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2012–2013

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The Edition magazine is produced annually by the University of Colorado Denver for alumni and friends of the School of Education & Human Development, Campus Box 106, P.O. Box 173364, Denver, CO 80217-3364.
Dear alumni and friends,

I am thrilled to join the School of Education & Human Development (SEHD) as Dean and to accept the privilege and responsibility of leading our talented faculty and staff in providing outstanding programs and contributing important new knowledge to the fields of education and human development through research and scholarship. I share the enthusiasm of the faculty for working hard to understand the distinctive character and needs of our urban context and for preparing excellent teachers, mental health providers, educational leaders and scholars for their professional settings.

My passion for school and community partnerships is an important reason why I came to CU Denver. I have been duly impressed with the nearly 20-year history of commitments that the School has maintained and championed with local school districts. There is no doubt that the preparation of the next generation of teachers, counselors and education leaders is best accomplished as a partnership between higher education and practitioners in the field.

Likewise, the School’s research collaboratives of faculty, doctoral students and district partners are remarkable. These projects address problems of practice in the schools and are meant to give immediate feedback and strategies to our partners, as well as new knowledge we can promote and publish nationally.

Our School is one of the Denver campus leaders in bringing in external grants and contracts for our work. Researchers have secured $23.6 million in external funding for current projects over the past few years. A recent proud moment is the recognition of Dr. Phil Strain and Ted Bovey by the Interagency Autism Coordinating Council for writing a Top 20 autism study and making significant progress in the field.

Another strong asset of our School is our counseling faculty and alumni. In this issue, we feature the incredible work of alumnus Brian Duncan, founder and CEO of Warrior Support Center and A Family Harbor counseling offices located in Colorado Springs, who is reshaping the idea of what counseling facilities can be for military personnel and their families.

This month, we opened a new Office of Equity and Inclusion. The director of this office will concentrate on recruitment and retention of traditionally underrepresented students to increase the diversity of our student population. We are especially focused on developing a diverse teacher workforce that mirrors the current student population in public schools.

My door is usually open and I welcome visits with alumni, education leaders and community members who would like to meet me. Together, I know we will take the SEHD to the next level of achievement as a first-class program leader in the nation and make significant contributions to the Denver metro area and Colorado.

Best,

Rebecca Kantor

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REBECCA KANTOR
DEAN OF THE SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION &
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
It’s an exciting time in the chronicle of the human brain and the human mind. Latest advances in neuroscience are helping researchers at the University of Colorado unravel the critical interplay between reasoning and brain functioning when young adults solve tasks in the thorny domain of fractions.

Scientific experiments involving computer environments and fMRI brain scans were designed by Ron Tzur, professor of mathematics education at CU Denver’s School of Education & Human Development, and Dietmar Cordes, associate professor in the Department of Radiology at CU’s Anschutz Medical Campus, to better understand complex processes involved in how the human brain uses mathematical symbols and operations. In the critical and difficult-to-learn domain of fractions, the goal of this project is to find out where and how the brain processes fractions and if specific teaching interventions can improve participants’ learning and response times when solving number comparison tasks.

“The research literature suggests that the intraparietal sulcus (IPS) is a math processing region in the brain,” said Tzur. “This is typically where humans process whole numbers and simple addition.1 But when the human brain needs to process mathematical inverse relationships, like 1/5 > 1/7 (though 7 > 5), the mind takes a longer time to compute and reason. This seems to indicate that the different parts of the brain are dividing, governing and specializing in solving a fraction problem.”

Tzur and his team hypothesize that the human brain processes fractions in a unique brain-mind sequence, depending on the structure and order of the numbers and symbols with which one is presented. Thus, supported by modest awards of $17,000 from the University of Colorado Denver and $3,000 from the Leach Family Donor Advised Fund at Community First Foundation, these University of Colorado researchers have created step-by-step tasks to enable differentiating brain activity while students are solving comparison tasks of whole numbers or of fractions.

