

Contact: Rachel Boon

**REPORT ON THE IOWA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**Actions Requested:** (1) Consider approval of the report to the Iowa General Assembly regarding the update on the Iowa Research and Development Center for Educational Transformation at the University of Northern Iowa. (2) Direct the Board Office to submit the report to the General Assembly by January 9, 2017.

**Executive Summary:** This report provides the background, key accomplishments, research, community partnerships and next steps for the Iowa Research and Development Center for Educational Transformation at the University of Northern Iowa. The university is committed to leading statewide efforts that will optimize resources, capitalize on existing research, leverage research funding, and build capacity for a community of scholars.

**Background:** Preparing educators is an integral part of what the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) does. At UNI, one in four undergraduate students is studying to become a teacher. The largest major on campus is elementary education, with more than 1,200 students. UNI's education program is the largest in the state of Iowa; more than 450 new teachers graduate from UNI each year. UNI engages more than 350 school districts in partnerships and manages eleven Iowa field experience centers, seven US field experience centers (outside Iowa), and fifteen international field experience centers (outside the US). More than 99% of last year's graduating teachers were employed or continuing their education within six months of graduation. 9,200 K-12 educators, principals and superintendents in Iowa are UNI grads, teaching in all 99 counties in Iowa and 98% of the state's school districts. The legislation creating the Iowa Research and Development Center for Education Innovation structure at UNI was initiated via Senate File 470 in spring 2009. The goals outlined in Senate File 470 for the research and development initiative were:

- to raise and sustain the level of all Pre K-12 students' educational attainment and personal development through innovative and promising teaching practice,
- to enhance the preparation and professional competence of the educators in the state through collaborative inquiry and exchange of professional knowledge in teaching and learning, and
- to focus on research that transforms teaching to meet the changing needs of Iowa's educational system.

In April 2013, UNI received a \$2 million award from the Roy J. Carver Trust to establish the Center for Educational Transformation (CET). On October 24, 2013, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, approved the Center for Educational Transformation. The mission of Iowa's Research and Development Center for Education Innovation at the University of Northern Iowa is fulfilled through the CET. This report provides an update on CET activities since the last report was submitted in October 2015. UNI remains committed to leading statewide efforts that optimize resources, capitalizing on existing research, leveraging research funding, and building capacity for a community of scholars.

**CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

**Vision** - The Center for Educational Transformation (CET) seeks to redefine the face of educational research in Iowa and beyond. Founded upon the values of partnership and innovation, the CET responds to and is inclusive of all education stakeholders. This intrinsic

connectivity allows the CET to become embedded in the Iowa educational landscape, so that partners not only “reach in” to access the CET’s expertise, but the CET “reaches out” to promote best practices from research results and to connect partners with one another. This model enables national research-based educational transformations to be situated in a local context. The transformation is evidenced through the CET’s commitment to learners, educators, and systems.

Mission - The Center for Education Transformation serves as Iowa’s PK-12 education research and development center supporting and conducting transformative education research, building collaborative relationships across Iowa, and sharing innovative, research-based best practices to inform policy and drive practice.

## **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

During the past year, the CET made significant progress in developing an operating plan and implementing strategic activities to advance its mission. Key accomplishments include:

- Developing Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in 53 Iowa school districts. This statewide research and development network is where teachers and researchers are working collaboratively to infuse research with practical experience and application.
- Establishing a Research Council that drives the research efforts of the CET. This year, the Research Council identified five themes for the CET’s 2016-17 research projects.
- Restructuring the CET Advisory Councils to better match expertise with level of impact: local, state, and national.
- Co-sponsoring the 2016 Education Summit, which involved approximately 200 educators from across the state. Participants from all key education stakeholder groups attended, including: teachers, teacher-leaders, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, legislators, and UNI education students.
- Establishing partnerships between the CET and two innovative national education initiatives - Imagining America and Teaching Works—as well as solidifying UNI’s presence in the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Future collaboration between the CET and these organizations will position the CET to connect with the national work being done on publicly-engaged scholarship, high-leverage teaching practices, and development of clinical practice models for teacher education.
- Expanding dissemination efforts electronically, through involvement in other education organizations, and via multiple academic publications and presentations at national conferences.

