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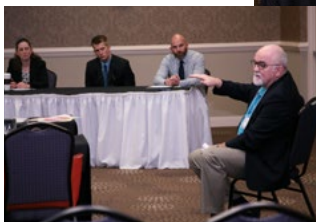
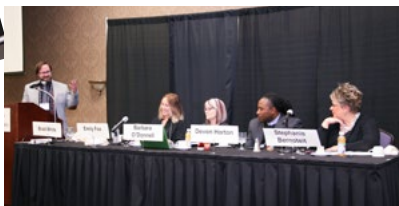
Upcoming

## IERC News

### IERC Hosts Successful 14th Annual Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium

Thank you to all who made this year's annual Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium a great success! Hallmarks of the IERC symposium are timely, relevant sessions on early childhood, K-12, and higher education research; a collegial atmosphere; great networking opportunities, including our very popular poster session and reception; and a balanced mix of research and policy perspectives.

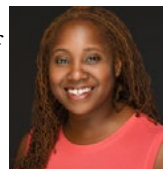
This year, attendees also heard from two outstanding keynotes, Juan Salgado, Executive Director of Instituto Progreso Latino and 2015 MacArthur Fellow, and Dr. Susan Dynarski, professor at the University of Michigan and higher education columnist for the New York Times. Mr. Salgado inspired attendees to reimagine our approach to educational pathways with proven adult education programming. While Dr. Dynarski dispelled common myths about student loans and discussed research-based strategies to expand college access and increase completion, especially for our most vulnerable students.



IERC research on principal preparation, first generation students, and FAFSA filing and college enrollment presented at the symposium is now available on our [site](#). Look for information on next year's symposium in spring 2017 on our site and social media.

### Welcome to Our New Faculty Fellow, Dr. Sosanya Jones

We are excited to welcome Dr. Sosanya Jones, Assistant Professor of Qualitative Research Methods and Higher Education at Southern Illinois University, as our 2016-17 IERC Faculty Fellow. Dr. Jones brings more than 15 years of experience in higher education administration, teaching, and research to the opportunity including a 2015 Fulbright Research Award. The work of her fellowship will primarily focus on the connections between efforts to strengthen diversity and performance-based funding.



More on IERC's Faculty Fellowship and Dr. Jones' project proposal on our website [here](#).

### Guest Feature

#### Interview with Robin Steans, Board Chair for the Steans Family Foundation

We were able to catch up with Co-chair of the Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee of the Illinois P-20 Council and longtime education advocate, Robin Steans, to reflect on the strides Illinois has made to strengthen education, and the opportunities and challenges still ahead of the state. See what she had to say!



**Q: What is your current role?**

**A:** I serve as the Board Chair for the Steans Family Foundation which concentrates its giving in the North Lawndale community. Among other community initiatives, the foundation works to improve access to early childhood and education opportunities in the neighborhood.

**Q: You recently transitioned from your role as Executive Director at Advance Illinois, where you spearheaded a number of education initiatives and helped to shape statewide conversations on improving policy and practice. What do you see as some of your biggest accomplishments?**

**A:** While at Advance, we were able to work with teachers, administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to tackle tough issues collaboratively. It's been an active time for the state, and many leaders came together to look at what our students need in order to be problem solvers and to be successful in college and careers; and we put policies in place aimed at making a difference.

As a result, the state adopted new student learning standards that better reflected the skills and knowledge students need to succeed. And to help teachers and principals constantly improve instruction, districts are now putting in place more substantive evaluations to provide real-time feedback that offers a better opportunity for reflection and support. In addition, there is now a targeted principal endorsement designed to better prepare the next generation of school leaders.

And with leadership from ISBE and the P-20 Council, the state gathered input from educators, families, and community members to guide the development of an updated school report card that makes meaningful information on schools publicly available and easily understandable, particularly to families. The state is also finalizing a longitudinal data system that allows all involved to better monitor and understand student progress over time and across institutions.

**Q: What do you see as some of the biggest challenges and opportunities facing Illinois schools?**

**A:** For policies and initiatives to be successful and to make a difference in the way we all hope they will, they must be well-supported and well-executed. Giving schools, districts, and universities the support and resources they need to implement effectively is the key; and it's no small feat given both the amount of change in motion, and the budget challenges facing Illinois.

Also, I am encouraged by the renewed energy around the school funding formula. Illinois schools have been underfunded for years; but on top of that, we do not distribute state funds in a way that promotes success for all students. From small towns to major urban areas, whether its downstate or Chicagoland, relying so heavily on local property wealth does a disservice to students by continuing to invest resources in a way that perpetuates achievement gaps.

**Q: Can you share more with us about your work with the Illinois P-20 Council?**

**A:** One of the biggest areas of focus most recently has been the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the re-authorization of No Child Left Behind. Every state

has some significant responsibilities around what they want students to know and schools to accomplish. The state's ESSA plan presents some big opportunities to think through how we know when schools are doing well, how we know when they are struggling, and how we can best tailor support when it's needed. The P-20 Council table is wonderfully diverse, so it's been a rich conversation so far, and very much in partnership with ISBE.

**Q: What's a fun fact about yourself?**

**A:** I'm a huge movie buff! I love to watch all types of movies from critically acclaimed films to documentaries to rom-coms and action flicks. Feel free to pass on any favorites!

