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CEHS Faculty Productivity, 2014

A self-report survey of our faculty revealed that 2014 was a good year for scholarly productivity in the College. Thirty-six of our 63 full-time tenured or tenure track faculty members (57% response rate) provided information to the Research Office regarding published papers and conference presentations in 2013 and 2014. Overall, 31 faculty members reported having published 36 journal articles (2.77 per faculty) with another 13 articles “in press.” Also, faculty published 18 books or book chapters! Finally, approximately 12 articles were “under review” at the end of 2014. This is a total of 79 papers, or 2.55 per faculty member. Thirty faculty members reported giving 125 conference presentations (4.16 per faculty). Extrapolating to our full faculty population – risky business, for sure, so this is for “entertainment value” -- suggests that perhaps as many as 160 journal articles, book chapters, and other research reports were published!

In comparison, for 2013, 16 faculty members reported publishing 26 journal articles (1.63 per faculty), 2 books or book chapters, and 4 miscellaneous articles or reports – a total of 40 publications, or 2.5 per faculty. These sixteen faculty members reported giving 58 conference presentations (3.63 per faculty).

Obviously, these numbers somewhat under-represent the productivity of our College as not everyone responded. And here’s the rub: At the end of the Fall 2014 semester, Nigel Clark, WVU’s Associate Vice-President for Academic Strategic Planning contacted all of the associate research deans and asked us to provide an estimate of the number of journal articles published by our respective faculty members for 2014. This information was requested by the WV Higher Education Policy Commission. So, I’d simply like to ask all of our faculty members to please provide this information when requested. I know that it’s a hassle and it takes valuable time away from “more important” activities. However, since we don’t know how such requested information will be used, it is probably in our best interest to provide accurate data that will portray our College and faculty in the best light. I’m sure you’d agree with this. And, the good news is that, in the

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near future, we will be able to gather such information using Digital Measures – and we can avoid pestering you!

A new feature coming to the College web site...starring you!

Beginning in January, 2015 we will feature one or two faculty publications, linked from the College home page. Selected articles will be those published in journals that can be accessed online (so that we can link to them). The feature page will have a thumbnail photo of the faculty member, a reprint of the abstract of the article, and a brief comment (which Christy Zachary will solicit) from the author about the article, and the link to the journal article.

I'm going to be completely arbitrary (and totally unbiased and fair) in selecting the articles to feature. Hopefully, you all will make this a very difficult task for me. Please alert me when you've published a paper that you'd like to have featured.

Berkeley Review of Education (BRE)

BRE is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal edited by students from the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal is currently accepting submissions on a rolling basis.

The process of submission to publication is approximately a year, with notification of acceptance within three months. If you are interested in submitting to the journal, see the [Call for Papers](#). Please forward to your colleagues, friends, and other networks. For more information, visit <http://berkeleyreviewofeducation.com>

The PIAAC and You

In December, 2014, I participated in a conference in Washington, D.C. that focused on the 2013 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The PIAAC was developed under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). During the 2-day conference, more than a dozen individual researchers and research teams presented the results of their projects – all commissioned by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) – to more than 150 adult literacy and education researchers, economists, policymakers, and officials from diverse federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, Treasury, USDA, and the National Center for

Education Statistics. Also on hand were representatives from OECD participant nations, including Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Great Britain, and Japan. PIAAC was undertaken to assess the abilities of adults in 24 countries, including the United States, to engage in literacy tasks – reading and numeracy (i.e., using math in everyday situations) – and problem solving in technology-rich environments (i.e., using computers and the Internet). Further, the project assessed individual countries’ readiness for its citizens to be competitive in a rapidly changing, increasingly global, workforce.

Along with members of my research group – Professors Amy Rose (Northern Illinois University), Jovita Ross-Gordon (Texas State University), and Tom Smith (Northern Illinois University), I presented the findings from our PIAAC study which investigated U.S. adults’ “readiness to learn,” and the extent to which readiness to learn predicts both adults’ literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills and their uses of these (and related) skills both at home and in the workplace. We not only received an excellent response to our work, but also made a promising connection with a team of researchers from Germany that is similarly investigating readiness to learn among Germans and other Europeans.

However, my purpose here is not to highlight the accomplishment of my research group, but to raise awareness about the PIAAC study and the opportunity that it presents for interested members of our faculty (as well as our graduate students) to use the PIAAC data to address some very important issues regarding literacy, educational preparedness, workforce development, family literacy, health literacy, and literacy behaviors among diverse adult populations (i.e., immigrants, rural adults, the prison population). And, although the U.S. data do not enable us to study these issues specific to West Virginia (unfortunately, no state-level assessments were conducted), the studies that will emerge from the PIAAC over the next several years will have important implications for understanding how educators, policymakers, and business leaders can respond to the educational and literacy challenges and economic opportunities of citizens in West Virginia and throughout the United States.