The CET is poised to become a national presence in PK-12 education research. During the next year, it will implement key activities to ensure the progression of its work impacting PK-12 education research. Partnership development and dissemination will continue to support and share the CET’s work.

## **RESEARCH**

### **Research Council**

The CET’s research efforts are organized around its Research Council, which determines critical and emerging issues in PK-12 education in Iowa that will receive CET support. It meets regularly to ensure that an atmosphere of continuous improvement is central to the work of the CET. Other

responsibilities of the Research Council include reviewing the CET Research Fellows applications and ensuring that the CET has an evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of its work. The Council is comprised of no more than eight members (current members listed below).

Robert Boody, Ph.D., University of Northern Iowa  
Anne Estapa, Ph.D., Iowa State University  
Jason Harshman, Ph.D., University of Iowa  
Anne Lebo, Ed.D., Iowa Board of Educational Examiners  
Trace Pickering, Ed.D., Cedar Rapids Community School District  
David Tilly, Ph.D., Iowa Department of Education  
Anthony Voss, Ed.D., Hudson Community School District

The CET Research Council members were recruited for their extensive research and publishing expertise and record of public or academic service. The members of the Research Council will collectively provide a balance of expertise across educational sectors and ensure that the CET's research themes meet the changing needs of Iowa's educational system rather than reflect the research interests of specific faculty.

### **PK-12 Education Research**

In fall 2015, the CET launched a new Request for Proposals (RFP) process focused on research that will be transformative for the Iowa education landscape and have a national impact. The new RFP process sought proposals for three types of research projects:

1. Seed funding (for research projects that will transform a single classroom or school)
2. Implementation funding (for research projects that will transform multiple schools, an entire district or an AEA)
3. Scale-up funding (for research projects with multiple partners from higher education, school districts, and the community that will transform multiple districts, the entire state or multiple states)

The 2015-16 RFP process, which funded projects for the 2016-17 year, drew 18 proposals, including proposals from all three Regents' universities and one private college. Six new research projects were funded this cycle and three projects were renewed from last cycle. The campuses which received CET funding for research projects for 2016-17 were:

|                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Iowa State University       | 2 new projects                    |
| University of Iowa          | 2 new projects                    |
| University of Northern Iowa | 1 new project, 3 renewed projects |
| Drake University            | 1 new project                     |

Each project is required to work with at least one PK-12 partner. With the 2016-17 CET Fellows announced, the CET now has 53 school districts involved in its statewide research and development network. The research being conducted by these Researcher-Practitioner partnerships is one of the ways the CET is addressing the changing needs of Iowa's educational system. The five research themes currently supported by the CET are:

1. STEM Education
2. Equitable and Effective Schooling
3. ELL Parental Engagement
4. Trauma-Informed Practice for Adverse Childhood Experiences
5. Literacy Teacher-Leadership

These research themes will be re-examined and re-prioritized each year by the Research Council to ensure that the education research needs of the state are being met by the CET's projects. For the 2016-17 Request for Proposals process that the CET is implementing in October 2016, the CET Research Council has identified the following strands as "critical and emerging" issues in Iowa education worthy of CET support.

Strand A: *Deeper Learning* (also known as competency-based education, school-business partnerships, innovative learning networks, and problem-based learning)

Strand B: *Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*

Strand C: *Instructional Technology*

Strand D: *Chronic Truancy*

Strand E: *Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)*

### **Undergraduate Research**

An integral part of the CET's vision is the provision of rich research experiences for undergraduate students. CET aims to help undergraduate education students understand how knowledge is created in education and give them research skills they can use in their own future classrooms, expose non-education majors to education as an exciting field of inquiry, and provide the CET Fellows with a pool of potential project assistants.

To expand the efforts piloted this summer, the CET is adding the inclusion of undergraduate students as research assistants to the 2016-17 RFP process. Projects with this element will receive priority review. The CET is encouraging the researchers to plan substantive roles for undergraduates on their projects.

### **Postdoctoral Fellows Program**

The CET Postdoctoral Fellows Program expands research opportunities for young scholars and provides research support to statewide CET projects and research initiatives across Regents' and other campuses. The CET recruits postdoctoral candidates from top research universities nationwide to ultimately build a strong network of national scholars and researchers with the CET at the center, and the goal of providing CET projects with greater resources and support to expand their scope, scale, and impact.

