Dr. Lakia Scott is not afraid to shake things up. In fact, she’s planning on it. The newest addition to the faculty in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, Scott said her educational philosophies were forged during a three-year stint teaching English Language Arts and Reading at an all-male charter school in Houston, The Pro-Vision School. “A lot of the students came there as a final option before entering the juvenile justice education system,” she said. “It was our job to show them education was a key to freedom.”

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Scott earned her MSEd at Prairie View A&M University in 2009 and went afterwards into a PhD program, which she finished at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2014.

At UNC Charlotte, Scott continued to focus on urban education and explore cultural themes, such as the urban dialect, multicultural education and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Before graduating, she co-authored a book with one of her mentors, Dr. Greg Wiggan. The book, Unshackled: Education for Freedom, Student Achievement and Personal Emancipation, analyzes cultural barriers in education and poses recommendations to improve academic outcomes for traditionally marginalized student populations.

Scott is teaching classes for SOE students studying elementary education, and she hopes her experiences can offer insight for working with the urban demographic. “I didn’t grow up in poverty; my parents worked hard to ensure that I had opportunities in education,” she said. “It’s a great misconception that because I am black, I can relate to any black student. Every teacher faces some sort of cultural struggle and adjustment. But I hope my transparency will help my Baylor students see how we can all get beyond our naiveties to best meet the needs of our students.”

Baylor senior Lindsay Adams is in Scott’s class on elementary literacy and said she always feels encouraged by her. “She’s funny, relatable and has great stories,” Adams said. “I can come to her with individual teaching problems from my classroom, and she listens, asks questions and helps me.” — Meg Cullar

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DR. LAKIA SCOTT
Message from the Dean

Dr. Jon M. Engelhardt
Dean, School of Education

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As the date of retirement approaches for anyone (next May for me), one cannot help but reflect across one’s career and ask a few soul-searching questions — questions like “Was it all worthwhile?” “Did I make a difference?” and “Are things better off than when I started?” Of course, answers to these can be quite personal, but the honest answers to the first two, respectively, are “definitely yes” and “I certainly hope so.”

The third question may be more arguable and, in some ways, others are better positioned to answer. But focusing on the last few years here at Baylor, several things come quickly to mind. To identify a few substantive developments over the past few years, the School has

• moved into a dramatically remodeled building that is better designed to support Education students, programs and faculty;
• nearly doubled its endowment for student scholarships;
• increased the breadth of global mission and study experiences;
• advanced the development of one of the finest clinical teacher education programs nationally;
• increased the breadth of global mission and study experiences for students;
• launched a new college on the Baylor campus (Health and Human Sciences);
• created several new doctoral programs;
• spawned a new college on the Baylor campus (Health and Human Sciences);
• built a collaborative, mutually supportive environment for faculty, staff and students, where resources are directed toward developing human capital;
• established powerful partnerships with the local community and area schools and school leaders, including a recent partnership with a health-care system to address the challenges faced by families that have children with autism; and
• developed a broadly differentiated and scholarly advanced faculty that maintain commitment to K-12 educational practice and preparing outstanding educators.

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Of course, none of these happened because of the efforts of any single individual. Rather, they resulted from the efforts, collaboration and developments over the past few years, the School has:

• established powerful partnerships with the local community and area schools and school leaders, including a recent partnership with a health-care system to address the challenges faced by families that have children with autism; and
• developed a broadly differentiated and scholarly advanced faculty that maintain commitment to K-12 educational practice and preparing outstanding educators.

So, as I approach retirement (and there is yet lots to do in the next few months), I am confident that the last few years have been productive and, in the relay race to excellence, the Baylor baton is nearly ready to pass on.

The Baylor School of Education
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Melissa McLevain’s day planner might look like that of an undergraduate — filled with meetings and events galore. But McLevain’s activities outside of class are anything but extracurricular. They are an integral part of her experience as a graduate student in the School of Education.

McLevain is in the second year of earning a master’s degree in Higher Education & Student Affairs (HESA) through the Department of Educational Administration. And, like every student in the program, she serves 20 hours a week in a student affairs apprenticeship on campus. HESA students are serving in Greek Life, Multicultural Affairs, Spiritual Life, Student Productions, Campus Visits and others.

As graduate hall director in Brooks Residential College, McLevain lives in Brooks and eats her meals in the cafeteria, so she is truly immersed in college life.

On an autumn Thursday, McLevain’s day began at 8 a.m. with a student meeting and ended at 10:30 p.m., after a big Brooks meeting to finalize room assignments for the next semester. She tries to attend chapel each day and squeezes in studying wherever possible — on this particular day, it came between the drop-ins from students wanting to discuss room assignments.

