8-17-2016

Press release : 2016 : 08 : 17 : USFSP Education Alumni Take Leading Roles in Area Schools

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USFSP EDUCATION ALUMNI TAKE LEADING ROLES IN AREA SCHOOLS

Several alumni of the USF St. Petersburg College of Education are making waves at several Tampa Bay area schools in their new leadership positions.

Nikishia “Nikki” Dixon was selected as assistant principal of Melrose Elementary in St. Petersburg for the new academic year. Dixon, 38, a St. Petersburg native, graduated from USFSP with a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education in 2003. She later returned for a master’s degree in Elementary Math and Science Education in 2012 and another in Educational Leadership in 2014. Most recently, she served as the assistant principal at North Shore Elementary.

“I was called to the district office at the end of May and they told me they were looking for top leaders to lead Transformation schools,” said Dixon, who said she was among the five educational leaders who were handpicked for positions in Pinellas County. “I feel like USFSP prepared me to be an educator in this district and a leader, and that's what I'm doing.”

Two other USFSP alumni also have been named assistant principals in local schools include Salima Lakhani at Largo Middle School and Robyn Oyer at Countryside High School. Additionally, three alumni have been promoted as principals of three Tampa Bay area schools over the summer.

Jennifer Mekler has been appointed as principal at Brooker Creek Elementary in Tarpon Springs. Mekler, who received a master’s degree in Educational Leadership from USFSP, previously served as assistant principal at Sutherland Elementary School and worked as a classroom teacher for another dozen years.

Kristy Moody, who completed coursework in Educational Leadership at USFSP, was appointed principal of Fairmount Park Elementary. Prior to joining Fairmount Park, Moody served as assistant principal and principal at Douglas L. Jamerson Jr. Elementary. She previously served as an active duty officer and later a reserve officer in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Kristen Storm-Taylor was named principal of the new SouthShore Charter Academy, a tuition-free public charter school in Riverview that celebrated its first school day on Aug. 10. Storm-Taylor received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from USFSP in 2011. She formerly served as principal of Henderson.
Hammock Charter School and held a number of other education roles that included teacher and curriculum specialist.

“I am very proud of leadership students who become school or district based leaders in school district,” said Dr. Olivia Hodges, associate dean in the College of Education at USFSP. “When I attend school system meetings, I am always proud to see former students and talk about their success.”

“The quality of the Education Leadership program prepares the candidate to meet the highly rigorous criteria for administrative selection in school systems, both public and private,” said Hodges. “The program is aligned to state standards, and the College works in collaboration with neighboring school systems to prepare our future school leaders.”
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