Twenty adults (ages 18 to 45) are participating in the study. They first took an individual pre-test to establish baseline proficiency levels (processing time, error rate) in solving the comparison tasks in a computerized environment called E-Prime. Next, Tzur provided a one-hour teaching intervention, individually or in pairs, to foster participants’ understanding and mastery of a foundational conception—the inverse relation among unit fractions (e.g., 5 > 4 but 1/5 < 1/4). An individual post-test in the same environment immediately after the intervention provided first indications of differentiated changes in processing between the two types of numbers.

To further measure the impact of this intervention on the ability of a person’s brain to process whole numbers and fraction numerical symbols and operations while tightly linking behavior with brain activity, a few months later study participants solved similar mathematical tasks in E-Prime while their brain activity was scanned at University of Colorado Boulder’s new Intermountain Neuroimaging Consortium.
In all three tests (pre-test, immediate post-test, and fMRI delayed post-test), students were given a variety of mathematical tasks that may occur in separate areas of the brain (> or =; fraction or whole number).

**For example:**

- Number (1/9) OR operation (>) appeared on the computer screen (one second)
- Number AND operation (1/9 >) appeared (additional one second)
- Entire mathematical task (1/9 > 1/4?) appeared and the subject had to press a right button (true) or left (false) the instant he/she decided the answer (up to 3 seconds)

Researchers then analyzed preliminary findings about the interaction between the sequencing of mathematical task components, number type operated on and the reaction time of each student.

One participant in the study was a third-grade teacher who earned her master’s degree from CU Denver’s School of Education & Human Development’s Curriculum and Instruction program. She is participating in this brain study because the teaching intervention she received and the anticipated findings can help her teach fractions to her students. “Fractions are hard for most third-graders to understand,” she said. “Third-graders typically say that 1/4 is larger than 1/2 because 4 is larger than 2. When I teach my students to think in terms of a fraction being a multiplicative relation to a given whole, their understanding seems to improve just like mine did. And when I give children learning prompts, I can tell that they compute the fractions faster.”

After this study with young adults, Tzur and his research team hope to continue to expand this work by studying math reasoning and brain functions in younger children—before and after they learn fractions for the first time. “If we can determine with more precision how children’s brains reason and think about math,” said Tzur, “educators and parents will be able to teach learners in the best ways possible.”

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The prevalence of autism is increasing at a faster rate than any other developmental disability in children. Autism affects approximately one in 88 children and is increasing at a rate of about 23 percent per year. Children with Latino backgrounds have recently shown the highest increase in autism diagnoses. Perhaps the most significant finding from autism treatment research is the benefit of early identification and intervention. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting treatment as soon as autism is suspected; most children will begin to demonstrate signs of autism prior to age two or three. Sadly, 40 percent of children aren’t diagnosed until after age four, and children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds are diagnosed even later.

Autism spectrum disorders are a group of developmental disabilities often diagnosed during early childhood that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges over a lifetime. They are called “spectrum disorders” because they affect each person in different ways and can range from very mild to severe.

Young children are typically screened for autism at well-child checkups. Early indicators that a child should receive a more comprehensive assessment for autism include:

- Delays in social interaction and joyful expressions
- Absence of shared enjoyment and back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, reaching or waving, by 12 months
- No words by 16 months
- No two-word phrases by 24 months

Dr. Bryn Harris, an assistant professor in the School Psychology program, and Dr. Erin Barton, an assistant professor in the Early Childhood Special Education program, both with CU Denver’s School of Education & Human Development, have teamed up to evaluate autism diagnostic tools for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and provide improved best practice guidelines for conducting autism evaluations. Harris and Barton each provide a unique perspective. Harris brings years of research experience relating to culturally and linguistically responsive psychoeducational assessments to the table; Barton’s research focuses on early intervention and evidence-based practices for autism.