Matthew Green, Ph.D. (UNC-Chapel Hill, 2015), the first and current CET Postdoctoral Fellow, will continue in his fellowship for the 2016-17 academic year and focus on translating research to the Iowa context, along with engaging with Iowa schools to disseminate research and research-based practices. The CET will recruit a second Postdoctoral Fellow for the 2016-17 academic year. He/she will provide expertise related to the themes of current CET-sponsored research.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the US Department of Education offers a Postdoctoral Research Training in the Education Science grant competition annually. The CET applied for \$714,134 from IES to build a five-year Networked Improvement Community of Postdoctoral Fellows working with scholars and researchers from UNI, University of Iowa and Iowa State University, as well as practitioners from school districts across Iowa, to research topics related to Teacher Effectiveness and Effective Teaching (award notification expected by July 1, 2017).

### **Next Steps in Research**

Several CET research projects drew to a close during the summer of 2016. CET staff are currently designing the final report structure for their research results. These reports will include information about partner schools, teacher and teacher-leader involvement, students impacted by the project, and dissemination efforts-to-date, in progress, and planned. Evaluations will be

provided to all CET Fellows requesting information about their experiences as CET Fellows. The evaluation will ask the researchers to provide feedback about the CET Fellows process and implementation and solicit possible ways to keep past CET Fellows engaged in the work of the CET. For example, one method of keeping the CET Fellows engaged would be to create researcher panels based on the research themes and submit those panels to conferences for presentation. Keeping the CET Fellows engaged also would provide an opportunity to present the Fellows' work to the Education Subcommittee of the state legislature.

## **CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

A multi-pronged approach was used to build and leverage partnerships across the state with the goal of informing decision-makers and driving policy. A variety of partnerships have been cultivated during the past year between the CET and decision-makers at many levels. CET staff met with more than 100 education stakeholders in all parts of the state. Face-to-face meetings with legislative leaders such as Herman Quirmbach, Senate Education Committee chair, and Ron Jorgensen, head of the House Appropriations Committee, opened up a dialogue about critical and emerging education issues in Iowa and the CET's role in promoting innovation and gathering evidence for policymakers. Tangible outcomes pertaining to policy are still emerging, although CET research projects that address new education related legislation (e.g., the TLC program, third grade literacy) are in progress. The CET also created opportunities to meet with potential new PK-12 education research partners and to deepen existing relationships with constituents already committed to supporting its transformational work.

### **Ed Perspectives**

Three Ed Perspectives meetings were held during the spring semester on UNI's campus. These meetings invite Iowa educators, educational stakeholders, and Iowa teacher education faculty. By bringing in outside expertise to speak with Center partners, CET can be proactive in learning about a variety of national educational perspectives and issues to inform work in schools and the training of future teachers. The three Ed Perspectives programs offered were:

1. Tim Eatman, Imagining America. *Beware of Shrinking Imagination: Publicly Engaged Scholarship and the Educational Enterprise*
2. Deborah Loewenberg Ball, TeachingWorks. *High-Leverage Teaching Practices*.
3. Audra Parker, Kristien Zenkov, and Rene Roselle, AACTE Clinical Practice Commission Panel. *Reform of Clinical Practice in Teacher Education*.

### **Ed Research Afternoons**

The Ed Research Afternoons are two-hour-long events in which 1) a UNI faculty member presents on a research project, methodology, or topic, followed by 2) a "working" session whereby participants can share their current research projects informally to get feedback and research guidance from CET staff. The Ed Research Afternoons aim to build research capacity and collegiality among UNI teacher education faculty. These events are a collaboration between the CET and the Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations.

### **Community Collaboration**

The CET is collaborating with entities outside of public education. One such collaboration is with the Cedar Valley Alliance and Chamber, to evaluate the impact of the Leader in Me, a leadership program the Alliance and Chamber supports the implementation of in Cedar Valley Schools. Another partnership that developed this year was with the Center for Social and Behavioral Research (CSBR) at UNI. The CET and CSBR collaborated on an evaluation of UNI's teacher education program, and CSBR has expressed an interest in further collaboration relating to

education research. CSBR has research capacity it can offer the CET in exchange for the CET's PK-12 education expertise and partnerships.

