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Ensuring research-informed education policy for Illinois

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National Thought Leaders to Keynote 15th Annual IERC Symposium



IERC is thrilled to welcome **Valerie Purdie-Vaughns**, Director of the Laboratory of Intergroup Relations and Social Mind at Columbia University, as the lunch keynote for our annual research symposium. Purdie-Vaughns is an associate professor of psychology and research fellow at the Institute for Research on African-American Studies. She will address attendees on psychological factors related to narrowing the achievement gap in STEM.

Helping us to wrap up the conversation is closing keynote speaker **Julie Kochanek**, Director of the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Midwest. Kochanek will speak from a lens of promoting collaborative processes for strengthening quality through data-based decision making.



Registration is now open via the IERC website. More information on featured speakers and the symposium schedule is available [here](#).

IERC Welcomes Interim Executive Director, New and Returning Staff Members

In our first issue of IERC InformED since his appointment, **Bradford White** has come into his new role as Interim Executive Director. White is an IERC veteran and previously served as Associate Director and Senior Researcher bringing leadership to projects related to the teacher pipeline, principal preparation, and early childhood innovations. Outgoing Executive Director Janet Holt retired at the end of May, but remains involved with education research.

Carol E. Colaninno returned to the IERC after spending the summer directing a collaborative National Science Foundation-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates program. Dr. Colaninno is an assistant research professor at SIUE with over ten years of experience working with quantitative and qualitative data sets and has joint appointments with the IERC and the STEM Center. **Beverly Ahrens** recently joined the IERC as Office Support staff to assist with operations and administration who brings over 25 years of experience navigating these systems at SIUE. Following a brief retirement, **Jennifer Barnhart** returned to the IERC to assist with special projects, including coordination of our research symposium. We couldn't imagine trying to pull it off without her!

Upcoming IERC Projects Tackle School Funding, College Affordability, and Competency-Based Education

IERC is pleased to preview three selected projects due out in the coming months. We look forward to sharing a report which builds on **Degrees with Less Debt** and highlights postsecondary institutions in Illinois that are successful in graduating more under-represented students with less student loan debt. Also due out this year is *How Money Might Matter in Illinois*, a collaboration with Derek Houston at the University of Oklahoma, which explores how school funding policies may impact the educational mobility of Illinois public school students. Lastly, as a follow up to **Advancing the Illinois Early Childhood Education Workforce: A Model College and Career Pathway**, a forthcoming IERC monograph will outline a model for developing well-designed competencies to support innovations in preparation, credentialing, and professional development systems.

See anticipated release timeline under Upcoming Publications and Presentations section.

Guest Feature

*IERC was pleased to have the opportunity to speak with Cynthia Tate, Executive Director of the **Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development**, to learn more about Illinois' vision for the future of early care and education and what initiatives are underway to realize that vision.*

Q: Can you please tell us more about your background and experience in early childhood?



A: As a clinical psychologist, my work concentrated on community mental health, children, and families. I became Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) in October 2016. Previously, I served

in the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, directing initiatives related to child welfare, early childhood developmental screening, and the state's Title IV waiver.

Q: What is the role of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and what are some of its primary priorities and projects?

A: OECD was created by executive order in 2010 with the goal of developing greater coordination and alignment across the early childhood system. The early childhood system is very fragmented. Oversight and funding come from multiple state and federal agencies. Credentialing and qualifications vary by program type. It's a system that is administratively complicated but also complicated for families. It is difficult to figure out eligibility requirements, how to enroll, what's a quality program, and how to pay for it.

We work to move the system towards congruency and provide leadership to cross-systems projects that involve multiple state agencies. The OECD was established with the funding of three federal grants including the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, and the Preschool Development – Expansion Grant.

Q: What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing early childhood in Illinois?

A: One area where we have targeted our efforts is toward developing the workforce. Through the Children's Cabinet, a cross-system collaboration that brings together state agencies and is led by the Governor's Office, we are working to address the recruitment and retention of qualified candidates with the help of policy experts, practitioners, and advocates.

One particular area of need within licensing and credentialing is the unmet need for bilingual educators and English as a Second Language programming. We have an exciting partnership with The Ounce of Prevention and Latino Policy Forum to better bridge this gap which includes successful models like that of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association.

Q: Illinois was the recipient of a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant from the federal government to strengthen access and quality of early childhood. Can you reflect on the progress made possible through this award?

A: RTT-ELC has wrapped up and the many contributions were invaluable. ExceleRate allowed for a systematic way to measure, develop, and support quality.

Innovation Zones fostered community development which is foundational to making improvements at the local level for providers and families.

Q: IERC has had the opportunity to work closely with state agency partners to develop an early childhood career pathway to expand Illinois' pipeline of highly qualified early learning professionals. What do you see as the barriers and keys to success for better supporting the recruitment, retention, and development of our state's early childhood workforce?

A: Workforce issues are absolutely critical. We must ensure there's a robust pipeline of early childhood professionals if supply is going to keep pace with the need for high-quality early learning. The Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation grant allowed for a tremendous amount of work by the higher education community to make sure that students are building the right competencies, able to get the classes they need, and that these credits are recognized when they transfer so that we don't lose anyone along the way. The work in which IERC has been engaged around developing a career lattice that leverages competency-based education and stackable credentialing creates a flexible route for developing the workforce that accommodates a variety of different entry points into the pipeline. That's really important.