**Feature Topic**

**Illinois Higher Education: Partners in Early Childhood Workforce Development**

Stephanie Bernoteit, Senior Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the Illinois Board of Higher Education

*In November, the IERC will publish findings from the second phase of the evaluation of the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation grants. In preparation for the release of that study, we are excited to share a piece from Stephanie Bernoteit at the Illinois Board of Higher Education, outlining Illinois' cross-agency work to improve early childhood career pathways.*



Well-prepared, highly skilled early childhood professionals are at the heart of high-quality early learning opportunities that effectively support the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of young children during the formative period of birth through age eight. Illinois, like many other states, has a patchwork of regulations and requirements governing entry into its early childhood workforce depending on program type, funding stream, and oversight agency. Qualifications and credentials, professional development, and compensation across the early childhood education (ECE) workforce vary widely because of the broad range of the education requirements and employment on-ramps.

Through the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has taken an innovative approach to partnering with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA),

and ECE faculty at two- and four-year institutions across the state to create seamless pathways with stackable credentials that enable early childhood educators to advance their professional learning and improve their attainment of both credentials and degrees in the field. Credentials through the Gateways to Opportunity (Gateways) professional development system provide for a stepped preparation and professional development “lattice” that encompasses the wide-ranging needs of practitioners in all ECE settings across the state.

Launched in 2014, the EPPI grant supports partnerships of two- and four-year institutions in jointly redesigning programs with a focus on articulation and transfer initiatives. Tied closely to Illinois’ Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge federal grant award, the EPPI partnerships emphasize the Gateways early childhood credentials administered by DHS and INCCRRA. In addition to working to attain recognition of their coursework for Gateways credentials, EPPI partner institutions innovated in many areas, including:

- cross-institutional advising,
- development of a summer bridge course to span upper- and lower-division coursework,
- jointly held professional learning opportunities on key topics such as early math, and
- development of baccalaureate programs that allow for seamless transfer of the traditionally terminal associate’s degree, among others.

Faculty at EPPI partner institutions played an important role in aligning Gateways credentials and postsecondary certificates, and creating new strategies to increase attainment of Gateways credentials. Faculty recognized the importance of embedding the Gateways credentials in their preparation programs and the need for support for students transitioning from the completion of an associate’s degree to a baccalaureate degree program. Together, faculty from two-year and four-year institutions jointly examined the Gateways credentials and helped to launch a project aimed at strengthening credential attainment by improving student advising and enrollment processes. Additionally, they informed the transition of the Gateways credentials to a competency-based system creating opportunities to strengthen alignment across institutions.

Ongoing dialogue among the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, state agencies, postsecondary institutions, and early childhood workforce development partners has made this cross-agency, systems-building work to strengthen integration and alignment across the early childhood workforce possible. These innovative partnerships between two- and four-year institutions promotes seamless pathways for ECE professionals, making it easier to attain both their college degrees and workforce credentials; and ultimately, better preparing them to support the development and learning of Illinois’ youngest children.

Readers can expect to see several ECE publications from the IERC by the end of the year, including the research study of the EPPI partnerships, a monograph written by the 2-year and 4-year faculty who are involved in these innovations, and a policy report on early childhood credentialing. In the meantime, we invite you to learn more about our initial findings on the EPPI partnerships [online](#) today!

## Upcoming

### Publications & Presentations

- **IERC Report:** *Innovative Pathways to Degrees and Capacity-Building for Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce*
- **IERC Policy Brief:** *Early Childhood Education Credentialing in Illinois*
- **Monograph:** *Voices from the Field: Collaborative Innovations in Early Childhood Educator Preparation*
- **IERC Report:** *Variation in the Impact of High School Environment on College Applications*
- October 26 – 29. Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) [Annual Meeting](#), Evanston
  - » Invited Division H Keynote: *Research for Impact* - IERC Executive Director Janet Holt
  - » Innovative Pathways to Degrees and Capacity-Building for Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce - Janet Holt
  - » Postsecondary Institutional Rankings for Assessing Economic and Social Mobility - Janet Holt
- November 18 – 20. Triple I Conference, Chicago
  - » Navigating the Shift to Intensive Principal Preparation in Illinois - Holly Hart
- November 17 – 20. University Council for Education Administration, Detroit
  - » Navigating the Shift to Intensive Principal Preparation in Illinois - Bradford White

### Upcoming Events - ESSA Planning:

- Date: November 16  
Event: **Teacher and Leader Effectiveness** P-20 Committee meeting  
Location: Bloomington
- Date: November 17  
Event: **Data, Assessment, and Accountability** P-20 Committee meeting  
Location: Chicago
- Date: December 12  
Event: **P-20 Council meeting**  
Location: TBA
- Date: December 15  
Event: **Data, Assessment, and Accountability** P-20 Committee meeting  
Location: Chicago
- Date: December 16  
Event: **Teacher and Leader Effectiveness** P-20 Committee meeting  
Location: TBA
- Date: November - December  
Event: **ISBE Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** Listening Tour, Round 3  
Location: TBA

### Other Illinois Education Meetings:

- Date: December 8  
Event: **Children's Cabinet meeting**

## Let's Keep in Touch!

Have you had a chance to visit our new 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](mailto:ierc@siue.edu).



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