You recently received an invitation to our annual Fall Doctoral Dinner – an opportunity to network with fellow students and professors. We really hope you will join us for this important annual event in the life of our Ed.D. program.

We will have a short agenda for the evening. Dr. Alan Mabe will speak to us about his vision for our Ed.D. program. He is not new to many of you, but he is in a new role as our Department Chair.

Our guest speaker is Dr. Shannon Alpert, a UNCC Ed.D. graduate and a former Senior Vice President for Bank of America. She is currently a faculty member of the online Ed.D. program in Organizational Leadership Studies at Northeastern University, where she is also a doctoral research chair for 20 students. At Bank of America, Shannon was frequently in charge of managing projects, and she tied that experience into her dissertation: Project Management in Higher Education (a study of the project management practices of professors).

Not being far removed from her own doctoral research, Shannon will share her unique perspective on how to succeed as a doctoral student and especially in the dissertation process.

Finally, there will be a Q&A with Dr. Dunaway and Dr. Mabe. So come on November 4th at 5:00 p.m. with your questions ready. You, our students, are our main reason for the night, but we hope that you will also invite a friend who might just be a new enrollee next fall. If you do, please advise Ms. DeBlock so we can prepare enough food and space.

Mickey Dunaway, Ed.D.
Happy Dissertating

Mickey Dunaway, Ed.D.

You are standing on the tee of a par four ready to tee off. Several things are going through your mind because in front of you is a lake (also known as a water hazard!) that bends gently to the right and you must carry the water for about 100 yards and land your ball to the left of the lake in a decently wide fairway.

First, you wonder if you have enough club? Should you be hitting your driver that easily carries 250 yards, but is also the club that you tend to slice (the ball curves to the right in the same path as the lake), or should you be hitting an iron which will carry the water, but leave you a much longer approach shot to the green? This is a classic risk vs. reward scenario.

Second, you are teeing off second in your group and first person just hit a ball in the water ahead of you. This is the stress that this game, which was dubbed by Mark Twain as “a good walk spoiled,” brings to all of its players duffers and professionals alike.

Finally, you face the demon of negative self-talk. Here is how it sounds in your head: “Don’t hit the water. Do not hit the water. Not the water. Please golf-gods, not the water.”

An interesting truism in golf and life in general, is that the more you concentrate on the water, the more likely you are to hit the water. Damn strange; but it is true. So what should you concentrate on as you stand on that tee with gentle fall breezes rippling that beautiful expanse of water in front of you? You should be visualizing where, on the fairway, your ball is going to land. Already see your success.

I can promise you, with the voice of experience, the dissertation process will be much like the scenario above. If you visualize a creative process of self-learning unlike any other you have undertaken in your life, it will likely fulfill your vision. On the other hand, if you dread it; if you constantly think about how hard it is going to be; if you focus on not failing; I can tell you, it will be a bear.

Below are some commonsense suggestions that I am confident will help you visualize success, starting right now!

1. **Take ownership of the entire process, not just the research.**
   Make sure you have read the handbook and know each step (and form!) in the process.

2. **Choose an area of research that fills you with passion.**
   The time will come when (a) the bear is on your back, or (b) you cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, (c) you are in uncharted territory, or (d) it’s the 4th quarter and time is running out. Choose the overused phrase that suits you, because there will come a time when you are just tired of the process. That is when you need to rely on your passion to carry you through.

3. **Choose an area of research that will help you as you do the research.**
   Not only will you improve your success at your current job, your current job will likely inform your research.

4. **Choose an area that will take you to your next goal in life.**
   A dissertation done just to get that Dr. before or the Ed.D. after your name is not enough. I teach school law in both the master’s and doctoral programs. My dissertation topic in 1985 was: *A Legal Analysis of The Prevailing Law of Search and Seizure in Elementary and Secondary Schools.* Coincidence? I will let you judge.

5. **Once you have chosen an area of research, get the “helicopter off the ground.”**
   Before you formally start the process of the lit review, you must know enough about the area in order to focus your review. Read in the area of interest enough so that you can carry on a reasonable discussion in class of the issues. This is the helicopter view, and it is critical to every phase of your dissertation.

> "There are problems everywhere. Pick one every week and write a problem statement and hypothesis about it. Repeat until doing so is second nature."

Another truism (there are hundreds!) in golf is that golf is a simple game, unless you over-think it. Starting your lit review in your first year is over-thinking! Give yourself time to learn how much you don’t know! At the same time, use every course, every professor, and your fellow students to help you increase your knowledge and logical thinking, and refine your skills in research and writing.

When I was working on my dissertation, I worked in the basement while my wonderful wife kept our two children at bay. One day, my oldest son, Christian, asked my youngest, “Where’s Dad?” To which Adam replied, “He’s in the basement dissertating!”

Happy dissertating to you, too.
Former Teaching Fellow Named Regional Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Darrin Hartness, superintendent of Davie County Schools, has been named the 2015 Regional Superintendent of the Year by the Piedmont Triad Education Consortium.

Hartness was nominated by fellow superintendents in the 16 school districts that make up the Piedmont Triad Region.

He has served as superintendent of Davie County Schools since 2011. Over the past 25 years, he has served in five school districts across North Carolina, as a high school teacher, chief technology officer, principal, and assistant superintendent. Before serving in Davie County, his first superintendency was in Mount Airy City Schools.

A highlight of his career was being named the recipient of the 2014 E.C. Tatum Humanitarian Award by the Davie County Chamber of Commerce. He was also awarded Citizen of the Year by the Mocksville Woman’s Club in 2015.