The initial results from the PIAAC study paint a troubling picture of U.S. adults’ skills. Thirty-five million adults (18 percent of the adult population) have low literacy skills, as defined by the PIAAC assessment. Fully one-third of American adults have low math skills – perhaps not surprising in a country where we have not yet figured out how to teach mathematics well in school (at least not to everyone). In comparison to other OECD nations, the United States scored in the middle of the distribution (with a mean literacy score = 270, on a 500-point scale); Japan scored highest, at 296 points, followed by Finland, at 288 points. Italy trailed all other nations, at 250 points. The results for numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments were similar. Also of concern is that U.S. adults’ performance has not improved

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and, in some areas and for some subpopulations, has declined from that of previous assessments in the early 2000s and 1990s – a very troubling trend.

The United States is an aging nation. Soon, adults over age 50 will comprise more than one-half of the population. Simultaneously, we are becoming an increasingly diverse population, with a rapidly growing population of Hispanic citizens (now the largest minority group in the U.S.). These demographic shifts have significant implications for the U.S. economy, our education system, and the nation's ability to remain competitive in the global economy. West Virginia and its' citizens will be significantly affected by these changes.

But, we as educators, social scientists, and education researchers have the capacity to respond, ask critical questions and conduct research, and develop programs, practices, and interventions that can contribute to helping adults – indeed, all of our citizens – in developing the skills, competencies, and behaviors necessary to learn, support their children's education, develop entrepreneurial skills, work in high-tech and "high-touch" jobs, respond to rapid changes in the workplace, and lead the way to economic prosperity, and acquire a renewed sense of purpose in a democratic society.

PIAAC not only assessed adults' competencies, but also gathered a rich variety of data using an extensive background survey that obtained information on adults' education and training experiences, past and present workforce participation, skills use and literacy practices, health status, and personal traits, among other data. The PIAAC is the most psychometrically sound and sophisticated assessment of skills that has been conducted, to date. Thus, it is a rich and complex data set.

As such, it can be daunting to think about how to use the data to address questions about education, literacy, and economic development and life outcomes. The good news, however, is that there are a number of supports available to faculty members and graduate students that are interested in analyzing portions of the PIAAC data. Reagan Curtis, Director of the Program Evaluation & Research Center (PERC) and I are interested in working with individuals (and groups) that have interest in the PIAAC. We hope to prepare graduate students in the skills of secondary data analysis. Further, the PIAAC offers several tools that can help researchers get starting using and analyzing the data. The PIAAC Outreach Toolkit offers a series of brief videos to familiarize users with the study and Powerpoint slide modules that focus on the results. Further, the National Center for Education Statistics is launching several data analysis tools – the PIAAC Distance Learning Dataset Training -- for researchers that are available on the PIAAC and NCES websites. I have listed the relevant PIAAC websites, below.

If you or your students are interested in learning more about the PIAAC and how to get started with data analyses, please feel free to contact me at mcecil.smith@mail.wvu.edu.

PIAAC website: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/index.asp>

PIAAC results (U.S.): <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/results/summary.aspx>

PIAAC Outreach Toolkit: <http://piaacgateway.com/toolkit>

PIAAC Distance Learning Dataset Training:

<http://nces.ed.gov/training/datauser/#PIAAC>

Proposal for a CEHS Distinguished Speaker / Guest Lecturer Program

I would like to submit, for your consideration, a proposal to develop and launch a modest effort to establish a distinguished speaker / guest lecturer program, beginning as early as the Fall 2015 semester.

What I have in mind is to invite individuals who are well-known, well-established researchers and scholars, as well as “rising stars” who are located within the various areas of study represented in the College of Education & Human Services. These persons will be easy enough to identify – through your knowledge of the literature in your field of study as well as your professional connections.

We can probably invite one or two people each semester and pay an honorarium to cover travel costs, hotel accommodations, and meals. We can save some costs by inviting a few individuals who are located at nearby institutions – in Pennsylvania, Ohio, D.C., Maryland, Virginia etc., but we are not necessarily limited to a regional scope. By combining funds from the dean’s office and one or more “sponsoring departments,” we can reduce the costs for any single entity.

What is the purpose and value?

