



FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the Division for Research (CEC-DR)

President's Message

(Re)Focusing on What's "Special" about Special Education Research

Kristen McMaster, *University of Minnesota*

It is my honor to serve as president of CEC-DR, and I am so grateful for this opportunity. I would like to thank the CEC-DR Board members for all of their work in the past year, especially **Past President Betsy Talbott** for her outstanding leadership in advocacy for special education research funding. She, along with **Linda Lewis**, continues to lead the way in working with the Friends of IES (led by **Deb Ziegler**) to fight for increased funding for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)—please see Legislative Updates in this issue! I'd also like to thank all of you who continue to participate in these advocacy efforts, through letters to members of Congress, participation in the Special Education Legislative Summit, and visits to Capitol Hill. Your actions do make a difference—not only in preventing cuts and (we hope) *increasing* funding but also in increasing the visibility of special education research and, ultimately, its impact on children, youth, and adults with or at risk for disabilities.

I am always excited for fall—for many of us in education, it is a time of new beginnings: new students, new classes, and of course, starting up new research projects! I see it as a time of renewal—to refocus on what makes special education research “special” and to be sure that these elements are at the core of daily work. I find the following questions to be helpful as I gear up for fall research activities, in the hopes that ongoing attention to these elements will enhance the possibility that the research will make a meaningful and lasting difference:

- Is it *generative*—does it build on foundational scholarship and continue to move the field forward in knowledge and practice?

- Is it *translational*—does it have a place in a systematic progression of basic science to application to eventual implementation at scale?
- Is it *engaged*—does it include meaningful input and participation of professionals, parents, and students who represent the populations for whom it is intended, such that it is relevant in real-world contexts?
- Is it *rigorous*—does it adhere to the high standards that have been articulated over the last decade or so in our field, whether the methods are qualitative, correlational, experimental/quasi-experimental, or some combination?
- How might it have an *impact*—such that there's a plan to go beyond peer-reviewed journals and into actual practice?

Further, in thinking about what's “special” about special education research, I believe it is critical to continue to focus efforts on the *individual* who is often at the heart of our work. In many ways, special education research has had a broad impact on educational practice in general, by producing evidence-based assessments, interventions, and other practices across academic, social, and behavioral domains that are used in both special and general education contexts. Yet, a small but significant proportion of students do not fully benefit from these practices, and we must continue to ask the important question: How do we meet the needs of those individuals for whom our broadly effective practices are not enough? To this end, CEC-DR hosted a series of sessions at the 2016 CEC Convention that focused on research on intensive intervention, in which scholars (a) presented

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their efforts to examine ways of intensifying academic and behavioral interventions for students with significant needs and (b) engaged in thoughtful discussions about the challenges and opportunities related to this work. One of my goals as CEC-DR president is to continue to highlight and promote this work—stay tuned for more to come!

Finally, speaking of renewal, like other CEC divisions (and the larger organization itself), an important current focus of CEC-DR is *membership*. CEC membership has declined significantly over the last several years, and while CEC-DR has not experienced as drastic decreases as other divisions have, we still have seen some recent declines in renewals as well as in new members. I hope you will not only continue to renew your membership each year but also

encourage your colleagues and students to join us as well! Of course, it is important that there are clear benefits to membership—and we think there are several (e.g., this newsletter, subscription to *The Journal of Special Education*, frequent legislative updates and connections with other groups such as Friends of IES), but we will be reviewing these benefits and seeking input for how to retain current members and attract new ones. Again, stay tuned! Our division—and our efforts to advocate for funding and continued high-quality special education research—will only thrive with a strong and active membership.

With that, I wish you all a happy fall! I am looking forward to interacting with many of you this year as we continue our efforts to advocate for and carry out our *special education research*. ■

CEC-DR Legislative Updates

Elizabeth (Betsy) Talbott, *University of Illinois at Chicago*

CEC-DR has been busy advocating for funding for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). As you know, we worked with our Friends of IES colleagues last year and with prominent special education researchers to avert draconian cuts to NCSER funding. As a result, we were able to maintain flat levels of funding at \$54 million for the current fiscal year.

However, we seek to increase funding to \$70 million in the upcoming fiscal year so that NCSER can support innovative research serving children with disabilities. With help from the Friends of IES, we obtained signatures from 27 members of Congress on a letter to the Appropriations Committee co-chairs in the U.S. House of Representatives. This letter supported NCSER funding at \$70 million.

CEC-DR also joined fellow CEC and CEC-CASE members on Capitol Hill this summer to advocate for \$70 million in special education research funding, among other special and gifted education requests. This year, all CEC state teams participated in a special education research briefing and received legislative talking points to share with their congressional representatives. Those talking points are available on the websites of CEC and CEC-DR (www.cecdr.org).

Please stay tuned this fall as we continue to advocate for funding for NCSER at \$70 million in the midst of a busy election year. ■

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<https://www.facebook.com/divisionforresearch?fref=ts>

Call for Nominations: 2016–2017 CEC-DR Doctoral Student Scholars

The Division for Research invites nominations for outstanding doctoral student scholars to participate in the **2016–2017 Doctoral Seminars in Special Education Research**. Selected student researchers will participate with peers in generative discussions and professional development led by distinguished researchers recognized for making outstanding scientific contributions in special education. Three virtual seminars and on-line forums will be held during this academic year, culminating in a final colloquium that brings students and researchers together in a session dedicated to graduate student development at the **2017 CEC convention in Boston, Massachusetts**.

Nominees

Nominees should be outstanding doctoral students in special education seeking careers in research. *Nominees must have substantially completed their courses and be in the process of formulating a dissertation proposal or conducting dissertation research*. The competition is based on the judged quality of the student's research and capacity to gain from and contribute to the seminars.

Nomination Process

Students will be chosen to participate in the doctoral seminar series through a rigorous selection process:

1. Advanced doctoral students are nominated as **CEC-DR Doctoral Student Scholars** by a faculty member who can attest to the quality of their scholarship.
2. Students submit an abstract and a detailed summary research proposal that outlines relevant features of their study.
3. The proposals are blind reviewed by members of the DR-DSS planning committee.
4. Nominees must commit to participating in the seminars and to traveling (at their own expense) to the CEC convention.

Nomination Packet

Nomination packets should be submitted by the faculty advisor by November 15, 2016. All four (4) documents should be submitted in .doc format to facilitate the review process.

1. Nomination form
2. Abstract of student's research project that is no more than 120 words
3. Two-page summary statement of student's proposed research
4. Two-page letter of nomination

(Note: Attendance at the 2017 CEC convention in Boston is expected, as is participation in the virtual seminars. Please note that you understand these expectations at the conclusion of your summary. Costs associated with attending the annual CEC convention are at your own expense.)

Nominators are cordially invited to attend the colloquium at CEC, usually scheduled late on Friday afternoon and followed by the DR business meeting and reception.

We expect to extend invitations to the new cohort of doctoral student scholars by the end of December. All nominating faculty members will be notified of the outcome for their students at that time.

For additional details on the format and content of abstracts and nomination letters, please visit the CEC-DR website and click on the Professional Development tab (<http://www.cecdr.org>).

Please **submit nomination packets electronically** to:
Dr. Jean Crockett, University of Florida
(jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu).

Please **direct questions** to:
Dr. Mary Theresa Kiely, Queens College,
City University of New York
(mary.theresa.kiely@qc.cuny.edu). ■

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