The CET was the only non-school district invited to the Iowa League of Innovative Schools (ILIS) meeting on May 18, 2016. At this meeting, ILIS members from 19 Iowa school districts shared information about innovations occurring in their districts.

### **E-Connections**

The CET has been building its electronic presence. Informational articles and announcements are posted to the CET Facebook page daily. These posts include: mentions of CET Fellows in the media, Iowa education news, information on the state of PK-12 education in the U.S., resources on doing and understanding education research, information on sources of funding for education research, and findings of recent education research. The CET Twitter account (@IowaCET, #IowaCET) is used to promote and engage participants in Ed Perspectives meetings and other CET programs.

### **Next Steps in Connections and Partnerships**

It will be important for the CET staff to continue building relationships across the state and deepen its existing relationships with the innovative national partners. Specific strategies will include:

- Building relationships with the Iowa Department of Education Content Area Consultants. This will expand the CET's exposure to Iowa teachers.
- Working with statewide teacher associations like the Iowa Council of Teachers of Mathematics to meet teachers who are committed to and invested in their profession.
- Developing a pilot using the speakers from the 2016 Ed Perspectives meetings as our National Education Fellows for 2016-17. This would allow each Ed Perspectives program to continue working on issues discussed at the meeting and move it forward in a working session over the next 6-12 months. These projects would culminate in a combined Colloquium in the fall of 2017.

### **DISSEMINATION**

The dissemination of innovative and best practices from the CET's research themes is a core activity that the CET has been developing and will continue to strengthen and measure. The CET works with its partners to share the findings of their research activities in ways that will support practitioners and policymakers as well as the education research community.

### **2016 Education Summit**

An element of the original vision of the CET was its participation in "innovation sessions." One such Innovation Session was the 2016 Education Summit. The CET co-sponsored the Summit, entitled *Necessary Connectedness: The New Edge of Education*, in partnership with the Richard O. Jacobson COE Strategic Program Endowment on March 10-11, 2016, at UNI. The Summit provided the CET Research Fellows with a platform to disseminate the results of their research activities. Education stakeholders from across the state--including teachers, teacher-leaders, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, legislators, and UNI students--participated. National education researchers Gene Hall, UNLV; Gale Sinatra, USC; Sonia Nieto, University of Massachusetts Amherst; and Peter Afflerbach, University of Maryland were keynote speakers. Senator Herman Quirnbach spoke about the state of education in Iowa. The audience of approximately 200 attendees provided positive feedback about the event.

The CET is planning an Innovation Session in May 2017 entitled, *Perspectives and Potentials for Research on the Assessment of Educator Preparation*. This two-day conference will feature approximately 20 invited panelists from across the country to facilitate discussion on the assessment of educator preparation programs. With measuring and defining effective educator preparation becoming key issues nationally, it is vitally important to educator preparation programs that they develop comprehensive and valid ways to assess the effectiveness of their programs.

**Research Brief**

In July 2016, the CET published its first Research Brief. For this Brief, we condensed and summarized a journal article published by one of our original research fellows, Amy Hutchison of Iowa State (now at George Mason University), with permission of the publisher:

Hutchison, A. C., Woodward, L., & Colwell, J. (2016, March). What are preadolescent readers doing online? An examination of upper elementary students' reading, writing, and communication in digital spaces. *Reading Research Quarterly*. doi:10.1002/rrq.146

The Brief included the following recommendations for teachers based on Hutchison et al's findings:

- Provide students opportunities to participate in online activities in which they provide information or create content.
- Provide students with social media experience in school settings.
- Begin instruction in Internet navigation, reading, and writing in earlier grades.
- Help students become informed and critical consumers of online images and videos.
- Encourage girls to see themselves as more capable technology users.
- Use digital technology to get male students more interested in reading.

