Prince and Cumpton Travel to Washington

Associate Director Dr. Heath Prince participated in a three-day visit to Washington D.C., led and organized by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, from June 18th through the 20th. The purpose of the visit by the Austin delegation was to meet with Senators Comyn and Cruz, several Representatives from Central Texas, and their staff, to provide them with a Central Texas perspective on a range of education and training items, including the Workforce Investment Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization, Perkins Act reauthorization, interest rates for federal financial aid, and others. In addition to other national leaders, including Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Dr. Prince also met with key administrators in the Departments of Labor and Education.

On June 20th, Research Associate Greg Cumpton joined Prince in D.C. to present key findings and lessons from the Student Futures Project to an audience of researchers, practitioners, and academics based in the D.C. area, hosted by the Data Quality Campaign. Afterwards, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce Senior Vice President Drew Scheberle moderated a panel discussion and audience Q&A session. To see their presentation, click here.

Pre-K and Two-Generation Efforts Evaluated by RMC Receive National Attention

CBS Sunday Evening news ran a piece about the Tulsa Community Action Program (CAP) on May, 5th. In the interview, George Kaiser, Tulsa oilman billionaire and philanthropist, states that evidence shows that "it works, it pays, and it's the right thing to do." The Ray Marshall Center (RMC) has played a key role in the evaluation of CAP and specifically the CareerAdvance® project, which helps parents of pre-k kids receive education and accreditation that lead to higher paying jobs. This two-generation approach is highlighted in a second segment to the CBS piece. The CareerAdvance® project has now been expanded to 2015 with support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. RMC and partners at Northwestern and Columbia University have been engaged to provide ongoing data collection, implementation and outcomes analysis of project participants.

The Proliferation of Career Pathways and Two-Generation Programs

WDQI Summer Report Released
This publication is the third in a series of
This week’s Employment and Training Reporter highlights evaluation strategies undertaken by university partners to measure the results of career pathways programs across the country. The Health Professions Opportunity Grant program (HPOG) that originates from the Affordable Care Act has provided grantees with $67 million of funds to develop their career pathways programs, opening the door for researchers to evaluate the outcomes of training and education programs in selected healthcare fields. The Ray Marshall Center is working with colleagues at Northwestern University and other universities to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of training programs provided by the Tulsa Community Action Program (CAP), an HPOG grantee that provides two-generation education and has a strong nursing and health information technology career pathways program known as CareerAdvance®. CAP is the only HPOG grantee that is operating an explicit 2-generation strategy. Read the article on page 471.

King Participates in Panels for Kellogg Conference

On Tuesday, May, 21st RMC Director Dr. Chris King traveled to San Antonio to participate in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s 2013 conference titled Family Engagement: A Shared Responsibility Among Families, Schools, and Communities.

In the afternoon, King co-hosted an "open space" panel on Two-Generation strategies with Nisha Patel of The Aspen Institute. The following day, he served as a panelist on "Re-imagining Family Engagement," with Jesus Gerena of the Family Independence Initiative, Carolyn Jolivette of Parents for...
Public Schools of Jackson, and Kanoe Naone of INPEACE. To view photos of the event click here.

Austin Opportunity Youth Development Grant Funded

The Aspen Institute has announced the recipients for youth grants that it will be funding in 21 American cities. The Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative and Workforce Solutions are the two Austin organizations which have been selected to receive funding, allowing them to push forward with their work to incorporate opportunity (16-24) youth in the Austin Area. RMC is proud to be part of the effort in Austin to unite the various stakeholders that influence the lives of disenfranchised youth into a collaborative cross-sector approach. For the Aspen Institute’s press release, click here.

'Local Rule' Random Assignment Progressing Quickly

RMC researchers Daniel Schroeder and Dan O'Shea have been monitoring random assignment of child support cases in El Paso County as part of their evaluation of the Integrated Child Support System (ICSS), also known as 'Local Rule'. Those with new child support orders are randomly assigned to either participate in the ICSS system, or to be a part of the control group. Random assignment started in April, 2013, and will continue until there are 400 cases in each group. It was expected that this would take a year, but at the current pace, it will likely be completed sooner. This 'natural experiment' at the El Paso site is the centerpiece of a larger impact evaluation, the results of which are eagerly awaited by officials from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG).

Dr. Anjali Gupta Heads for India

Dr. Anjali Gupta will be leaving the Ray Marshall Center to take on a new adventure in India. She will be working for the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) South Asia Research Center. J-PAL's mission is to ensure that policy is based on scientific evidence and research is translated into action via a threefold mandate of evaluation, capacity building and policy outreach. Anjali will be working on two J-PAL projects pertaining to education. Her primary project is the "Math Games" project conducted in collaboration with Pratham Educational Foundation in India. The purpose of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a game-based "school readiness" curriculum which will prepare children in pre-schools to learn more effectively when they enroll in schools.

