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Educational Leadership Doctoral Students to Defend Dissertations

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MACOMB, IL -- Three Western Illinois University students are about to make history.

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Jay Marino, Michael Oberhaus and Vicki VanTuyle, students in Western's educational leadership doctorate degree program, will defend their final dissertations Friday, Aug. 22 and Monday, Aug. 25. The trio will graduate in December 2008, marking the first Ed.D. degrees awarded at Western.

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Marino, who is the associate superintendent for learning and continuous improvement at the Cedar Rapids (IA) Community School District, will defend his dissertation, "School Board Accountability: The Role of Continuous Improvement," at 10 a.m. Aug. 22, while Oberhaus, the associate superintendent at Rock Island (IL) School District, will defend his work, "The Relationship Between Instructional Expenditures and Academic Achievement for Illinois Public Schools," at 2 p.m. Both Aug. 22 defenses will be held in Horrabin Hall 78. VanTuyle, former superintendent of North Greene Unit District No. 3 in White Hall (IL), will defend her dissertation, "Women Superintendents in Illinois: Barriers to the Superintendency and How These Barriers are Considered as Reasons for Leaving the Superintendency," at 10 a.m. Aug. 25 in Horrabin Hall 60. The dissertation defense even are open to the public.

The first cohort of WIU doctoral degree students started with a class of 25 in August 2005 one year after the North Central Association Higher Education Commission, the accreditation agency for colleges and universities, approved Western's Educational Doctorate (Ed.D.) degree in Educational Leadership for elementary and secondary school administrators in the greater western Illinois region.

The doctoral program coursework consists of 43 semester hours over a three-year time frame. The second cohort began in June 2007, while the third cohort began this June. As part of the program, each student works with a specific low-performing school/district in Western's service region as part of the program's partnership with public education.

"It's exciting to see three of our students get to the final step in their pursuit of their Ed.D.," said Jess House, educational leadership chair. "We look forward to the next round of dissertation defense events and watching these committed professionals cross the stage at Commencement."

Additional information on the Ed.D. in educational leadership can be obtained from the department of educational leadership website at wiu.edu/edleadership or by calling the department at (309) 298-1070.

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