

NCLII and NCII CO-HOST POLICY-FOCUSED SEMINAR FOR SCHOLARS IN WASHINGTON, DC

In January 2019, NCLII and NCII (National Center for Intensive Intervention) hosted a 2-day policy-focused seminar at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in Washington, DC. The goals of the seminar were to help scholars become more familiar with the network of policy-related organizations and groups, to better understand the relationships that faculty have with various players in DC, and to discuss current issues at the forefront of policy-related conversation.

The first day of the seminar included a series of panels featuring federal agency funders, policy and research organizations, advocacy groups, and professors engaged in policy-related work. The first panel, titled **“Meet with Federal Liaisons,”** explored the roles and work of federal liaisons and how they work with faculty and policy makers. Scholars then participated in a working lunch during which Larry Wexler, Division Director of Research to Practice at the Office of Special Education Programs, delivered special remarks. Following lunch, there were three afternoon panels: 1) **“Conversation with Research Organizations,”** which explored the types of project work, organizational structures, and the ways that research organizations interact with faculty, other researchers, and policymakers. Panelists included individuals from AIR, Westat, and WestEd; 2) **“Conversation with Professional and Advocacy Organizations,”** which featured the work that professional and advocacy organizations undertake, how they interact with faculty/researchers/policymakers, and the major policy and advocacy initiatives that they see forthcoming. Panelists included individuals from the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Council of Administrators of Special Education, American Educational Research Association, and the Council for Exceptional Children; and 3) **“Think Tanks: What Do They Do?”** which focused on what think tanks do and how they measure impact, how they interact with faculty/researchers/policymakers, and the major policy and advocacy initiatives that they see forthcoming. Panelists included representatives from the Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute, and Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

On day 2, scholars conducted a site visit to OSERS during the first half of the day. That afternoon, two final panels were held. The first, titled **“Conversation with Project Officers,”** included individuals from IES and OSEP and explored the role of a project officer and how they interact and support grantees and contractors. The final panel - **“How to Advocate for Special Education as a Leader and Professional in the Field”** – focused on how federal policy and initiatives have impacted the panelists’ work, how they have interacted with policymakers, and what they wish others in the field understood about policy. Panelists included university faculty and liaisons as well as the Co-Director of NCII.

Feedback on the seminar from NCLII scholars was positive, with one scholar noting, *“This event was so informative. I really do appreciate the wide range of panelists and the focus of the discussions. I have a broader understanding of the options available to me for ways to get involved with and affect policy with my work and in my future career.”* Another commented, *“I so appreciate all of the intricate planning that went into this and the time that all of these experts took to share with us - this was an invaluable experience I’ll remember and draw upon throughout my career.”*

Following the 2-day seminar, NCLII hosted a half-day All-Scholar Meeting that included a seminar debrief and a series of small group, round-table discussions with NCLII faculty on grant-writing.



Panel on research organizations with Allison Gandhi (AIR), Kellie Jim (WestEd), and Tom Fiore (Westat)



Scholars are welcomed by Joan McLaughlin, Commissioner at the National Center for Special Education Research, during a site visit to OSERS.

POST-GRADUATION PLANS ARE FIRING UP FOR NCLII COHORT 1 SCHOLARS

How time has flown! A number of the NCLII Scholars in Cohort 1 will be graduating from their programs in the next few months. Many of them have been applying and interviewing for jobs, and we are thrilled to announce their new positions below. Congratulations for a job well done, scholars! Please visit nclii.org for continued updates on scholar plans.

Gina Braun has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Special Education at Rockford University. This small liberal arts school is located about an hour outside of Chicago in a largely populated and diverse community. Mrs. Braun will be the sole Special Education faculty member at RU with a primary focus on teaching. Over the next three years, she will be redeveloping their program for both undergraduate and graduate students to submit for accreditation. Mrs. Braun also plans to align her research with teacher preparation as she works towards involving the community in the development of the programs.

Lisa Anne Didion will join the faculty at the University of Iowa as an Assistant Professor in the Fall of 2019. Currently, her research is focused on self-determination to improve academic and behavior outcomes for elementary students with high-incidence disabilities. Other research areas of interest include teacher learning, professional development, and methodology.

Sam Gesel will be moving to Charlotte, NC to begin a tenure-track faculty position at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As Assistant Professor of Special Education, Sam's research will target (a) reading interventions for students who have demonstrated persistent reading difficulties and (b) teacher training in data-based decision-making practices that link assessment data to reading intervention content. In her first year, Sam will teach reading assessment courses each semester, which will provide the opportunity to translate this research for UNC-Charlotte's undergraduate pre-service teachers in both special and general education.

Skip Kumm will be a Postdoctoral Fellow in the University of Alabama's College of Special Education and Multiple Abilities. In his position, Skip will work with Dr. Kristine Jolivette to research educational, behavioral, and mental health interventions for youth involved with the juvenile justice system. The fellowship will provide Skip with the opportunity to work with staff and youth from juvenile justice facilities around the country and to disseminate research on evidence-based interventions for court-involved youth.

Katherine Ledbetter-Cho has accepted a position as a tenure-track assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas State University. Beginning in the fall, Katherine will teach courses in the university's autism/applied behavior analysis concentration and work in the Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation, and Support (CARES). She looks forward to continuing her research which examines technology-based interventions for individuals with autism that are feasible for practitioners to implement.