“Research indicates that children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are misdiagnosed more often and identified later than white children,” said Harris. “That concerns us greatly because early, accurate autism identification and prompt autism intervention greatly improve a child’s development and potential.”

“Because the cause for autism is unknown and because we don’t have a simple medical test that can confidently confirm the presence of autism, current diagnoses are based on clinical judgment and behavioral observations,” said Barton. “A diagnosis of autism is primarily based on social and communication behaviors, which develop within the context of one’s culture and family. It is highly plausible that current autism screening and diagnostic tools and practices are not sensitive to cultural variations or family expectations around social and communicative behaviors.”

Harris and Barton believe that autism test procedures, materials and professional development learning activities should be augmented with the treatment needs of underserved and understudied populations in mind, specifically the needs of ethnically diverse and low-income communities. They contend that children’s natural settings and cultural backgrounds should inform the tests.
For example, a study found that African-American children with autism were diagnosed an average of 1.4 years later than white children and spent an average of eight additional months in mental health treatment prior to being diagnosed.¹

In addition, English language learners have not been included in the norming samples for current autism diagnostic assessments. Autism tests would be more accurate with culturally and linguistically diverse children if they were translated and normed in a variety of languages. This is important because recent studies have pointed to cultural variations in the initial concerns and behavioral expectations of parents and practitioners. White American parents are more likely to identify delays or concerns with language skills. But white parents are unlikely to provide information about social delays unless probed by the diagnostician.⁶ Conversely, Indian families are more likely to identify delays in social behaviors and social difficulties.⁷

Although a growing set of evidence-based practices for children with autism exists, families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds report difficulty accessing the quality and intensity of recommended autism practices.⁸ Furthermore, there is a serious dearth of research on evidence-based practices for culturally and linguistically diverse children with autism. This is critical, because children with autism who are also English language learners require individualized instruction that supports their language acquisition process and their communication delays.

Harris and Barton are currently in the first stage of the project—looking at diagnostic procedures and the norming and standardization samples of the autism diagnostic tools to determine if and how they are including culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This involves a survey and follow-up with hundreds of practitioners who conduct autism assessments in the state of Colorado. Next they will study the way in which the test developers suggested modifying or adapting the assessment for diverse populations and if these modifications and adaptations were part of the standardization process. Finally they will look at the actual materials used in autism assessments to evaluate their cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

In the future, Harris and Barton hope to continue their research together by conducting interviews with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have children with autism. “We would like to find out what supports and challenges occurred along the way to their path to diagnosis and treatment and how autism screening and assessment can be improved in the future to meet the needs of all families” said Barton.

⁷Daley, T. C. (2004). From symptom recognition to diagnosis: Children with autism in urban India. Social Science and Medicine, 58, 1323-1335.
How CU Denver’s Counseling Alumnus Brian Duncan Created Two Thriving and Influential Centers for Soldiers and Their Families

Brian Duncan (MA, Counseling, Couples and Family concentration, School of Education & Human Development, ’02), founder and CEO of Warrior Support Center and A Family Harbor counseling offices located in Colorado Springs, is a pioneering force in the counseling world. He and his team of licensed social workers, counselors and psychologists have reshaped the idea of what counseling facilities can be for military personnel and their families.

In 2009, Duncan had the idea to create a calming, welcoming, efficiently run mental health center that was specifically designed to provide the best possible care for troops, veterans, spouses and children. “Soldiers and their families are courageous by nature and willing to work hard to overcome barriers in life,” said Duncan. “I believe they need an environment to heal that is far different from the average community mental health clinic. They need the support of therapists who understand military life and stresses in great detail.” Duncan’s wife encouraged him to take a risk and follow his passion. They sold their house and used the proceeds for the startup cash. Soon thereafter, Warrior Support Center opened its doors with a staff of three counselors.

