

Education Policy

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SET IN THE BACKDROP OF OUR NATION'S CAPITAL, UMD SCHOLARS ENGAGE IN INNOVATIVE AND RIGOROUS RESEARCH TO ADVANCE UNDERSTANDING OF HOW EDUCATION POLICY IMPACTS STUDENTS AND SOCIETY.



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Dean's Message



The University of Maryland College of Education faculty relies on sophisticated and rigorous research designs to examine some of the most relevant and pressing education policy issues of our time. Our educational policy research builds on and benefits from meaningful partnerships that we have established with local, state, federal and global education leaders. As an education policy researcher myself, I recognize the importance of collaborative research that evaluates education policy and its impact on the ground.

As experts in education policy, the College's faculty conduct innovative analyses that both probes the theoretical foundations of current policy trends, and empirically analyzes the implementation and impact of those policies. From participatory action research to innovative research on the use of synthetic data, the College's researchers use rigorous and nuanced study designs to provide valuable feedback to policymakers, education leaders, and practitioners. We provide valuable evidence-based guidance to the state through research collaborations that meet school systems' needs, and we harness big data to evaluate education policy and influence national debates.

We are committed to impactful research—our status as the flagship university in the state and our location just outside of Washington, D.C., position us to develop close relationships with lawmakers and education agencies in Annapolis and on Capitol Hill.

Here, we feature some of our most influential and promising education policy scholars, and several initiatives that illustrate how our work advances both equity and excellence goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer King Rice".

Jennifer King Rice
DEAN OF THE UMD COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION POLICY



BETTY MALEN

PROFESSOR AND
A DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR TEACHER

Education Policy on the Ground



A former school administrator, Dr. Malen studies policy developments at the point of service to identify how legislation is carried out in local schools and school systems. Her research brings the discipline of political science to the examination of education problems and relies primarily on the effective application of case study designs and qualitative research methods.

She analyzes the political determinants and substantive effects of prominent education reforms, including decentralized decision-making, initiatives designed to professionalize teaching, student-based budgeting and pay-for-performance programs. Her research also examines the impact of high stakes accountability policies on school capacity and recent shifts in the distribution of power within and across federal, state and local units of the education system. Across her research, Dr. Malen foregrounds a concern with what actually occurs when educators implement reforms, the reasons why those patterns of implementation evolve, and the implications of those findings for the education policy reforms that policymakers should promote—or even abandon.

She has served on the editorial boards for five major journals and held leadership positions in the Politics of Education Association and AERA Division L. Dr. Malen has invested heavily in the development of collaborative, field-based research partnerships that enable faculty and graduate students to conduct research that is relevant to school systems, policy makers and academia.

“EDUCATION POLICY PROCLAMATIONS SOUND GOOD RHETORICALLY, BUT THEY FUNCTION VERY DIFFERENTLY PRACTICALLY. WE NEED TO MAP WHAT’S ACTUALLY GOING ON AND DEAL WITH THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN POLICY PROMISES AND OUTCOMES.”

THE CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT (CEii)

In 2017, CEii was founded to facilitate stronger partnerships between the College's researchers and local schools around issues of school improvement. The Center ensures the College's research and leadership development agenda meets local school systems' needs.

The Center houses a Doctorate of Education in School System Leadership program, an innovative, practice-based model that brings together a cohort of school administrators from county school systems to work collaboratively on solving education problems. The Ed.D. program builds capacity for educational leadership across the state.

Through CEii, UMD and Prince George's County Public Schools was one of 11 university-school district partnerships selected nationwide to be part of the Carnegie Foundation's Improvement Leadership Education and Development (iLEAD) program. As part of iLEAD, CEii created the Postdoctoral Improvement Science Action Network, which brings together alumni of the Ed.D. program's PGCPs cohorts to help school leaders address County equity issues through research.

CEii is also collaborating with the nonprofit organization Learning Forward and the Maryland State Department of Education to improve science teaching and help schools implement new science standards. The partnership, one of only three nationwide, is designed to inform state policy for high-quality curriculum assessment and its connection to professional development programs for teaching science in Maryland.



Ed.D. program graduates and advisors from PGCPs.

CLAUDIA GALINDO

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



Dr. Galindo's interdisciplinary research examines issues of inequality and social justice. She focuses on improving educational opportunities for racial and ethnic minority students in K-12, with an emphasis on the Latinx community. She investigates mechanisms in families and schools that influence inequalities, while highlighting the cultural assets of historically underserved families and children.

She studies full-service community schools, a re-emerging reform that focuses on the holistic needs of students and their families to improve educational opportunities for underserved populations, in Baltimore City. Funded by the Spencer Foundation, she investigates the opportunities and challenges of this reform, including teachers' roles.

In past years, the Latinx population has migrated to U.S. locales unfamiliar with this population. Dr. Galindo researches young Latinx children's experiences in "new destination" schools, examining how they fare in school systems that may not have resources, e.g. culturally-responsive language practices, to meet their needs. Working with collaborators nationwide, she is developing a nuanced picture of how the Latinx diaspora shapes young Latinx children's schooling experiences and school systems.

Educational Experiences for Underserved Youth

School Discipline, School Leaving, and Equity

TARA BROWN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Brown’s work examines “school exclusion”—suspension, expulsion and high school non-completion—among Black and Latinx adolescents and young adults in urban areas. She conducts participatory action research, a meta methodology that includes people from the population being researched on the research team and an intervention component.

She studied the schooling experiences of young adults who did not complete high school or a GED and how leaving school shaped their lives post-school, looking at how school exclusion makes workers vulnerable in the labor market and leads to youth involved in illegal activities. In investigating the emotional well-being of those who have left high school, she found, contrary to the prevailing literature that assumes poverty has a greater psychological effect on single women because of the demands of motherhood, that men were much more emotionally distressed. This gender difference stemmed from cultural expectations of men as breadwinners, as well as non-custodial parents’ lack of access to public benefits.