Amanda Martinez-Lincoln was awarded an Academic Pathways Postdoctoral Fellowship at Vanderbilt University. She will be working under the mentorship of Dr. Laurie Cutting to bridge her imaging research background with her academic training in the field of special education. Amanda's research will focus on the examination of underlying neural mechanisms involved in reading comprehension in students with reading difficulties.

Caitlyn Majeika will begin as a tenure track Assistant Professor in the Educational Psychology department of the University of North Texas (*Go Mean Green!!*). Caitlyn will teach undergraduate and graduate special education courses while continuing to develop her research lines. These lines include (a) developing and implementing function-based behavioral interventions for students with or at-risk for emotional or behavioral disorders, and (b) training teachers to use a data-based decision-making process to adapt and intensify behavioral supports.

Brittany Pennington will be working as Research Coordinator for the Disability Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services in Saint Paul, MN. She will develop and oversee research related to improving outcomes for people with disabilities in Minnesota, and she will use research results to recommend changes to legislation and funding.

Beth Pokorski will begin a position as a post-doctoral researcher with the Supporting Transformative Autism Research (STAR) grant, an interdisciplinary autism research initiative at the University of Virginia (UVA). During this experience, Beth will continue her research on interventions for young children with autism, support pre-service practitioners in acquiring the skills necessary to be effective service providers, and provide diagnostic, intervention, and support services to children, families, and the surrounding community. She is excited to collaborate with UVA faculty, staff, and students to support children with autism and to continue moving the field of special education research toward positive change.

Samantha Walte will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Louisville. Her teaching and research focus will be on students with moderate and severe disabilities.

NCLII ALL-SCHOLAR MEETING IN AUSTIN PREPARES SCHOLARS FOR THE JOB MARKET

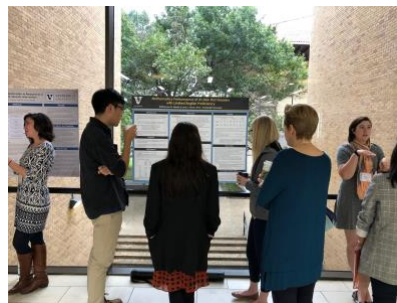
In November 2018, the University of Texas at Austin hosted the Fall NCLII All-Scholar Meeting. During this 2-day meeting, Cohort 1 activities focused on preparing for the job interview process. For one of the primary activities, Cohort 1 scholars were tasked with presenting “mock” 25-minute job talks to an audience of faculty members and other scholars. In addition, NCLII faculty members held practice one-on-one interviews with Cohort 1 scholars. These back-to-back 15-minute interviews were conducted with 5-6 faculty members at a time. Scholars were asked to familiarize themselves with the faculty members, their research interests, and current projects/publications to prepare for each interview accordingly. Faculty at UT created an individualized schedule for each scholar to practice and observe both in-person interviews and job talks with faculty in order to receive feedback and support. On Friday evening, faculty and scholars ventured to a fine dining establishment in Austin. At the restaurant, scholars were assigned to small groups for dinner in order to simulate an interview dinner. Finally, various panel discussions were held that featured topics such as “What to Expect When You are Interviewing,” “Negotiations: Start Up and Beyond,” and a discussion/Q&A with Sherry Field, Interim Dean of UT’s College of Education.

While Cohort 2 scholars had the opportunity to sit in on interviews and job-talks as observers, separate activities were also planned specifically for them. On Saturday morning, Cohort 2 scholars presented posters during a conference style poster session. Time was also allotted for scholars to work on their NCLII scholar-designed courses and to meet in their cross-site collaboration groups with faculty members to begin planning their collaborative experiences.

In the post-meeting evaluations, scholars rated this meeting as “excellent.” One Cohort 2 scholar remarked, *“All aspects of the meeting were highly useful. I found it particularly useful to observe practice interviews and job talks. It would be difficult for me to determine which panels were most beneficial since they all offered different perspectives on the job search process from their unique vantage points. In general, I thought this was the most useful convening we have had to date.”*



NCLII faculty participate in a panel on the job negotiation process.



Cohort 2 scholars present during a conference-style poster session.

IN THE NEWS

IMPORTANT DATES

COMPASS Science Communication Workshop

This training is designed to help scholars find the relevance of their science for the audiences they most want to reach — journalists, policymakers, the public, and even other scientists.

June 3-4, 2019

Vanderbilt University

Fall NCLII All-Scholar Meeting

October 18-19, 2019

University of Illinois at Chicago

SCHOLAR-DESIGNED COURSES ACCESSIBLE ON NCLII.ORG

This past fall, information about scholar-designed courses in intensive intervention from Cohort 1 scholars was featured on the NCLII website. Access to the full sets of masters-level course materials have been made available to interested faculty and district-level trainers upon request. Materials include a syllabus, PowerPoint slides, directions for course activities, and assessments for 14 weeks of instruction.

Since launching this information on the website, materials have been disseminated to 27 individuals (24 university faculty; 3 district-level administrators and trainers). The four courses featured are **“Classroom and Behavior Management for Students with Disabilities,” “Intensifying Behavioral Interventions Using a Data-based Decision-Making Approach,” “Intensive Interventions in Reading,”** and **“Data-based Individualization in Academics and Behavior.”**

Courses from Cohort 2 scholars will be made available this summer.