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To say that the Warrior Support Center grew quickly is an understatement. Fort Carson military personnel came off post needing extra support. They felt comfortable confronting their stresses in an off-base setting. “In the first two years, we expanded from three to a team of 19 therapists, with 1,000 patient visits per month and 90 new patients per month. Now we’re at 27 therapists,” said Duncan. “Soldiers came to us to get better, and their spouses and children needed support as well. Many of our clients come back from war and want to learn how to become better parents. Other families are dealing with deployment anxieties, post-traumatic stress disorder or substance abuse issues. We keep expanding and improving our services to meet their needs: individual counseling, couples counseling, family counseling, post-traumatic stress disorder support, substance abuse treatment, anger and commitment therapies, outpatient and inpatient capabilities, parenting support groups, play therapy, learning help for children, yoga to help heal post-traumatic stress disorder … the list goes on. We provide very professional attention—quickly, efficiently and with multiple providers under the same roof.”
In 2011, the family care unit of Warrior Support Center spun off as a nonprofit called A Family Harbor. If you enter the A Family Harbor office, you will probably be greeted by Rosie, the pet therapy dog. Rosie, a local animal shelter adoptee, is now officially ranked as a lieutenant colonel in the Army. She trained at Fort Carson and was deployed to reengage wounded soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most recently, Rosie’s military service involved helping to close out the 4th Infantry Division of Fort Carson in Iraq. Soldiers say that Rosie’s presence in the war zone helped put the world together and was often much more beneficial than any type of medication. “Rosie helps our patients ground themselves by demanding normalcy, walks, affection and life. For someone who is lost in bad experiences, she is pure joy.”

Throughout the growth and big changes in his centers, Duncan remains nimble, adaptable and enthusiastic. “It’s amazing to witness our clients’ lives change through therapy,” said Duncan. “You can see wonderful results in the waiting rooms. By bringing the right people together, lives that were visibly in chaos are measurably changed for the better.”

For more information, please visit www.warriorsupportcenter.com or www.afamilyharbor.org.

Duncan credits his counseling success in part to two individuals he met while at CU Denver. Dr. Tracy Todd supervised his counseling internship, where he received superb insight into client care, insurance company paperwork and collecting and analyzing patient outcomes. His most poignant memory is from his last day of the counseling practicum in the Student and Community Counseling Center. “Professor Diane Estrada gave me an assignment on my very last day of class because I had a reaction to a very difficult family situation. Even to the last moment, Professor Estrada was actively engaged with me and my professional identity. Her message to me was clear: learning and growing never stops. That lesson has stuck with me.”
Chantel Astler (MA, Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Elementary Math and Science, CU Denver, ‘99) traveled to Washington, D.C., last year to receive one of the nation’s most prestigious teaching honors: the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Astler, a science teacher with a focus in the future of energy and sustainability, was chosen for the award because she serves as a role model for her colleagues at Flagstone Elementary in Castle Rock, inspires her students and community and demonstrates leadership in her profession. She was one of only two teachers in Colorado to receive the award.

“I love helping my students explore real-world scientific questions to develop their thinking around scientific topics,” said Astler. “It’s all about inquiry! Whether we’re learning to embrace the advantages of wind power, participating in NASA’s Student Involvement Program or tracking recycling and energy conservation efforts at our school, I like to create hands-on, cooperative science-learning environments that help my students think in new ways.”

Flagstone Elementary was also recognized nationally in 2012 as one of only three schools in Colorado to receive the U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools award. The award recognizes schools that save energy, cut costs, feature environmentally sustainable learning spaces, promote health and wellness and provide environmental education to heighten academic achievement and student engagement. The award is part of a larger U.S. Department of Education endeavor to identify and distribute knowledge about classroom practices that will augment student engagement, academic achievement and graduation rates while increasing knowledge about energy independence.

“I love learning about wind energy and sustainability,” said one third-grader. “Ms. Astler is really fun and inspiring,” said another. “The things I am learning are going to get me a job later on,” said a third student. All were busy exploring wind turbines and recording how variables like the number of blades, blade length, blade angle, blade shape, wind speed and proximity to the wind source impact voltage output.

