor for emerging science teachers, and curriculum and assessment coordinator for the sciences. Greg earned his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in science and holds Vermont teaching licenses in physics and earth science. Greg has also participated in policy-level work on science standards.

Balancing Terror and Exhilaration

W
den asked about taking risks as an educator, Jim Firmin understands that both terror and exhilaration come in equal parts and that positive results come from holding the tension between the two.

A 12-year veteran teacher, Jim is described by his school’s administration as a thoughtful and reflective professional. As Head Teacher in the English Department at Nashua High North School, he has often been asked to assume leadership roles in the district, such as co-chairing a standing committee on competencies and standards-based grading and coordinating a new off-site program for students with emotional and behavioral challenges. When the district was approached by UVEI to consider a teacher who is on a leadership track and would benefit from our Principal Internship Program, the superintendent identified Jim as that person.

In applying for the program and the scholarship, Jim wrote, “If I were to design a school, I would start with my core belief in the power of education to change the lives of kids... it would be connected to the community it serves and the community would be invited to actively contribute to the learning of students.”

In addition to interning in the principal program, Mr. Firmin is concurrently enrolled in the Upper Valley Graduate School of Education, where he is a candidate for a Master of Education in School Leadership. He is a graduate of Plymouth State College.
**Teachers**

**Class of ’03**

Ben Boyington, former English teacher/chair and personal learning plan coordinator at Windsor High School, is now an education consultant and vice president of the Action Coalition for Media Education, co-designing conferences and guiding curriculum. His research on the 1:1 movement is featured in Media Education for a Digital Generation (Routledge).

**Class of ’04**

Matt Peterson is beginning his fifth year at Western Reserve Academy in Hudson, OH. WRA is a co-ed boarding school for grades 9-12. Matt teaches two sections of junior English, is English Department Chair, Academic Dean, and House Master of a boys’ dormitory.

**Class of ’06**

Kelly Marcotte (prior name “Nix”) received a CAGS from Plymouth State University and Principal Certification/Educational Leadership. She is the principal at Rindge Memorial School.

**Class of ’07**

Joseph Andriano was appointed Assistant Professor of Law and Director of the Program on Alternative Dispute Resolution at Clarkson University’s School of Business in Potsdam, NY. He is teaching several classes on law, a class on business ethics, and is designing a program to teach mediation skills to community members.

**Class of ’09**

UVEI Alumna, Janice Beal, and her colleagues, Leslie Rench and Suzan Locke of the White River School in White River Junction, VT, were awarded a grant by the Vermont Academy of Science and Engineering for 5th graders to design and create a system to catch and store rain water for the school’s community garden. The grant provided needed materials for the selected design.

**Class of ’10**

Peter Ginsbury has been working at the Jackson Hole Community School in Jackson, WY the last couple of years. He teaches 9th and 12th grade History and coordinates the senior project.

**Class of ’11**

Kate Davison moved back to New Hampshire and is teaching 1st grade at Memorial Elementary School in Bedford.

**Class of ’13**

Timothy Alvarenga is still serving in the Peace Corps in Zambia, teaching two sections of 5th grade English and two sections of adult literacy. He is also fundraising for a health clinic for his rural village and the surrounding areas.

**Class of ’14**

Jennifer King is teaching 5th grade at the Haverhill Cooperative Middle School in Haverhill, NH, which was where she spent her second internship placement. Jen writes “I love 5th grade and I live to make learning fun for my students.”

**Class of ’12**

**Jana Sellarole** is a Title 1 Math teacher for grades K to 4 at Central Elementary School in Bellows Falls, VT.

**Principal Notes**

**Class of ’13**

Cat Fair became the principal at Calais Elementary School in Calais, VT.

W. Harrison Little moved from the Lebanon Middle School to the Indian River School in the Mascoma Valley Regional School District where he is the Associate Principal. He writes, “Every day’s a little different; never a dull moment. I feel very well supported by my current staff and the district’s administrative team, and very well prepared by my friends in Lebanon and the dedicated team at UVEI!” (Harrison also earned an MEd through UVGSE in 2013.)

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**Principals**

**Class of ’12**

After serving for two years as Assistant Principal at James Mastricola Elementary School in Merrimack, NH, Jay Gratton is the Assistant Principal at Francis J. Kane Elementary School in Marlborough, MA.

**Class of ’13**

Cat Fair became the principal at Calais Elementary School in Calais, VT.

W. Harrison Little moved from the Lebanon Middle School to the Indian River School in the Mascoma Valley Regional School District where he is the Associate Principal. He writes, “Every day’s a little different; never a dull moment. I feel very well supported by my current staff and the district’s administrative team, and very well prepared by my friends in Lebanon and the dedicated team at UVEI!” (Harrison also earned an MEd through UVGSE in 2013.)

