

# FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the



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## President's Message

### Advancing Special Education: A New Chapter for CEC's Division for Research

Jessica R. Toste, PhD, *The University of Texas at Austin*

As we look forward to a new academic year, I am honored to step into the role of president of CEC's Division for Research (DR). I have served as vice president of DR for the past year and am transitioning directly to president due to shifts within our Executive Committee. Thus, I am playing a bit of catch-up in thinking ahead to my goals for DR!

One of my primary goals is to foster stronger collaborations between researchers and practitioners. The strength of special education research lies in its practical application, and this can only be achieved through robust partnerships with those on the front lines of education. We need to create more opportunities for these collaborations, whether through joint projects, professional development workshops, or community-based research initiatives. By working closely with educators, we can ensure that our research addresses the most pressing issues in the classroom and leads to meaningful improvements in educational practice and outcomes for students with disabilities.

In addition to enhancing collaboration, I am committed to advancing equity and inclusion in our research efforts. It is crucial that our work reflects the diverse needs of all students with disabilities, particularly those from historically marginalized communities who often experience

the consequences of ongoing disparities in our education system. This means prioritizing research that explores and addresses these disparities, and our scientific evidence must inform conclusions about what works, for whom, and under what conditions.

By doing so, we can contribute to a more equitable education system that serves all students effectively. To support my broad goals for DR, I plan to focus my efforts in three main areas: capacity building, dissemination, and advocacy.

First, capacity building will involve comprehensive review and enhancement of DR's internal processes, bylaws, and procedures to ensure operational efficiency. This will also include building a diverse and skilled committee membership to strengthen DR's impact, and diversifying sources of sustainable financial income to ensure that DR has the capacity to achieve its mission in the long term. We will also engage in efforts to provide members with the resources and professional development opportunities to support rigorous and high-quality research in the field of special education.

Second, dissemination is about ensuring that our research findings reach those who can use them to make a difference. This includes not only publishing in academic journals but also sharing our find-

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## CEC-DR Diversity Committee Spotlight



Federico Waitoller, PhD  
University of Illinois  
Diversity Committee Chair

The Diversity Committee is grateful for our *DiveIn* podcast listeners. We have had almost 2,000 downloads in the last year. We are happy to announce the release of our 12th and final episode of our first season. In this episode, we talked to Dan Losen about the school discipline gap and how it affects students with disabilities. Losen emphasizes the lack of adequate support and quality services for students with disabilities and the profound consequences this has on educational outcomes. We also delve into how the discipline gap and achievement gap are interconnected, highlighting how lost instructional time from suspensions severely impacts students, particularly those of color and those with disabilities.

Listen to this (and all) episodes of *DiveIn* at <https://divein.alitu.com/1?order=newest>. Also available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. ■



### Call for Nominations

## 2024–2025 CEC-DR Doctoral Student Scholars

Division for Research, Council for Exceptional Children

**DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2024**

The Division for Research invites nominations for outstanding doctoral student scholars to participate in the **2024–2025 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 forums will be held during this coming academic year along with a colloquium that brings students and researchers together in a session dedicated to graduate student development at the **2025 CEC Convention in Baltimore, Maryland**.

### 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.* Invitations will be issued to 10 doctoral students, with competition based on the judged quality of the student's research and capacity to gain from and contribute to the seminars.

### Nomination Process Summary

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 to their nominating faculty member.
3. Faculty members submit the student materials with the letter of nomination.
4. The proposals are blind reviewed by members of the DR-DSS planning committee.

### The Nomination Packet

*Directions for Students: Email the following 2 items in separate attachments to your nominating faculty member.*

1. Abstract of student's research project that is no more than 120 words.
2. Two-page summary statement of student's proposed research. The summary statement should be no more than two (2) single-spaced pages and should outline the problem you are pursuing or plan to pursue in your research, its intended contribution to theory and practice, specific research questions, and study procedures. Follow APA style throughout your submission. **Use 12-point Times New Roman font, single spacing, and 1-inch margins all around your document, and save as a Word file.** Up to 5 additional pages for References, Tables, and Figures may be included and will not count against the 2-page limit. References should include only works cited. Remove all information about the nominee's name and institution. The

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Call for Nominations (continued from page 2)

statement is forwarded to DR-DSS reviewers during the selection process.

**Directions for Faculty Nominators:**

1. Please compile the nomination packet (letter of nomination, abstract of student research, and statement of proposed research) for the nominee.
2. Your letter of nomination should be no more than 2 pages (12-point Times New Roman font, single spaced, 1-inch margins). Please explain why this student was selected, with special reference to academic performance and prospects for a career in research. (You might consider informing the committee about why you think this student would benefit from participating; what the student has to share with peers from other universities; or the research projects, publications, or other scholarly activities the student has engaged in during doctoral study.)
3. **Complete the *Nomination Form* and send the letter, abstract, and research summary to [jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu) no later than **September 30, 2024**. Attach**

**all three (3) items to one email (i.e., letter of nomination, abstract of student research, statement of proposed research).** Please save items in a **Word format** to facilitate the handling for reviewers.

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

We expect to extend invitations to 10 doctoral student scholars by the end of October. All nominating faculty members will be notified of the outcome for their students at that time.

For questions, contact Dr. Jean Crockett, University of Florida, at [jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu); Dr. Mary Theresa Kiely, Queens College, City University of New York, at [mary.theresa.kiely@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:mary.theresa.kiely@qc.cuny.edu); or Dr. Kristen Merrill O'Brien, George Mason University, at [kmerril2@gmu.edu](mailto:kmerril2@gmu.edu).

**NOMINATION PACKETS MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH THE NOMINATION FORM (see link above) NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 30, 2024.**



**President’s Message** (continued from page 1)

ings through more accessible channels, such as policy briefs, infographics, and social media. We will also work to strengthen our partnerships with scholarly journals, educational organizations, policymakers, and the media to broaden the reach and impact of our research.

Third, advocacy involves using findings from our research to inform and influence special education policy and practice. By engaging with policymakers at local, state, and national levels, we can help ensure that decisions affecting the educational and life outcomes of individuals with disabilities are based on the best available evidence. This includes advocating for policies that promote equity, adequate funding for special education programs, and the professional development of special educators.

As we pursue these goals, I am committed to maintaining an open dialogue with DR members. Your feedback and insights are invaluable in shaping the direction of our work. I encourage you to share your ideas, concerns, and suggestions with me and the rest of the

DR leadership team. Together, we can build on our past successes and create new opportunities for advancing the field of special education research.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as president of CEC-DR and excited to work alongside the other members of our incoming presidential line: Jason Chow, vice president (Vanderbilt University); Michelle Cumming, president-elect (University of Florida); and Audrey Sorrells, past president (Texas Christian University). I look forward to working with all of you—the membership of DR—to advance our shared mission of improving educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Please feel free to contact me at [jrtoste@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jrtoste@austin.utexas.edu) with any questions, ideas, or suggestions. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to ensuring that our research makes a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families, and educators. Together, we can enhance the quality, depth, and impact of the research being conducted in the field of special education! ■