“We’re going to have a schoolwide contest to see which student can build the highest-performing wind turbine,” said Astler. “Students will design their own blades and come up with the best combination of turbine parts and pieces.”

Below right: President Barack Obama greets teachers in the East Room of the White House, May 20, 2011. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza) Chantal is on the second back row, second to the left.
Flagstone Elementary has unique science clubs and student groups that reinforce the science lessons learned in Astler’s classroom. These include an energy team dedicated to monitoring habits around energy use, a recycling team and a gardening club, which has been working all year to start Flagstone’s garden.
From Kilimanjaro to the Classroom

Merck Grant to CU Denver Aids Investigation of Experiential Learning

Every parent hopes his or her child will have a “Seize the Day!” sort of teacher—an inspiring, mind-expanding and life-changing instructor cut from the cloth of films such as Dead Poets Society or Mr. Holland’s Opus. But where do phenomenal teachers come from? How can merely “good” teachers become truly inspirational?

Mike Marlow and Brad McLain think they have an answer.

After mutual friends introduced Marlow to educational researcher and documentary filmmaker McLain, they met for what was to be a one-hour lunch. Four hours later, they left with the idea behind XSci—now a CU Denver School of Education & Human Development collaborative that explores how experiential education can enhance effectiveness and enthusiasm not only for science teachers but for teachers from all fields.

Since that 2008 meeting, XSci has grown steadily. But with a $900,000 grant by the Merck Company Foundation, the program has been expanded in a big way. The grant funded a climb up Mount Kilimanjaro, an African safari, research about the impact of these experiences and a national experiential-learning conference for a cohort of Colorado and Michigan teachers.

Last summer, the Colorado teachers who received the Merck grant experienced the adrenaline and learned the hardships and rewards of climbing to the top of the massive, dormant Kilimanjaro volcano, the highest point on the African continent at 19,341 feet above sea level. They navigated the less-traveled Rongai
Route up the north side of the mountain, savoring the delicate ecosystems and natural history along the way: a lush green rainforest, forests of giant plants, barren desert plains, snowfields and gaping volcanic craters. By night, they slept in tents. They celebrated on July 12, 2012, when they made the extraordinary Kilimanjaro summit. Their descent was down the Marangu Route on the south side of the mountain.

After the climb, they also had the opportunity to take in an African safari to view lions, elephants, giraffes, zebras, monkeys, baboons, hyenas, cheetahs, vultures, and other free-roaming African wildlife. They also gained a new perspective on education and humanity by visiting an orphanage near Lake Manyara.

Corinna Woodruff, a student in CU Denver’s Urban Community Teacher Education program and a future science teacher, was one of the Colorado teachers who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro and experienced the African savannah thanks to the Merck grant.

“I hadn’t really done much traveling when the opportunity arose,” said Woodruff. “I applied for the grant because it seemed like an experience that would be fun and a trip that would positively impact my identity as a teacher and a human being.”

Woodruff is athletic and loves the outdoors. She and the other teachers on the trip prepared for the Kilimanjaro climb by attending special classes on altitude sickness and studying Kilimanjaro’s wilderness and biomes. They also prepared for the physical challenge by hiking Colorado trails, including some at higher altitudes in Rocky Mountain National Park.

“We got to know each other during the training hikes,” said Woodruff. “These are positive people! We have built strong friendships and camaraderie.”

For Woodruff, getting to the top was important. But inspiring her future students will be even more imperative. “I hope my stories and lessons will inspire students to seek adventure, to take risks and to achieve their dreams, whatever they might be.”
Faculty—New Books

**Donna Sobel and Sherry Taylor** (1)
Special Education Associate Professor Donna Sobel and Sherry Taylor, associate professor of literacy, language acquisition, and culturally responsive teaching, cowrote *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Teaching Like Our Students’ Lives Matter*, published in 2011 (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing).