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At 2 p.m., McLevain headed to class. HESA students take three classes each semester in a cohort model — a group of students starts the program together and takes every class together.

“The program is definitely academically rigorous,” McLevain said. “I think the cohort model has made our class discussion much deeper. We are comfortable enough with each other to break down the barriers in a way we might not in a class of 20 people that we don’t know well.”

McLevain is also working on a thesis, developing a model to define factors of interaction between students and faculty-in-residence. The project grew out of previous research with HESA director Dr. Rishi Siriram, who is also Faculty Master of Brooks College, where he lives with his wife and three children.

Siriram, who has been director of the HESA program since 2009, is also a HESA graduate; he completed the program in 2003 before earning a PhD in higher education at Arizona Pacific University.

Siriram said the School of Education’s HESA program has set itself apart by being the only program from a research university that prepares students to understand the integration of faith and learning in addition to theory on college administration and college student development. “We seem to be carving a niche that is drawing a lot of national attention,” he said.

McLevain said Baylor’s focus on faith-based education was indeed a big draw for her. She wants to work in student affairs because the College is such a seminal time for so many students — and adding an understanding of faith development made Baylor’s program special. — Meg Callar

For more information on Baylor’s scholar-teacher programs, visit SoE.Baylor.edu/impact.
Something Special

Each year, Baylor School of Education graduates about 12 students in Special Education (SPED), which is classified as a "high need" area in education by the U.S. Department of Education.

The nationwide shortage is understandable, said Pat Arredondo, lecturer in Educational Psychology and director of the special education program. "Not everyone is able to get joy from the challenges these children bring," she said.

Ben Rabideau, BSED ‘14, said he had half a dozen job offers before graduation. "School districts really think highly of the Baylor education program," he said. Rabideau now teaches at Clements High School in Fort Bend ISD in Sugar Land, where he started a new program to teach living skills to special-needs students ages 18-22.

Rabideau said Baylor’s program put him into the classroom early and often and that the variety of experiences allowed him to get a good overview. "I gravitated more toward the older students, and during my senior year I was able to intern at Robinson High School in the Life Skills classroom," he said. That experience confirmed his decision and set his path.

"People say that it takes a special person to teach special education. I am no more special than the students that I get the chance to work with on a daily basis." — BEN RABIDEAU, BSED ’14

Arredondo said Baylor students in SPED begin working in schools during their first semester of the program, and they find out quickly if SPED is for them. But many have already felt a calling to the field.

A family member inspired Rabideau. "I have a cousin who was born with Down Syndrome, and just being able to interact with him and see what a special guy he is, I knew that I wanted to work with students like my cousin." Senior Sasha Wells decided while in high school to study Special Education. A member of Baylor’s equestrian team, Wells had worked as a counselor at a riding camp and found that she especially enjoyed the campers with special needs.

Wells is teaching in a self-contained classroom teaching young children learn basic skills like following directions and social interaction. "Age doesn’t matter to me," Wells said, but she enjoys working with children who have severe disabilities.

Bayor SPED majors also teach students with mild disabilities and work within regular classrooms, Arredondo said.

"A major misconception about special education is that all students have severe disabilities," she said. "Most students with disabilities have mild differences that are invisible to the eye but still require specialized instructional and assessment skills."

Arredondo offers both an all-level degree in special education and a supplemental certification for elementary education majors. Those in the supplemental program focus on milder disabilities, but the coursework in SPED classes for both tracks is substantial, Arredondo said. "Students must master not only instructional techniques but also governmental regulations and laws," she said.

With classes including Child Development, Exceptionalities, Collaborative Consultation, and Applied Behavior Analysis, Baylor graduates enter the field well prepared.

— Meg Collar

Alumni Profile

Danielle Fearon, PhD ‘12, is a Senior Research and Planning Associate in Baylor’s Department of Institutional Research and Testing (IRT).

Danielle Fearon, PhD ’12, has always loved working with numbers, and now she enjoys making numbers work to benefit Baylor University.

As a Senior Research and Planning Associate in Baylor’s Department of Institutional Research and Testing (IRT), Fearon uses statistical information gathered in University-wide surveys to predict and produce facts about Baylor. "We publish the fun facts about what is going on at Baylor," Fearon said. "Anything that you ask us (within reason) — we’ll give you the data."

Baylor’s IRT is a treasure trove of statistical information, most of which is published online, with reports ranging from raw enrollment numbers to graduation and retention rates.

Statistical analysis is something Fearon mastered in the doctoral program of the School of Education’s Department of Educational Psychology, where she studied research methods, statistical techniques and analytical approaches related to psychological and educational phenomena.

For one of her recent projects, Fearon worked with former professor and mentor Dr. Alex Beaujean of the Educational Psychology department. The duo researched and analyzed data for the University on what factors affect retention rates.

