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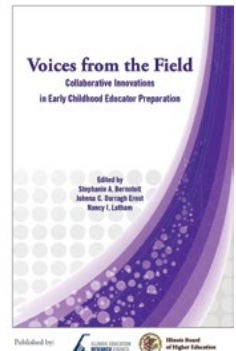
Ensuring research-informed education policy for Illinois

IERC News

IERC Research on Preparation of Illinois Early Childhood Educator Workforce

The IERC has been engaged in several projects related to early childhood educator preparation with support from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), funded through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. This includes an IERC research study released in November 2016, **Innovations for High Quality, Aligned Early Childhood Educator Preparation**, authored by Bradford White and team, which provides an overview of strategies employed by Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation grant recipients to address common obstacles and practice-oriented challenges in early childhood (EC) educator preparation system.

A book published jointly by the IERC and IBHE, *Voices from the Field: Collaborative Innovations in Early Childhood Educator Preparation* will be featured at a celebration event at Roosevelt University on January 26, 2017. Producing this book was an exciting project for us at the IERC as we worked with the authors and editors to showcase the strong collaborative work in EC preparation being done by higher education faculty in Illinois to facilitate a seamless alignment of credentials and degrees from 2-year to 4-year institutions.



The chapters are written by partners from both sectors and describe innovations in many areas of EC preparation with introductory and concluding chapters by editors, Stephanie Bernotteit, Johnna Darragh Ernst, & Nancy Latham. "This book took one year to produce from conception to publication and I am very impressed by the work of the authors and editors to come together in such a short timeframe to produce this unique collection of descriptions of EC educator preparation

innovations in Illinois. We appreciate the leadership of Stephanie Bernoteit of IBHE in conceptualizing this project and partnering with the IERC to bring it to publication. I also want to acknowledge Jennifer Barnhart from the IERC for her expert work in layout and production, as well as working carefully with the authors and editors, and also acknowledge Rebecca Butler, professor emeritus from Northern Illinois University, for her expert copyediting assistance and her advice on copyright and other publication matters,” said Janet Holt, Executive Director at IERC. The book will be available at no cost on our website as long as it is used for non-commercial purposes and is given proper attribution. So please review it and share it!

Future work in this area includes an upcoming policy brief and infographic on the early childhood postsecondary education and career pathway authored by Stephanie Bernoteit, IBHE and Janet Holt, IERC.

IERC Research on Principal Preparation Disseminated Nationally

Highlights from the I-PREP study of principal preparation in Illinois, *Navigating the Shift to Intensive Principal Preparation in Illinois: An In-depth Look at Stakeholder Perspectives*, were presented at the annual conference of University Council for Educational Administration on November 17 in Detroit. Brad White from the IERC presented findings from this joint study with the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. This work was also highlighted in a recent article in *Education Week*, **Principal-Preparation Programs Get Major Makeover in Illinois**. Our study describes how the reforms to redesign principal preparation programs are being implemented and gathers feedback from stakeholders in order to spotlight lessons learned on the successes and challenges. Overall, the reception of the new policies has been positive although the enrollment in preparation programs has reduced as standards have become more rigorous. Detailed findings are available in the **full report**.

Guest Feature

We are pleased to share our interview with Brian Spittle, former Assistant Vice President for the Center for Access and Attainment at DePaul University. Dr. Spittle has a wealth of expertise in student support services and a proven track record of promoting student success. We thank him for making time for us and we wish him well in retirement!



Q: Can you share more about your professional background and experience supporting college students?

A: During my 30 years at DePaul, I served in a number of different capacities on

projects related to admissions, enrollment, retention, and completion. My work evolved over time from working with adult learners returning to school to student assessment, placement, and advising, and later to the establishment of the Center for Access and Attainment (the Center).

Q: DePaul has a strong reputation as a leader for its emphasis on enrolling and completing first generation, low income, and underrepresented students. Can you speak about the CAA and its role in advancing student success?

A: The center is part of a wider commitment and effort that has taken place over time. We work to develop pathways to and through DePaul focusing on underrepresented groups particularly in Chicago.