**Rebecca Kantor** (2)
School of Education & Human Development Dean Rebecca Kantor coauthored *Educating Toddlers to Teachers: Learning to See and Influence the School and Peer Cultures of Classrooms*, published in 2011 (New York: Hampton Press).

**Nancy Commins** (3)

**Erin E. Barton** (4)
Rebecca Kantor, Dean of the School of Education & Human Development, brings a robust career as an early childhood teacher, researcher, professor of teacher education, education policy reformer and public university administrator to her role. She earned her EdD from Boston University in language and cognitive development. She spent 29 years at The Ohio State University, first as an assistant professor and the director of the Laboratory School and then, over time, in the role of director of the School of Teaching and Learning, along with achieving rank and tenure as a full professor. Her scholarship is focused on the study of classrooms as social contexts for teaching and learning, and reform of the ways we prepare teachers in partnership with schools. Dr. Kantor has published numerous articles, book chapters and books in her areas of expertise and has been a principal investigator on $17 million of external funding that has supported her research.

Elizabeth Mahon is a new clinical assistant professor with the Linguistically Diverse Education program. She earned her PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder and most recently worked as an English as a Second Language teacher and ESL specialist for Durham Public Schools.
Reading Rocks

**Tania Hogan** (MA, Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary/Bilingual/ESL Leadership, ’01), literacy leader and bilingual educator at Goldrick Elementary, is enthusiastically dedicated to helping young children unlock and celebrate written words.

Smiles are plentiful as she discusses picture and chapter books with her students at Goldrick, one of CU Denver’s professional development schools. The school supports the highest English language learner population in the Denver Public Schools (63 percent), the majority of whom are Spanish speakers. Other languages spoken include Vietnamese, Somali and Chinese.

“I love watching children as their ability to read starts to click,” said Hogan. “I work hard every day to instill that love of reading!”

Hogan’s passion for literacy development and English language learning runs deep and has a personal connection.

“I grew up in a bilingual household where we spoke English and Spanish,” said Hogan. “Prior to fourth grade, I was incredibly shy in school. I never raised my hand. I didn’t speak in front of people. Some of the teachers and administrators even thought I might have autism. In reality, I was an English as a second language student with very few supports.”

When Tania’s parents moved to Pennsylvania, her fourth-grade teacher, Mr. Phillips, helped her engage in school and fostered her love for books. “He made me want to become a teacher. He was my role model,” said Hogan. “There was something about Mr. Phillips’s welcoming demeanor and the way that he provided differentiated learning that brought me out of my shell. Mr. Phillips took extra time to teach me the English language and to call my parents at home when I was demonstrating positive steps. Gradually, I started raising my hand to answer questions and taking risks. He eventually hooked me into a pattern of reading and lifelong learning.”

**Tania Hogan’s Top 10 Techniques to Get Young Readers Excited**

1. **Allow Student Choice:** Find out what grabs a student’s attention. Choices can include comics, jokes, poetry, songs, spooky stories or reading games on the iPad.

2. **Make Connections:** Help students pick books that personally connect to their lives in some way. Students who relate to stories have a better chance at absorbing and comprehending the text.

3. **Use Photos and Real Objects:** Print pictures, show video clips or show students real items that relate to their books.

4. **Engage in Conversations:** Give students a chance to share their opinions, wonderings and questions.

5. **Use Storytelling:** You can tell stories about animals to reinforce reading strategies. For example, Skippy the frog skips the word and thinks about what would make sense.

6. **Encourage Kinesthetic Learning:** Have kids act out certain words in the text. Involve movement and tactile activities whenever possible.

7. **Allow Students to Collaborate:** Encourage students to talk with reading partners. It helps them internalize the content.

8. **Read in Silly Voices:** Inspire students to reread texts using a Santa voice, opera singer voice or a spooky ghost voice. This helps with practicing rate, expression and accuracy.

