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SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Professional Portfolio Abstracts: Virginia Salo, Ph.D.

2021-2022 SRCD Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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Introduction: This portfolio provides an overview of the work that I have contributed at NICHD during the 2021-2022 Fellowship Year. The projects I have been involved in have included outreach events to communicate with researchers about the priorities of the NICHD and the process for applying for federal funding; activities to support and move developmental science forward, including a workshop and funding opportunities announcement; and advising on the suitability of applications for funding. These projects demonstrate the complex and rewarding nature of working in a funding agency, and the varied experiences I

undertook to gained a wider perspective on how basic and applied developmental science can inform policy decisions and the wide range of roles developmental scientists can play in that process.

Portfolio Entry 1: Demystifying the application process: Planning for an NIH application

Project Overview:

Background: Program officers at the NIH are typically the primary point of contact for investigators and other outside scientists. The Boston University Conference on Language Development hosts comprises a key audience for the Language Development and Multilingualism portfolio and regularly hosts a panel on federal funding.

Goal(s): To provide an overview of relevant NIH funding opportunities and tips for how to approach writing an application to an audience of mostly early career researchers.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Developed slide deck based on current funding priorities and mechanisms
- Gave presentation and answered audience questions

Activity Focus Keywords: Workshops and scientific meetings
Policy Area Keywords: Professional Development; Federal research funding
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice

Portfolio Entry 2: Reframing the word gap: Equity-based approaches to supporting early language development

Project Overview:

Background: The Child Development and Behavior Branch at NICHD supports basic and translational research and training that addresses the typical neurocognitive, psychological, behavioral, physical, and social-emotional development and health of infants, children, and adolescents, and has particular emphases on the social determinants of health and developmentally informed strategies to mitigate health disparities.

There is a need in developmental science for a prioritization of research that incorporates strengths-based and culturally responsive theories and methodologies.

Goal(s): To convene stakeholders from different perspectives to reflect on the state of the science of interventions to support the early language environment; To identify key gaps and opportunities to move the field forward.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Conducted literature review and portfolio analysis to support attention to the topic
- Developed concept
- Organized planning committee and developed agenda

Activity Focus Keywords: Workshops and scientific meetings
Policy Area Keywords: Dual Language Learners (DLLs); Early Intervention; Family Engagement; School Readiness; Health disparities; Public health
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Processes to connect research to policy and practice; Incorporating a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens

Portfolio Entry 3: Notice of Intent to Publish a Funding Opportunity Announcement for Learning Disabilities Research Centers

Project Overview:

Background: The purpose of this Notice is to highlight to the extramural research community that the NICHD plans to issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to solicit new and renewal applications for Learning Disabilities Research Centers (LDRCs). The LDRC RFA will seek multi-project and multi-core applications that support transdisciplinary research focusing on the needs of learners that are at-risk for significant learning challenges, have been identified with a specific learner disability or have been minimally responsive to interventions. An LDRC application will include a that addresses critical, time-sensitive research and practice topics specific to individuals with significant learning challenges and/or individuals with SLDs. The FOA is expected to be published in Summer 2022.

Goal(s): To encourage investigators who believe that they have sufficient expertise and resources to coordinate and implement a center research program to begin consideration of applying for this initiative.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Co-drafted the NOIP and RFA language
- Made relevant edits to RFA in the course of approval to publish
- Serve as a contact for researchers interested in submitting an application

Activity Focus Keywords: Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)
Policy Area Keywords: Early Intervention; Learning disabilities; Health disparities; Public Health
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice; Incorporating a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens; Developing funding opportunity

Portfolio Entry 4: Impact of Technology and Digital Media (TDM) Exposure/Usage on Child and Adolescent Development

Project Overview:

Background: Technology and digital media exposure and use have become ubiquitous facets of modern childhood from an early age, underscoring the urgent need to understand how this exposure/usage affects multiple developmental domains and health outcomes, as well as alters neurocognitive development and the very nature of social interactions between family members, peers, and society at large. NICHD created this multi-project (P01) funding opportunity announcement to strengthen existing and foster new collaborations in areas of technology and digital media research that could benefit from enhanced multidisciplinary approaches which enable the simultaneous examination of trajectories across two or more developmental domains, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of the impact technology and digital media exposure and usage have on the typical/atypical development of children and adolescents.

Goal(s): To support integrated, multi-project research programs examining the pathways by which technology and digital media exposure and usage impact developmental trajectories and health outcomes in early childhood or adolescence.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Tracked incoming grant applications
- Collaborated with scientific review officer to identify appropriate members of the review panel
- Drafted funding recommendations for applications.

Activity Focus Keywords: Grant Review
Policy Area Keywords: Family Engagement; Technology and digital media; Public health
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice; Funding application review

Portfolio Entry 5: Learning Disabilities Innovation Hubs

Project Overview:

Background: NICHD has a long-standing interest in learning disabilities research, and this funding opportunity announcement is a renewal of the Learning Disabilities Innovation Hub FOA which invites exploratory grant applications, addressing the etiology, manifestation, prevention and remediation of reading, writing and/or mathematics specific learning disorders (SLDs).

Goal(s): To serve as a catalyst to understand and address 1) the needs of diverse, under-represented populations in SLD research, 2) the role technology plays in improving or limiting the learning experiences of children with SLD, including the impact of remote learning on service delivery, family stress, and peer socialization, 3) investigate more complex behavioral phenotypes of learners in SLD research, 4) speed the maturation of nascent/novel, high-impact, high-risk SLD studies that advance research on SLDs and demonstrate potential to directly benefit the SLD community, policy or practice, and 5) provide project embedded, career enhancing research and professional development opportunities to support the next generation of SLD scientists.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Tracked incoming grant applications
- Collaborated with scientific review officer to identify appropriate members of the review panel
- Drafted funding recommendations for applications

Activity Focus Keywords: Grant Review
Policy Area Keywords: Early Intervention; Learning disabilities; Health disparities; Public Health
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice; Funding application review

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