One of the reasons we've been successful in improving graduation rates is that we have focused on that for the university as a whole, not just on specific groups. And we've seen substantial improvement over two to three decades against national trends. If I had to pick 3 critical components that set us apart, I'd say:

- Institution-wide Commitment – Beyond the just the work of the Center, there is an institution-wide commitment to putting in place the supports, services, and resources to facilitate completion for our students and to making the University accessible to first generation students, lower income students, and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, particularly those from communities that neighbor campus. It's historically central to our work and attracts staff, faculty, and students to us.
- Long Term Goals, Long Term Efforts – Significant change takes time and a comprehensive approach. We take the long view, not one-off initiatives. This means making tweaks and reorganizing efforts to find what works and to continue improving upon it.
- Data – To target our efforts and take a strategic approach to supporting students, we spend a lot of time with data. We slice it different ways to highlight what we know about our students and sub-groups, and to understand where things are likely to go off-track. For example, retention research and practice often focuses on persistence but we know that continued enrollment looked at alone is not as powerful a predictor of graduation as progress toward academic and career objectives and milestones. Looking at a combination of first year GPA and credit accumulation patterns has told us a lot more about the patterns and dynamics of degree completion.

Q: In your experience, what academic supports or strategies have been most successful for helping underserved populations to college completion?

A: We developed a first year academic success program focused on math to help

students identified as needing additional support get a strong start. It not only serves as an academic booster but provides continuity for those who may not have taken math in their senior year of high school, and helps meet prerequisites so that the path is cleared for their degree program. More broadly we also undertook a significant effort to strengthen student advising and ensure it is as effective and meaningful as possible.

Q: Outside of academic supports, are there other types of programs, supports, or experiences you have found to strengthen access, retention, and completion for underrepresented students?

A: Through student affairs, DePaul offers a wide variety programs to support students beyond academics including first year mentoring for minority students, peer-to-peer mentoring, and student empowerment programming among other opportunities. We also have highly effective TRIO programs targeted to low income and first generation students. The graduation rates from those programs are very high.

On the administrative side, one thing we've put in place is an executive retention committee which monitors and analyzes data. The committee includes leadership from enrollment, faculty, student affairs, and other areas of the university, and they meet regularly to understand patterns and modify course where necessary.

Q: Are there any particular successes stories that you would like to share about how the CAA made a difference for your students?

A: DePaul is committed to ensuring access to for students from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and we have been very intentional about cultivating relationships with local schools. Compared with other private institutions, we enroll a large number of CPS students including students from neighborhood schools in addition to the magnet schools. Many of these students get involved with Center initiatives.

To give an individual example, I can think of a student who came to us from an International Baccalaureate program at a CPS school on Chicago's West Side. He was a very bright and highly motivated student who participated in TRIO, mentoring, and a program aimed at preparing underrepresented students for doctoral work. When he completed, he went on to pursue graduate studies. He had been a stand-out student and it was really exciting to see all that he accomplished.

But this story isn't unique. At DePaul, we have the opportunity to work with many bright, successful students whose stories are similar to that of this student's. But there are many more with whom we do not cross paths and who may not find their way to good educational opportunities and the supports they need to reach their full capacity. I often think about those talented young people with tremendous

potential across the city, our state, and even the nation, and what it would take to better connect with them and put the educational opportunities in place to enable them to reach their goals and thrive in college or on whatever path they see for themselves.

Q: What's a fun fact about yourself that you care to share?

A: Originally from England, I am a fan of soccer and I enjoy following Manchester United. Outside of soccer, I have begun a writing project to share my father's story as a World War II veteran who was imprisoned by the Japanese during the war.