9. **Enjoy Series Books:** Help students find the perfect book series match that they won’t be able to put down!

10. **Show Enthusiasm:** Most of all, show your own enthusiasm for reading. When you are excited about what you are reading, your energy and excitement will create the mood.
Selected Research Grants

The School of Education & Human Development celebrates the ingenuity, resourcefulness and creativity of our faculty and staff, whose dedicated work has secured $23.6 million in external funding for current projects over the past years. Eighteen faculty and three professional staff secured external funding for 41 grant projects. Below we highlight several outstanding grant projects.

University of Colorado Denver’s Pyramid Plus Expands Statewide Reach in Effort to Help More Young Children with Social-Emotional Development

Pyramid Plus, the Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion at the University of Colorado Denver, expanded its statewide reach thanks to an $811,810 grant from The Colorado Health Foundation. The foundation provided funding to increase the number of children served as well as support early childhood education training efforts.

Pyramid Plus promotes positive social-emotional development of all children from infancy to age five. The program supports and recommends inclusion of children with disabilities in all early childhood settings.

“We are thrilled to be able to partner with new communities in Colorado. Our focus is building the capacity of communities to implement the Pyramid Plus Approach with fidelity. We do this by assisting a community-wide cross-agency leadership team to plan and sustain the effort, certifying trainers and coaches in their community, and helping to establish at least one program that can show others how to do it,” explains Barbara Smith, director of the Pyramid Plus Center.

“We see a need for programs that provide caregivers of young children in Colorado with skills and techniques to promote social-emotional well-being and prevent and address behavioral health problems. The Pyramid Plus Center uses evidence-based strategies to foster positive social-emotional development and effectively address behavioral health problems,” said Kelly Dunkin, vice president of philanthropy for the Colorado Health Foundation. “Children who benefit from high-quality early care that promotes positive social-emotional development are better prepared for school.”

eCALLMS: Preparing Teachers to Provide Linguistically Responsive Math, Science and Literacy Instruction Through Online Collaboration

Thanks to a $1.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition and its National Professional Development program, the School’s Urban Community Teacher Education program will improve the way it prepares teachers to work effectively with multilingual learners through innovative uses of collaborative learning and online professional development modules. The goal is to improve academic achievement for multilingual learners in urban K–12 schools, especially in the areas of math and science. The grant name eCALLMS stands for e-Learning Communities for Academic Language Learning in Math and Science.

The program will assist pre-service teachers (teachers in training) and experienced teachers working in CU Denver’s professional development schools network. Pre-service initiatives focus on collaborative action research aiming to solve local issues around the effective instruction of multilingual learners. The project also strives to align curricula across licensure programs and internships. Initiatives for experienced teachers will focus on creating online communities for professional development where participants will receive instructional support.

“This project is a fascinating blend of online learning, cohesive content alignment and language development,” said Kara Mitchell, assistant professor. “Our work provides targeted strategies for teaching multilingual learners, especially in math and science. It’s exciting because we are forging new and different ways of collective learning and collaborating. And the online modules we are creating are truly superb. Our goal is to support teachers so that they may more readily share and expand on their expertise for improved ongoing professional learning and classroom instructional practices. We’re creating spaces where learning is not an external, disconnected process, but more about building on expertise that already is at the table.”

Grants
The Paraprofessional Resource and Research Center

The Paraprofessional Resource and Research Center (The PAR²A Center) is the premier source of information and support for paraprofessionals, providing research and resources as well as policy development concerning their training, career development, supervision and employment.

The PAR²A Center is 100 percent supported by federal and state funded grant projects that fall under three broad categories: paraprofessional training projects, paraprofessional-to-teacher career ladder projects, and research projects that examine training and supervision practices for paraprofessionals. Currently there are five active projects at The PAR²A Center with a combined annual budget of nearly $1.25 million.