Q: Can you share a fun fact about yourself?

A: On an upcoming trip to DC I'll have the chance to visit the National African American History and Culture Museum which holds such incredible significance for African Americans in our country and for the entire nation. I'm really excited and looking forward to the opportunity.

Feature Topic

Incentivizing Diversity - Exploring the Implications of Performance Based Funding Diversity Indicators

In preparation for the release of her upcoming report exploring postsecondary performance funding and indicators of diversity, this issue of IERC InformED features a preview of IERC's 2017 Faculty Fellow, Sosanya Jones' report. Jones is an assistant professor of qualitative research methods and higher education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. You can find more on her work [here](#).



In my forthcoming report for the IERC, *Incentivizing Diversity: Midwestern Performance Funding Policy and Diversity Indicators*, I will report results of my recent

IERC-funded study comparing postsecondary performance funding systems in four states. Performance funding (PF) is a policy that ties state funding of higher education to outcome indicators. The latest iteration of PF is widely referred to as PF 2.0 because unlike its predecessor, it does not award incentive funding over the base allocations. Instead, in PF 2.0 model indicators and weights are embedded in state funding formula so that they are tied to the base operating funding allocations for an institution.

It is important to study these programs because PF 2.0 has seen rapid growth and as more states adopt PF as a policy, criticism mounts about the potential negative unintended consequences such as exacerbating funding problems for institutions with high numbers of students of color and low income populations, leading to a “creaming” of students and courses where the best of each would be selected to successfully meet outcome goals (Dougherty, Jones, Lahr, Natow, Pheatt, & Reddy, 2016).

To address this concern, most PF programs have explicitly or implicitly adopted indicators designed to improve institutional outcomes for recruiting, retaining, and graduating historically underrepresented students of color (National Conference of State Legislators, 2015). While these goals are admirable, there has been virtually no empirical investigation of the development and thinking surrounding indicators and weights designed to increase diversity in institutions of higher education.

For my inquiry, I designed multi-case study to investigate PF policies in Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, and Minnesota and the rationales that undergird the metrics and weights designed to incentivize diversity in higher education. I used both document analysis and semi-structured interviews with state level actors closely attuned to the development of higher education policy in each state. My analysis uncovered varying degrees of prioritization of diversity in PF policy.

I also found four logic principles that communicate the beliefs and practices that organize the priorities of an organization. These logic principles also guide decision-making in the creation and adoption of policy. The logic principles that emerged in my analysis were: 1) diversity and access is important; 2) mission differentiation is key; 3) learning from other states’ mistakes; and 4) data decision policy. In the report, I detail how these logic principles were enacted differently across states, with a focus on Illinois, and discuss implications for state policy and future research in this area.

References

Dougherty, K. J., Jones, S. M., Lahr, H., Natow, R. S., Pheatt, L., & Reddy, V. (2014). Performance funding for higher education: Forms, origins, impacts, and futures. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 655(1), 163-184.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2015). *PF for higher education*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/performance-funding.aspx>

Upcoming

Upcoming Publications & Presentations

- IERC Symposium presentations:
 - ♦ November 9 – *Cornerstones of Student Success: Institutions Yielding High Return on Investment for Underserved Students*, Janet Holt, Brad White, and Dan Duffy
 - ♦ November 10 – *Illinois' Early Childhood Innovation Zones*, Brad White and Leah Pouw (Illinois Action for Children)
- Fall 2017. *Illinois Degrees with Less Debt*, by Janet Holt and Daniel Duffy
- Fall 2017. *How Money Might Matter in Illinois*, in partnership with Derek Houston, University of Oklahoma
- Winter 2017/18. *Incentivizing Diversity: Midwestern Performance Funding Policy and Diversity Indicators* by IERC Faculty Fellow Sosanya Jones, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- Winter 2017/18. Competency-based education monograph, by Stephanie Bernoteit (Illinois Board of Higher Education), Johnna Darragh Ernst (Heartland Community College), Nancy Latham (Illinois State University), and Brad White (IERC)

Upcoming Events

- Date: October 27
Event: **Illinois Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Fall Meeting**
Location: Bloomington-Normal
- Date: November 2–4
Event: **Association for Public Policy and Management Conference**
Location: Chicago

- Date: November 6–11
Event: **American Evaluation Association Conference**
Location: Washington, DC
- Date: November 8–9
Event: **Illinois Association for Institutional Research Annual Forum**
Location: Naperville
- Date: November 9–10
Event: **IERC Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium**
Location: NIU Conference Center, Naperville
- Date: November 9–11
Event: **Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference**
Location: Houston, TX
- Date: December 3
Event: **Governor's Children's Cabinet meeting**
Location: TBD
- Date: December 11
Event: **Illinois P-20 Council meeting**
Location: TBD

Let's Keep in Touch!

Have you had a chance to visit our website? Check it out today at <http://ierc.education>

Follow us on **Facebook** and **Twitter** for the latest updates and news on education policy in Illinois and beyond!.

Have a suggestion for an issue feature, interview, or upcoming event? We'd love to hear it. Share it with us at ierc@siue.edu.