Spanning her body of research is a concern with how education policies, such as zero tolerance, impacts the everyday lives of young people.

“THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF MANY EDUCATION POLICIES AND SCHOOL PRACTICES ALMOST ALWAYS IMPACT THE SAME GROUP OF YOUTH—THOSE WHO ARE LOW-INCOME, PEOPLE OF COLOR.”

DAVID BLAZAR

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Blazar’s work focuses on the economics of education, leveraging quantitative data to identify resources that best improve student outcomes. He examines resources related to teachers, including teachers’ impact on students’ academic achievement and social and emotional development; efforts to help teachers improve their practice; and the equitable distribution of teachers and instructional

resources across classrooms, schools, and districts.

He strives to use rigorous research design to ensure that high-quality studies inform educational policies. While decades worth of research have described patterns in education—particularly patterns related to inequality—he cites an important, recent push to design studies that support causal inferences as essential for informing policy and reducing inequality.

Dr. Blazar’s recent projects include a study examining teachers’ varied skills, which found that teachers who raise test scores are distinct from those who make students happy and engaged in class, reflecting the need for targeted development programs. His work identifies teacher coaching as a particularly beneficial form of professional development that can have large impacts on teachers and students. He also examines the impact of additional instructional resources including curriculum materials, as identifying top curricula and helping teachers implement these materials with fidelity holds promise for student outcomes and equity.

Applying Rigor to Evaluating Teaching

The Historian's Lens on Education Policy

CAMPBELL F. SCRIBNER

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Scribner draws from history and philosophy to undertake broad examinations of education policy. His work centers on conflicting notions of democracy in American schools. In his book, "The Fight for Local Control: Schools, Suburbs and American Democracy," he delved into the problematic history of U.S. school districts, which reflect both the nation's democratic participation and its commitment to racial and economic segregation.

In 2018, he was named a National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow. As a fellow, he will investigate the history of vandalism in schools, focusing on property destruction as a form of political dissent and as an existentialist form of play and experimentation.

His interest in democratic education is also evident in his 2018 Association of American Colleges & Universities grant to incorporate civic learning and social responsibility in the College's degree programs.

MINING THE MARYLAND LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM (MLDS)

The UMD College of Education, along with the University of Maryland School of Social Work, comprise MLDS' Research Services Branch, which is a state database that tracks student performance from PK-12th grade, postsecondary institution attendance and outcomes, income and labor data. To fulfill MLDS' mission to gather data that can be used to improve the state of Maryland's education system and guide decision makers, College faculty collaborate with researchers across the University System of Maryland.

Drs. Laura Stapleton, David Blazar and Tracy Sweet, all College faculty, are co-PIs for MLDS, conducting policy analyses for the state and local partners. Drs. Stapleton and Sweet provide expertise in research methodology and statistics, guiding faculty and student researchers in designing meaningful evaluations. Dr. Blazar helps to set priorities for which education policies are analyzed by MLDS, focusing on the teacher pipeline.

Dr. Stapleton, with support from a \$2.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education via the Institute of Education Sciences, led pioneering research on the use of synthetic data at MLDS. The research team

examined whether synthetic data, created with statistical models designed to capture the properties of real data sets, enables a broader pool of researchers to benefit from longitudinal data sets and overcomes limited access to confidential education data. Synthetic data sets hold promise for expanding the range of researchers with the ability to use high-quality data to conduct certain types of education policy evaluations, they found, although they cautioned that there are limitations to using synthetic data as a stand-alone tool to conduct high-stakes policy evaluations.

College faculty provide an important service to the state through MLDS, as the System links multiple sectors of data and is an important tool for decision-making by state policymakers. MLDS is also a key resource for graduate students interested in using quantitative methods and big data to understand effective policies in education.

Addressing the Achievement Gap

JOHN B. KING, JR.

VISITING PROFESSOR



Dr. King is the president and CEO of The Education Trust, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to identify and close opportunity and achievement gaps, from preschool through college. He served in President Barack Obama's cabinet as the 10th U.S. Secretary of Education. In fall of 2017, he joined COE as a visiting professor, where he has taught education policy.

Dr. King first began his career in education as a high school social studies teacher and middle school principal. In 2011, he became the commissioner of education for the state of New York, where he oversaw the state's elementary and secondary schools, as well as its colleges and universities.

Before becoming Secretary of Education under the Obama administration, Dr. King carried out the duties of Deputy Secretary of Education. In that role, he directed the agency's operations and managed policies and programs related to P-12 education, English learners, special education, and innovation. He also led cross-agency collaboration on President Obama's My Brother's Keeper, which is an initiative designed to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color and to ensure that all young people can reach their potential.

ETHAN HUTT

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Hutt approaches policy issues from a historical perspective and examines the numbers used to describe and evaluate the U.S. school system. While standardized test scores, grading practices and other measures are often seen as fixed features of schools, he considers how their evolving uses have shaped the perceptions of schools' practices and success.

Through his NAEed/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship, he is investigating big data's history in school systems. His research highlights the many motivations, audiences, and applications of data, spanning from Cold War concerns to civil rights struggles to policy evaluations. As better data production has become an explicit governmental policy goal, the history of big data efforts' achievements and failures is crucially important.

Dr. Hutt researches the intersection of law and evaluation metrics. Education law often turns on issues of causality that have previously been beyond the reach of education data and methods. His research examines the promise, limits and risk of the 'causal revolution' on education law, which includes studying teacher value-added measures in litigation and the implications of new teacher credentialing requirements involving edTPA, a performance assessment frequently used for teacher licensure.

“Big Data” in School Systems