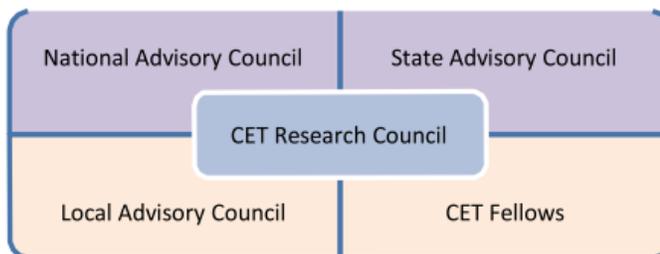
The Brief is available on the CET web site at [uni.edu/cet](http://uni.edu/cet) and was printed for sharing at conferences and events.

**CET Research Fellows Dissemination**

Current CET Research Fellows were required to provide a dissemination plan for sharing their research findings both in-state and nationally. This dissemination, carried out in partnership with CET staff, has three areas of focus: policy briefs, practitioner briefs, and research papers or conference presentations. During 2015-16, CET Research Fellows had nine dissemination activities, including publications and presentations. As some of the Researcher Practitioner Partnerships complete their research projects and begin compiling results, CET expects more dissemination.

**CET Advisory Councils**

The CET implemented a new Advisory Council structure that organized the original Advisory Council into smaller groups, each with a more specific purpose. The figure below illustrates the new CET Advisory Council Structure. Members of the CET Research Council will be invited to the other Advisory Council meetings so that they can benefit from the perspectives of the diverse group of education stakeholders involved with the Advisory Councils.



### **Local Advisory Council**

The Local Advisory Council provides direction for the CET in reviewing long-range goals and plans and recommends CET program design based on needs at UNI. The Council is responsible for helping the CET remain relevant to education and community needs by creating partnerships between the CET and education stakeholders in the community and helping promote public awareness of the CET's work. Members of this Council hold significant leadership positions at UNI.

### **State Advisory Council**

The State Advisory Council maintains communication and contact between statewide stakeholders, the CET Research Council, and the CET leadership team to provide information, feedback, and recommendations for the ongoing work of the CET. Members of this Council hold significant leadership positions in Iowa, have particular expertise and investment in quality PK-12 education, and represent stakeholders at various levels.

### **National Advisory Council (to be launched in 2017)**

The National Advisory Council will inform and be informed by critical issues and events within the national education research and practice landscape. This Council will identify promising areas of research, development, and dissemination for the entire field of PK-12 education. Members will be stakeholders in education and include researchers, members of education organizations, and practitioners.

### **Next Steps in Dissemination**

The CET is planning a comprehensive approach to dissemination for the next year. Dissemination activities will include an Innovation Session for May 2017 focused on assessing teacher preparation programs to improve student learning; policy briefs for each of the projects that concluded during 2016; practitioner briefs for teachers to be shared at statewide content-area conferences and made available electronically; and identification of participants for the National Advisory Board.

The conference in May 2017 will bring together key stakeholders who will discuss research perspectives on assessing teacher preparation programs and potential for new and substantive areas of interdisciplinary research into effective teacher preparation that improves teacher performance and student achievement. Preliminary negotiations with education researchers have begun in anticipation that they will be panelists for the two-day conference.

## **SUSTAINING SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT**

The CET developed a draft funding plan that will allow it to diversify its funding sources. The plan currently includes developing funding case statements for the following entities:

- Geographically-focused Iowa Foundations
- National Research Foundations
- UNI's Capital Campaign
- Federal Government RFPs

During summer 2016, the CET applied for three grants (two have already been declined; notice on the third is due by July 1, 2017).

UNI provides \$340,000 per year to the CET; these funds were reallocated to the CET following the Price Lab School staff restructuring. As stated previously, a grant from the Carver Trust was obtained to launch the Center and provides \$2 million in research funding and support for a 2-3

year period. The CET works in collaboration with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the UNI Foundation in pursuit of strategic grant opportunities, contracts, and external foundation support to advance its mission.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the past year, the CET has continued to evolve and expand its connectedness both in and outside of Iowa's education community and has increased its impact on PK-12 education both locally and nationally. It made significant progress in developing an operating plan and implementing strategic activities to advance the key activities of its mission:

- supporting and conducting research which transforms practice to meet the changing needs of Iowa's education system,
- building and leveraging partnerships across the state to include all stakeholders in the educational work, and
- sharing innovative practices to inform and drive policy and practice.