

# *real estate*



## Candidates Prepare to Earn First WCSU Doctoral Degrees

DANBURY — Fifteen teachers, administrators and principals are preparing dissertations to become the first graduating class to earn doctorate degrees in education from Western Connecticut State University.

As they ready for their final presentations, which range from studying the factors that result in middle school student suspensions to the effects of literacy coaching, these candidates will most importantly bring their knowledge and learning experience into the community to better help educate students.

The candidates recently gave 30-minute presentations on their dissertations and answered questions from a panel for another half hour. Candidate Frank LaBanca presented his dissertation on the Impact of Problem Finding on the Quality of Authentic Open Inquiry Science Research Projects on Saturday, March 29.

"My view of education was enriched and expanded," said Mr. LaBanca, a science teacher and chair of the science department at Oxford High School. "The beauty of it was that I feel I can offer the profession more now than I could have four years ago

in terms of being able to influence teachers and the teaching enterprise."

The doctorate program received final approval from the state Board of Governors to institute the Education Doctoral program in Instructional Leadership in 2002, and the first class of doctoral students was admitted in September 2003.

The program is designed for educators who are interested in exploring issues related to leadership in schools, curriculum and instruction, reflective practice and methods of inquiry related to school settings.

Graduates of this program will be able to apply advanced curricular systems and strategies in classrooms and prepared to be instructional leaders within their districts, able to assist with many decisions related to academics and assessment.

Mr. LaBanca said that while all the students are working in demanding positions, balancing jobs, classes and families and then researching and writing their dissertations, the support of the instructors at WestConn was crucial to their success.

"We're lucky to have some of the professors that we had. The

expectation was that you will do this, and we'll provide you with those structural supports you need to succeed," Mr. LaBanca said.

Nicholas Kowgios, an Advanced Placement English literature and composition teacher and English Department Chair at the North Salem Middle/High School, said the most substantial impact that the program had on his role as an educator has been in establishing a connection between empirical research and curriculum reform.

"The entire faculty provided a sound understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research and its role in the decision-making process in schools," Mr. Kowgios said.

"An equal emphasis was placed on the need for educators to connect pedagogy to sound educational theory."

The other candidates expected to graduate on Friday, May 16, include Patricia Cosentino, Pauline Goolkasian, Christine Salon, Stacy Bernstein, Lori Kolbusz, Jennifer F. Mitchell, Rima Zelvis, Jessica Devine, Annmarie Spatola, Deborah Hardy, Joan Mcgettigan, Patricia Anekwe and Susan Shaw.