He serves on the board of directors for the N.C. School Superintendents Association and the N.C. High School Athletic Association.

“I am humbled to receive this recognition from my fellow superintendents. I dedicate this award to the staff and students I have the honor of serving with each day. I am blessed to live and work in a community that supports education and am thankful for my wife and family who support me.”

Hartness was part of the first class of North Carolina Teaching Fellows, and the first Teaching Fellow to serve as a North Carolina superintendent.

Hartness earned his Ed.D. in educational leadership and M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction/instructional systems technology from UNC-Charlotte. He holds a bachelor’s degree in technology/secondary education from Appalachian State University.

Hartness is involved in several community boards and civic organizations and enjoys serving as a deacon and musician at his church. He has been married to Lisa Hartness for 26 years and they have two daughters, Madison and Molly.

Hartness will contend for the 2016 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year, to be announced in November. Regional candidates will be judged on creativity in successfully meeting the needs of the students, strength in personal and organizational communication, professionalism, professional development, and active participation in local activities.

It is my first semester in the Ed.D. program. I’ve been excitedly preparing for graduate school since I moved to the U.S. in 2014. However, shifting back into ‘student-mode’ was not easy the first few weeks, especially since I was used to being on other side of the fence as the professor or administrator in-charge. Homework becomes real for us. ‘Preparing for class’ actually meant we needed speed-reading techniques. We also begin to manage ourselves. We learn how to manage school and work while adhering to high-expectations and deadlines, and more importantly, how others perceive us.

Moving into the second half of the semester, not only have I shifted my summer sandals to fall boots, but shifted my view of what it takes to be a successful graduate student in the first year:

“Know what you know. But know it well enough to explain it in two sentences.”

I say this because the most frequently asked question from all professors on our first day was, “What is your dissertation topic?” You would think we’d all know the answer because we spent hours perfecting our doctoral application essay. But as I was asked to introduce myself to a room filled with doctoral students, I attempted to articulate the most accurate description of my dissertation topic in two sentences. By the time each one in the room made their dissertation topic public, I developed an uncomfortable, nervous feeling that everyone else had their topic organized but me.

This feeling lead me to think that I was not as intelligent or competent as everyone thought I was, with an added layer of self-doubt. This was the impostor syndrome kicking in. Those who feel this way begin to feel like a fraud, a fake, or like they don’t belong in graduate school. If at some point you felt like an impostor, you are not alone. Research shows that impostor feelings are common in academia/higher education.

Last month, the Center for Graduate Life held a special talk with Dr. Valerie Young, an internationally-known speaker, a leading expert on the impostor syndrome, and author of the book, “The secret thoughts of successful women: Why capable people suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and how to thrive in spite of it.” Dr. Young has spoken to thousands of students, faculty, and staff at over 70 major colleges and universities about this issue.

I personally found this phenomenon interesting so I decided to attend Dr. Young’s talk. Here are some of the key points I learned.

Identify the Symptoms

1. **The Perfectionist.** Are you the person with no relief to doing better; with extremely high self-expectation to do things perfectly? “I could have still done it better.”

2. **The Expert.** Are you the person with no relief to knowing/mastering everything; with extremely high self-expectation to know it all? “I still have one more book to read.”

3. **The Natural Genius.** Are you the person with no relief to doing things quickly; with extremely high self-expectation to do things with ease/speed? “I should be picking this up quickly.”

4. **The Soloist.** Are you the person with no relief from doing everything yourself; with extremely high self-expectation to do things on their own? “I should do this myself. I cannot ask for help.”

Coping Mechanisms

Manifesting at least one of the symptoms means you may have caught the impostor syndrome—that feeling of inadequacy around what
think you know and your academic and professional abilities. Those who feel like impostors hide or protect themselves to avoid being ‘discovered’ or ‘found out.’ Dr. Young describes these individuals to:

- Fly under the radar (i.e. don’t speak up in class; don’t ask questions),
- Procrastinate (i.e. never start; never finish),
- Be over-confident (i.e. act like they have a big ego),
- Be a workaholic (i.e. stay longer at work; study harder because they think they are not as intelligent as other people).

Managing Your Impostor Syndrome

While I say it is important to ‘know what you know well,’ Kate Bahn shares an even more interesting thought to ponder:

“‘It’s a twisted version of the Socratic paradox—the more you know, the more you feel like you know nothing.’”

So as we continue speed-reading this semester, and the next seven or so, we need to embrace the adjustment into graduate school territory and impostor feelings will settle.

Dr. Young advises three tips:

1. **Normalize the impostor feeling.** Remember, there are more people who feel this way; 70% of high achievers feel this way. It is helpful to talk about this with others.
2. **Reframe your thinking about failure.** Think differently about failure; shift the negative experience to a learning experience. Also, think differently about perfection or being an expert. Don’t be ashamed that you are “not able to.”
3. **Keep going, regardless.** Remove the fear. Repeatedly tell yourself you can do it and you will eventually believe it.

She offers advice to those further ahead in graduate school as well: “Finish what you start (especially your dissertation). A good dissertation is a done dissertation.”

Attending Dr. Valerie Young’s talk was a great eye-opener for me on the impostor phenomenon. There was a beautiful line from her presentation that really struck me and inspires me to push forth through graduate school:

“Everyone loses when bright people play small.”

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**SCHEDULE REMINDERS**

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<tr>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw from course(s)</td>
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<td>November 2</td>
<td>Registration for Spring 2016 begins</td>
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<td>November 4</td>
<td>Fall Doctoral Dinner</td>
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<td>November 16</td>
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<td>November 25</td>
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<td>November 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break (no classes)</td>
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