In the last 18 years of its existence, PAR²A Center projects have enhanced the skills of more than 10,000 paraprofessionals through multiple offerings of 37 courses that have been specifically designed to address the unique paraprofessional role. The center has trained more than 3,000 licensed professionals to become effective supervisors of paraprofessionals, and it has prepared more than 200 teachers in high-need school districts. Another key accomplishment of the center has been the partnership with Early Intervention Colorado within the Colorado Department of Human Services. This collaboration has led to the creation of the statewide training and supervision system as well as professional development standards for the paraprofessionals who work with families of infants and toddlers (birth through two years) with disabilities and developmental delays.

“Our work provides supports to paraprofessionals, licensed professionals, administrators and policymakers for quality preparation and supervision of this important workforce,” stated Dr. Ritu Chopra, the executive director of the PAR²A Center.

The Center for Advancing Practice, Education & Research and Affiliated Projects and Organizations

The Center for Advancing Practice, Education & Research (CAPER) supports and expands the mission and vision of the School of Education & Human Development by engaging in entrepreneurial activities, research, professional development, technical assistance, outreach, engagement and policy development and advocacy. We strive to serve as a partner and resource on a local and national level through dissemination of research that affects children, schools and education practice. CAPER is dedicated to outcomes that raise the quality and accessibility of public education to impact and foster student opportunity and achievement. We are home to the following funded projects and affiliated organizations:

Center for Advancing Practice, Education & Research (CAPER)
Shelley Zion, executive director

Continuing & Professional Education (CPE)
Shelley Zion, director

Center for Evidence Based Practices in Early Learning (CEBPEL)
Barbara Smith, director

Center for Transforming Learning and Teaching (CTLT)
Julie Oxenford O’Brien, director

Culturally Responsive Urban Education (CRUE)
Shelley Zion, co-director
Suzanne Arnold, co-director

The Evaluation Center
Bonnie Walters, executive director

Experiential Science Education Research Collaborative (XSci)
Michael Marlow, co-director
Brad McLain, co-director

Laboratory for Educational Assessment Research and innovation (LEARN)
Maria Araceli Ruiz-Primo, director

Paraeducator Resource and Research Center (PAR²A)
Ritu Chopra, executive director

Positive Early Learning Experiences Center (PELE)
Phil Strain, director

For more information, visit www.ucdenver.edu/education and click on “Centers” in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage.
Randy Sinisi (PhD, Administrative Supervision and Curriculum Development, ’92) and Ron Cabrera (PhD, Administrative Supervision and Curriculum Development, ’90) believe that the world of education constantly needs fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. That’s why they became founding members of the School of Education & Human Development’s Circle of Giving. Circle of Giving members make a three-year financial commitment to support the School. At a yearly lunch with the Dean, Circle of Giving members discuss faculty project proposals, such as research and outreach, and determine how pooled funds will be allocated.

“I really believe my CU degree opened many doors for me and that CU Denver faculty made a great impression in my life. The Circle of Giving gives me a chance to pass the baton and do something good for the faculty and future generations. What’s fun about this type of giving is that you actually get to see what you’ve funded.”

Randy Sinisi

“I’ve found it extremely gratifying to be involved with the Circle of Giving,” said Cabrera, superintendent for the Thompson School District in Loveland. “I’m impressed with the professionalism of the ongoing education research projects. I’m interested in helping to fund projects I feel will make the greatest amount of difference in an immediate way. The proposals that intrigue me the most have the potential to help close gaps between students who are struggling and those who are the most advanced. I consider this effort to be a true investment in advancing public education, research and teaching.”

Both Sinisi and Cabrera invite other alumni to join the Circle of Giving to support faculty projects that improve education in Colorado. To get involved, please contact Kyle Jaccaud-Smith at the CU Foundation at kyle.jaccaudsmith@cufund.org.

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Nicole Roberts, Flagstone Elementary, works on wind energy experiments in Chantal Astler’s science classroom. Astler received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.