A speakers program will enable us to expose our students, directly, to some of the significant thinkers, investigators, and scholars in our respective fields. Probably many of us had opportunities during our collegiate and graduate school days to attend on-campus seminars and presentations by the “giants” in our field of study. I know that, for me, these were memorable occasions in my academic development. While not intending to slight the great influence that each of our CEHS faculty members have in our students’ education, I think that we can agree that opportunities to hear about others’ work is beneficial to all of us.

How can we organize a speakers' program?

We all know the difficulties of trying to schedule presentations during the day when so many of our students are either in class or unavailable due to off-campus commitments (particularly so for many CEHS graduate students). As an *alternative*, I'd like to suggest the following scenario.

The invited speaker will give a research-focused presentation during the day to members of the sponsoring department(s) faculty and also any students who are available to attend. The presentation will be scheduled at a convenient time and place and will be promoted/advertised through the usual media channels (CEHS website, Mountaineer E-News, CEHS Facebook page) to attract others from throughout campus.

Also, the invited speaker will give a class presentation, on a relevant topic, to one or more classes that meet at approximately the same time during the day or evening (e.g., 4-7 pm on Tuesday). Here's a hypothetical example:

A well-known researcher who studies X will give a presentation to a graduate course in educational psychology and also a class in curriculum and instruction. This will require both coordination and planning. The presentation event will need to be planned far enough in advance that the course instructors can build this into their respective course schedules. The event could also be related to specific assignments in each class. Students from other classes – both undergraduate and graduate could also be invited to attend. Because students from at least two classes will attend the presentation, the presentation will likely require a larger meeting space -- further necessitating planning for the event.

I would like to suggest the formation of a committee of faculty members – one from the “education” side and another from the “human services” side of the college – and perhaps a student representative to plan, organize, and schedule the speakers. The committee will take nominations from faculty and students, and will collaborate with individual faculty members whose course(s) will host the speaker for a class presentation. I will be happy to chair the committee.

If there is sufficient interest in moving the proposal forward, I believe that we could begin in Fall, 2015. Please send your feedback to me at mcecil.smith@mail.wvu.edu.

Funding Strategies for New Investigators

If you are a new, junior faculty member it can be difficult to know where to start and what to do to get started when desiring to apply for grants from external agencies. Here are a few tips from the experts that can help improve your chances of getting funded.

1. Know what are your department and college's expectations regarding external funding.

I think it is safe to say that it is recognized that not every faculty member in doing research and scholarship in areas where research funding is bountiful; in fact, grant-supported research is in the minority of all scholarship that is conducted by faculty here and elsewhere. Nonetheless, for those who are going to need to rely on funding to support their work, it is important to understand the "local conditions" in terms of college expectations and support for grant writing.

2. Learn from others. Network with colleagues near and far.

Seek out your colleagues who have been funded. Talk to others outside of the college or institution. Ask for their advice. Collaborate where possible. Ask to read copies of successful proposals. Attend grant-writing workshops.

3. Establish your research agenda early on. Stick to your plan. Present at conferences and turn those presentations into published papers that provide the theoretical and empirical basis for your grant proposals.

Whew, that's a lot of advice packed into one nugget. But, it's all critical to your success. You have got to lay down a firm foundation of work *first*.

4. Use all available tools and resources to look for funding opportunities in your research area.

There are all sorts of online resources that can help you track and track down funding opportunities. Subscribe to funders' newsletters, email blasts, RSS feeds, and social networks. Get a PIVOT account (available for all WVU faculty members) and start tracking funding opportunities specific to your area of interest.

5. Be realistic about the funding opportunities you will pursue.

Think you're going to land that \$10 million NIH grant right out of graduate school? Um, probably *not* -- since you don't have a track record of success (and your award-winning dissertation doesn't count). Start small, build a foundation

of funded success, and work your way up to the big time.

6. If you think it will take you 4 weeks to write a strong and competitive grant application, then the rule of thumb is to DOUBLE that amount of time.

You said you wanted to write a competitive proposal. You want to get funded, right? Then, you've got to put in the time. There are no shortcuts to success.

7. If at first you don't succeed: Keep trying.

The file drawers of the most successful grant-getters that you can think of are chock-full of rejected proposals (10 get submitted, 1 gets funded; that seems to be a bedrock principle). Don't take rejection personally. I've served on many grant proposal review committees and one thing I've learned for sure: Reviewers *don't care* about your feelings. And so, you shouldn't let your feelings of being rejected get in the way of your progress. Read the reviews thoroughly and endeavor to learn from this feedback (turn lemons into lemonade). Revise the proposal and, by all means, resubmit it!

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