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Watson and The University of Pittsburgh~ A Partnership in Education

The Watson Institute has teamed up with the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, a coupling that will allow Watson to maintain a model program for students. While this collaborative effort will first focus on the mental health and the special education issues faced by Craig Academy students, future possibilities exist to broaden the scope to include all of Watson's programs.

For Pitt, the partnership enables University faculty and students to join with Watson's staff in a best practices setting to conduct research, as well as fulfill practicum and internships that are required across the disciplines within the School of Education including psychology, special education, administration and policy studies, health and physical activities, and instruction and learning.

For Watson, the venture allows for the revitalization of the Craig

Academy program, which serves children and teens with serious emotional challenges.

"With this partnership, we will have University experts in a variety of fields working with both staff and students," said Denise Sedlacek M.Ed., Craig Academy's new Program Director.

"Pitt's grad students will also be able to provide additional resources in working one-on-one with Craig Academy students, assisting the social workers with groups or other activities as well as be a caring, physical presence during the students' school day."

Craig Academy staff, in turn, will be able to share their expertise, and give University staff and graduate students the opportunity to see and apply the methodologies that are discussed in college classrooms."

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University of Pittsburgh

To help facilitate this revitalization, Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr, Associate Professor of Child Psychology and Education at The University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, will be on site at Craig Academy's East End location three days per week, supervising Mike Valenti – the University's first intern to take part in new offering – as well as future interns and providing her expertise as a member of a design team created to help facilitate the partnership's goal. Craig Academy staff and other consultants are also among the contributors to the team.

"Our hope is that we create new knowledge of how best to serve students often left behind in the public education system," explained Dr. Kerr, who will serve as University Liaison and Supervising Director for the collaboration.

"As a best practice school, we realize that we will be a teaching school," Ms. Sedlacek added. "People will come through our program and build their skills while helping our students."

"Because of the expertise of our staff and the number of years that we've been providing education for children with special needs, we are able to provide best practice models where others can learn from our successes with children," explained Watson's Chief Executive Officer, Ray White. "They can then take what they have learned and apply it outside of Watson, effectively helping far more children and teens.

In addition, by having professionals and pre-professionals learn through Watson, we ensure that we are using up-to-date methodologies and applied research strategies, which is a benefit for our own students."

In September, The Watson Institute and the University of Pittsburgh joined to create Project Reassure to help children affected by Hurricane Katrina.