Her secondary project is the Haryana Education Project, conducted in collaboration with the Government of Haryana. This project involves the evaluation of two state-run educational programs - Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation and Learning Enhancement Program. We wish Anjali the best of luck in her new endeavors and look forward to hearing about her progress abroad.
Summer Melt Program in Central Texas

The summer following high school graduation can be a trying time for many high school graduates. Financial deadlines and other responsibilities can be overwhelming; many students who originally intend to enroll never arrive at their college campus. This drop in the share of students who intend to go to college in the spring of their senior year, but do not enroll that fall, is referred to as 'summer melt.' Recent studies indicate that additional support in the form of counselor meetings and/or communication to high school seniors during the summer after graduation should increase the share of students enrolling in college in the fall.

A KUT News radio segment that aired on June, 13th, said the program "will provide answers and insight where parents may not be able to." Furthermore, the segment concludes that improving college enrollment will ultimately "boost the local economy." Using a random assignment research design, researchers at the Ray Marshall Center will investigate the efficacy of an innovative text messaging campaign designed to alleviate barriers associated with summer melt in four Central Texas school districts. This project will utilize a text messaging platform to increase students' college and financial literacy and to facilitate communication between high school seniors and school counselors the summer after graduating from high school. Text messaging is a particularly promising approach both to inform students and their parents of college tasks and to connect them to professional staff, such as high school counselors and college admissions counselors, when they need help.

An article published in the Austin-American Statesman on June, 3rd spoke to the program's merits. "A few hours of encouragement and support over the summer can make the difference between a high school graduate going to college or not. Counselors will reach out to low-income, first-generation students and their families and will help them navigate financial aid, housing and other daunting college enrollment forms. And they will try to ease students' anxiety about the new experience college brings." RMC researchers will monitor the results this coming fall, observing whether there is a regional reduction in summer melt compared to previous years. In future years, researchers will also be able to measure whether the college graduation rate improves as a result of the program.

GROW Project is Underway

In May and June RMC researchers made several trips to visit key actors in each of the five regions that constitute the GROW project. Meeting with community business leaders, community colleges and district board staff, researchers were able to assess how the implementation process for the career pathways programs was progressing. Dan O'Shea, Heath Prince, Daniel Schroeder and Greg
Cumpton traveled to meet with project leaders in the region, establishing a Center presence and helping guide the first phase of the project to completion.

**IHEC Project Moves Forward**

The Ray Marshall Center, in collaboration with the Child and Family Research Institute at the UT Social Work department, has completed analysis of the **Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) Capacity Survey**, funded by the **Texas Early Learning Council**. The purpose of the survey is to assess the level of preparedness of new professionals in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) field. The project surveyed providers of ECCE working in different settings, as well as administrators of higher education programs offering certificates and degrees in the field of ECCE. **Heath Prince** and **Monica Faulkner** served as principal investigators on the project, and research was led by **Cynthia Juniper**, Daniel Schroeder, and Anjali Gupta.

A total of 304 newly graduated and certified professionals working in the ECCE field responded to the first survey. The survey captured information on respondent demographics, opinions on how well the respondents feel their education program prepared them, challenges experienced in pursuing their education, and available continuing education opportunities. The second survey collected data from 63 programs that offer certificates and degrees in the area of ECCE. Survey items include faculty characteristics such as numbers of faculty (full- and part-time), degrees held by faculty members, numbers of faculty members with early child education or child development degrees, and faculty members who have direct experience working with children. Items regarding program characteristics include child age ranges covered by program content, courses in specialized content areas, student enrollment, number of graduates per year, and estimates of student work outcomes. These responses, combined with the results of the ECCE professional survey, contribute to the field’s understanding of the capacity of Texas to effectively prepare early childhood professionals. Project reports will be posted on the RMC website upon approval by the Texas Early Learning Council.

**Focus Groups Conducted in Tulsa**

In May, researchers **Tara Smith** and Kristin Christensen conducted focus groups with participants in the Tulsa CAP CareerAdvance® program. CareerAdvance® is a sectoral job development program designed for low-skilled, low-income parents of children served by early childhood programs in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It equips parents with workforce training and gainful employment opportunities in the healthcare field, such as medical coding, health information technology, patient care and nursing.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Christensen met with 21 individuals in five focus groups to learn about students’ experiences in the courses, their...
thoughts about the program, and how participation has affected their financial state and personal lives. Participants emphasized that they were appreciative of the opportunities the program gave them and liked that the CareerAdvance® Career Coaches helped keep them motivated as they worked through their coursework. Lessons learned and suggestions for improvement were shared with CareerAdvance® staff.

**Research Brief Publications**

**WDQI Spring Report Released**

This is the second in a series of briefs from research conducted as part of the Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative. This brief examines post-secondary education outcomes for 2008 and 2009 high school graduates in Central Texas through December 2011.

**WDQI Summer Report Released**

This publication is the third in a series of briefs from research conducted as part of the Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative. This brief provides highlights of the April 2013 Central Texas FERPA Conference.