**Jana Sellarole** is a Title 1 Math teacher for grades K to 4 at Central Elementary School in Bellows Falls, VT.

**The following individuals have been newly-appointed to the UVEI Board of Directors:**

Jacqueline Allen worked with Fortune 500 companies and regulators in sales, marketing, strategic planning and consulting to solve problems and grow businesses. Those companies included CVS/pharmacy, Peppers and Rogers Consulting Group and Pitney Bowes. Prior to joining the corporate world, Ms. Allen taught secondary English. She lives in Norwich, VT.

Jennifer Hartman is an Associate Attorney at Vitt & Associates in Norwich, VT where she practices general civil litigation, employment law and business
transactions. Prior to entering Vermont Law School, Jennifer taught high school and college level mathematics in New York, where she was selected to be a New York City Teaching Fellow. Jennifer lives in White River Junction, VT.

Jennifer Thompson UVEI Teacher Class of ’09, teaches grades 6–8 English Language Arts and Social Studies at Unity Elementary School in Unity, NH. There, she serves as the Student Community Service Coordinator and as liaison to the National Parks Service “Parks in Every Classroom” program. She is also President-Elect of Claremont Kiwanis, which serves children living in Sullivan County, NH. Jen is a frequent guest speaker about education on NHPR and represented UVEI on the NHPR program, “Giving Matters.” She lives in Newport, NH.

The following individuals have recently been appointed to the UVEI Advisory Council:

- Astrid Berger (’09)
  Teacher at Grantham Village School
- Sarah Glass
  Teacher at Frances Richmond Middle School and former UVEI Associate Director for Secondary Education
- Lorie McClory
  Marketing and Communications Director at Eastman Community Association
- Adam Patridge (’09)
  Teacher at Indian River School
- Charles Rattigan
  Executive Director at Vermont Institute of Natural Science
- Anne Silberfarb
  Teacher and Learning Disabilities Specialist (retired)
- Ian Smith (’96)
  Principal at Lebanon High School
- R. Stewart Wood, Jr.
  Former President, Osher@Dartmouth

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### Faculty and Administration

Christopher Ward, PhD, joined UVEI in July as the Graduate Studies Coordinator and member of the Program Faculty. He most recently served as Interim Director of Teacher Education in the Department of Education at Dartmouth College.

In his work with aspiring teachers, Chris has a special interest in collaboration and collective inquiry, the relationship between motivation and engagement in learning, and novice teacher learning, motivation and identity development.

### Faculty Coaches

Sue Farrelly, Barrie North and Jim Nourse have returned to UVEI as Faculty Coaches. Sue has worked with UVEI interns since 2004 and has also led graduate level professional development for us in the Concord area. Barrie, who is a former science teacher and served on the Design Team at the Rivendell School, was UVEI’s Associate Director for Secondary Education from 2011 to 2014. Jim, the former principal at the Fraces Richmond Middle School in Hanover, was UVEI’s Executive Director from 1998 to 2004.

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**continued from page 1**

Choosing to earn a master’s degree at UVGSE is an investment and commitment towards the improvement of one's actual teaching and leadership practice. As such, our mission is to help develop the capabilities of teachers and leaders and to directly improve schools and the environment in which students learn and thrive.

Chris Ward is UVEI’s Graduate School Coordinator and a member of the faculty. You can follow him on Twitter @chriseducated.
Intern Profile

A Servant’s Heart: Air Force Vet Musters at UVEI

Scott Laflamme sees a future career in teaching much as he viewed his 26-year long career in the United States Air Force. Because, for Scott, becoming a classroom teacher is all about service to the community. “I want to mentor and help young people understand their potential,” the retired USAF Superintendent of Security Forces Training said. “And it is now that I feel I can leverage my formal education and my life experiences in a way that will help the young people of my community reach their highest and fullest potential through positive leadership and a caring ‘servant’s heart.’”

Even back in the Air Force, Scott spent much of his time working as an instructor, where he developed life-skills curriculum on subjects such as problem solving, ethics, teamwork and workplace safety for junior members. He also facilitated a leadership course which focused on leadership and trust, teamwork and coaching, and communication motivation.

Scott, a resident of Franconia, is a graduate of Berlin High School. He received an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice at the Community College of the Air Force, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice from the American Military University and a Master of Liberal Studies from Fort Hays State University.

Scott is interning at Profile High School under the guidance of mentor teacher Dawn Glidden. His area of endorsement is English.
YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS GREAT TEACHERS AND GREAT SCHOOLS AND CHANGES KIDS’ LIVES

Please consider supporting our commitment to enriching the lives of children through the work we do in preparing teachers and school leaders.

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- $50
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