Fearon said they wanted to see how financial factors such as merit awards, student loans and family contribution impacted students’ persistence to continue at Baylor. Beaujean and Fearon found that students who received any amount of merit aid were much less likely to drop out than students receiving no merit aid.

The SOE played a role in bringing Fearon to Texas from her home in Jamaica. Dr. Terrill Saxon, associate professor in Educational Psychology, met Fearon while he was conducting research in Jamaica. He recognized Fearon’s potential and encouraged her to continue her studies at Baylor University.

"Danielle is the type of person that you want on your team,” Saxon said. “She is professional, articulate and able to organize and synthesize lots of information. But true to her Jamaican culture, she does not take life too seriously. She is proud of her heritage, and it is contagious when you are around her."

Moving to a different country can be scary, but Fearon said she loves working and living in Texas. She said the cuisine is better in Jamaica and the Jamaican people are friendly, but she likes the Texas weather.

Fearon is very focused and loves her work but enjoys singing and reading for fun and has a dream of one day being the Minister of Education in Jamaica.

Fearon graduated with her BS in Psychology from Northern Caribbean University in 2004 and earned an MS in Clinical Psychology from the University of the West Indies in 2007. Fearon also serves as an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology, where she teaches Statistical Methods and The Developing Child.

"I did my first research paper when I was an undergraduate, and my passion for research grew from there," Fearon said. “I have a curious mind and having the tools to find answers to different questions is fascinating to me.” — Kate McGuire

To read more about Danielle, visit baylor.edu/SOE/impact.
Dean Honored
School of Education Dean Jon Engelhardt received the Robert B. Howsam Award, a lifetime achievement award given by the Texas Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (TACTE). The Howsam Award is presented only on occasion and recognizes individuals who have exhibited exceptional leadership at state and national levels. Engelhardt received the award at the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) Conference on Oct. 20 in Austin, Texas.

Perfect Score
Two recent graduates, Lynette Atkinson and Stephanie Limes, both May 2014 graduates, teacher-preparation programs in university-based teacher candidates and exceptional leadership at state and national levels. Engelhardt received the award at the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) Conference on Oct. 20 in Austin, Texas.

Hannah Marie Gilliland, BSEd ’03, was a teacher in every sense of the word. “As a father, we’re supposed to teach our kids,” Kip Gilliland, Hannah’s father, remembers. “But the roles really were reversed. She taught me, and everybody who knew her, so much about life. To so many people, she was an inspiration.”

“Making a Difference”

Inspired to honor his daughter’s memory, Kip started a scholarship to help students attend the School of Education. Over the last decade, 36 students have been able to attend. Baylor thanks to the “Hannah Marie Gilliland Memorial Endowed Scholarship,” extending Hannah’s legacy through the lives they will touch.

EDP Chair Retires
Dr. Marley Watkins, professor and chair of the Department of Educational Psychology since 2011, retired in December. A prolific researcher, Watkins authored more than 130 peer-reviewed journal articles and 20 books or book chapters. He was an elected member of the Society for the Study of School Psychology and a diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. In January, Dr. Terrill Saxon, associate professor in Educational Psychology whose research focuses on language acquisition, became chair of the department.

Fall Lecture
Dr. Tyler Cooper, CEO of Cooper Aerobics, preached the power of prevention and personal responsibility in health care at the Fall 2014 Distinguished Lecture Series on Oct. 30. A graduate of the Hankamer School of Business, Cooper is on the Dean’s Advisory Council for the School of Education. Cooper said that lifestyle choices are a significant part of the health care crisis, with estimated annual costs of obesity-related illnesses topping $190 billion and $14 billion of that attributed to children.

“What if we could put that into the school system?”

Living-Learning Center
The Education LLC is accepting applications from incoming freshmen to live in South Russell with other future educators and our Faculty-In-Residence, Dr. Mona Choucair. Upcoming deadlines on the rolling admission schedule are Feb. 9, March 16, April 13 and May 4. LLC scholarships are available based on need and merit. All information can be found at baylor.edu/educationLLC.

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“She never complained, never said, ‘I can’t do this,’ no matter how hard it was,” Kip marveled. “How many people would, after two brain surgeries, go back to school and care enough to finish a degree?”

The brain surgeries robbed Hannah’s motor skills and radiation claimed her hair, but neither was powerful enough to overcome her spirit. In the spring of 2003, she walked across the stage to receive her diploma and was hired as a teaching assistant at St. Luke’s Episcopal School in San Antonio. That was her dream, to be a teacher,” Kip says. “But the tumor came back with a vengeance and her time was very short. She passed away in November. It wasn’t long, but she actually got to experience classroom teaching. She didn’t realize what an amazing teacher she really was.”

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