Feature Topic

Growing Graduation Rates While Minimizing Student Debt – Janet Holt, Executive Director, IERC



The IERC is happy to be working as a research partner with **St. Louis Graduates** to study how institutions that serve students from the St. Louis area help students to successfully complete college with low debt. According to Amy Murphy, Director of Scholarships and Donor Services, St. Louis Community Foundation, and Co-chair, St. Louis Graduates Higher Education Recognition Task Force, “St. Louis Graduates’ mission is to increase degree completion for low-income, first-generation students and students of color. While college enrollment is an important part of the process, persistence to graduation is even more so. The work Janet and her colleagues are doing is shedding light on what works for students. We both want to recognize that work and share lessons learned so more students have the support they need.”

The St. Louis Graduates organization commissioned the IERC to conduct a study to help them answer two key questions: (1) Which institutions are doing the best in supporting low-income, first-generation students and students of color through college completion with low debt? and (2) What strategies are these institutions using to facilitate these results? This interesting project has tapped our expertise in both quantitative modeling and more descriptive qualitative work. Starting with a list of 20 four-year institutions where St. Louis students most often attend college, we began the process of deciding which institutions were best supporting this population of interest. We started by examining existing college ranking systems and found that none exactly captured our conceptualization of college success for underrepresented students or had missing information on some of the institutions. Consequently, we used publically available data to develop a quantitative model

that predicted college success within defined parameters and emphasized graduation with less debt. From this analysis, a group of five institutions rose to the top.

In the second phase of this project, we interviewed administrators in the areas of academic and student affairs, enrollment management, and financial aid as well as a group of students, from each of these five institutions to find the key ingredients of their “secret sauce”. The results from this project, including the five institutions and their successful strategies will be revealed in an upcoming IERC research report, *Degrees with Less Debt: Effective Higher Education Strategies for Underrepresented Student Populations* to be released in February. Additionally, St. Louis Graduates will showcase this work, along with representatives from the five institutions at a St. Louis-area Professional Development Institute, hosted by St. Louis Graduates on February 17, 2017. Greg Laposa, Vice President of Education Strategies, St. Louis Regional Chamber, and Co-Chair, St. Louis Graduates Higher Education Recognition Task Force, describes the importance of this work:

“Higher education institutions clearly are critical partners in ensuring all students have the support system in place to graduate. IERC’s research is helping us understand the best practices of colleges and universities who are effectively graduating our students with less debt. We are excited to learn more and feed this valuable research into the ecosystem in St. Louis.”

It has been a wonderful experience to work with the St. Louis Graduates Higher Education Recognition Task Force, Co-Chairs Amy Murphy and Greg Laposa, and St. Louis Graduates Project Director Laura Winter, and learn about the St. Louis Graduates organization and their passion for helping students from St. Louis succeed. Our hope is that by sharing these findings in Missouri, Illinois, and beyond, institutions may learn new strategies for supporting students who have had less opportunity to realize their potential.

Upcoming

Upcoming Publications & Presentations

- January 26. *Voices of the Field: Collaborative Innovations in Early Childhood Educator Preparation* book release in partnership with the Illinois Board of Higher Education
- February. *Advancing the Early Childhood Workforce through Stackable Credentials and Degrees* policy brief release
- February. *Degrees with Less Debt* research report release

- February 17. Janet Holt to present on St. Louis Graduates project at their Professional Development Institute
- March 16 – 18. Janet Holt and Drew Anderson to present at the annual meeting of the Association of Education Finance and Policy their research on *Variation in the Impact of High School Environment on College Applications and High School Students' Knowledge of Parental Income and Implications for Planning How to Finance College*
- Spring 2017. Keep an eye out for IERC's upcoming evaluation study of the Illinois early childhood Innovation Zones grant to be completed early this spring

Upcoming Events

- Date: March 9
Time: TBD
Event: **Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth**
Location: TBD
- Date: March 13
Time: 12-4:30PM
Event: **Illinois P-20 Council** Meeting
Location: TBD
- Date: March 14
Time: 6–8PM
Event: **Advance Illinois Legislator Forum 2017: What the Every Student Succeeds Act Means for State Leaders and Communities**
Location: Springfield, IL
- Date: March 27-28
Event: **IERC Board speaker event and board meeting**
Location: Edwardsville, IL
- Date: November 9-10
Event: **2017 Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium**
Location: Naperville, IL

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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.



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