



Study III
The Future of Doctoral Leadership Programs Specific to Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) Think Tank: September 11-12, 2006 in Simsbury, CT

A Think Tank meeting was convened to consider the implications of a study on leadership training conducted by the Center to Inform Personnel Preparation Policy and Practice in Early Intervention. A group of 12 higher education faculty representing 11 OSEP doctoral training grants that address early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) participated in the Think Tank. The following summarizes the key areas for recommendations by the group.

Leadership training for future faculty members in EI/ECSE was assessed in an effort to maintain and improve services for young children with disabilities and their families. From this information, challenges and recommendations were delineated.

Student Recruitment and Retention

Issue:

- There is a shortage of future EI/ECSE faculty members.

Suggestions:

- Offer competitive student stipends that reflect the cost of hiring from year one until program completion.
- Advertise locally and begin recruitment with undergraduate and master's level students.
- Make ongoing personal contacts with potential students.
- Develop options for distance students (e.g., "fly in" weekend, summer programs).
- Increase diversity by offering sign on bonuses, paid recruitment visits, and faculty role models.
- Decrease and clarify OSEP service obligations.

Curriculum of Doctoral Programs

Issue:

- Due to the small number of program faculty in EI/ECSE, the curriculum may not allow for specialization in EI/ECSE.

Suggestions:

- Facilitate student's opportunities to participate in research projects matched with their interests.
- Use portfolio process to individualize curriculum based on students' past educational and professional experiences.
- Increase content in how to conduct research in special education, grant writing, and academic writing.
- Help students connect with other leaders and students in the field through video conferences across programs, visits to other campuses, conference attendance, etc.
- Modify the dissertation format (e.g., article format) and comprehensive exams (e.g., literature reviews) to be more meaningful.

Assessment of Student Progress and Program Quality

Issue:

- There is a need to assess student progress and the quality of the program.

Suggestions:

- Develop valid and measurable constructs for program evaluations (e.g., time for program completion, student retention, achievement of departmental goals, student publications, student success after graduation).
- Evaluate students at multiple points across their educational experiences using diverse evaluation methods.
- Methods to assess student progress (e.g., portfolio, updated vita, advisor evaluations).



The Center To Inform
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At a Glance...

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Fostering Leadership

Issue:

- Doctoral students must obtain the leadership skills to become future faculty members.

Suggestions:

- Mentor students on the specific roles of the profession and the politics of academia.
- Discuss leadership expectations with students and create leadership opportunities (e.g., through professional organizations, structured internships, and teaching).

Support Doctoral Students

Issue:

- There is an urgent need to increase the number of doctoral students who choose a profession in higher education.

Suggestions:

- Increase support to new faculty (e.g., reduced teaching loads, research support).
- Provide dual career supports, and improve the reputation of the field.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

The following represents the collaborative recommendations agreed upon by the Think Tank participants.

- Find a mechanism for evidence-based leadership performance indicators and create common benchmarks for high quality programs.
- Investigate supply and demand issues and EI/ECSE leadership in future Center studies.
- Increase funding for leadership projects at a high enough level to attract and retain students.
- Reinvest in student-initiated grants as a source of support for students.
- Clearly define criteria for funding leadership projects. Target funding for full-time students, to address critical faculty shortages, and to be specific to EI/ECSE.
- Target marketing of profession to diverse populations.
- Improve student mentorship by demystifying and conveying positive aspects of leadership roles.
- Find a mechanism to link projects together to share expertise and help the field to move in a unified direction.
- Utilize existing resources and create a community of practice (e.g., encourage linkages between UCEDDs and leadership programs).

For a copy of the full report go to: http://www.uconnuccdd.org/projects/early_childhood/publications.html

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