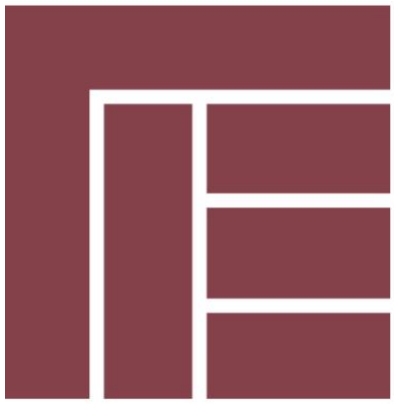

Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida Annual Report 2007

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

This year, FIE completed its 25th year of service to Florida's children. This milestone allows us to reflect on past accomplishments, build on existing successes, and look toward the future. For 25 years FIE has conducted research, delivered and evaluated educational programs and initiatives throughout Florida, and strived to make differences in the lives of children.
FIE has a long record of making a difference:

- Developed with support through a generous gift from Betty and Tom Petway, the Early Literacy and Learning Model (ELLM) curriculum has been used successfully in preschool centers located in low-income neighborhoods in Jacksonville and other Florida communities. During the past 11 years, the use of ELLM has provided quality early learning experiences for over 50,000 children. In 2007, the revised ELLM/Plus content-rich curriculum was accepted by the FLDOE as an approved VPK curriculum. The use of ELLM/Plus is expanding throughout Florida.

- The Sunshine State Scholars Program celebrated 11 years of recognizing the achievement of Florida high school seniors. To date, the program has recognized the accomplishments of 11 Statewide Sunshine State Scholars, 74 regional scholars, 750 district scholars, and more than 90 exemplary high school mathematics and science teachers. Dr. William Caldwell, the project director, was awarded a Senator's Proclamation by Senator Stephen Wise for his vision, dedication, and leadership in developing and implementing the Sunshine State Scholars Program.

- The Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools partnership with the FLDOE has increased awareness and improved school communication and collaboration for 11 years. One project highlight was the success of the 3rd Annual Statewide Bullying Prevention Conference. The theme of 2007 conference was Creating a Culture of Positive Behavior, with the goal of making school environments places where students feel safe and learn.

- FIE's Family Engagement team implemented a series of family engagement sessions at local child care centers. Adults participated in family-oriented conversations and literacy learning while children engaged in literacy-enriching activities. Families received books and materials to extend the lessons. Participation credits could be traded for tickets to community events and family-friendly venues.

This past year, FIE initiated several new and exciting projects:

- The College Reach-Out Program: PreCollegiate Connections serves at-risk students at urban middle schools in Jacksonville. The project provided a middle school pilot for the Jacksonville Commitment program. UNF undergraduate students, serving as learning guides, mentored sixth graders. The project goals are to prepare students for success in high school and completion of post-secondary education. In 2008, the program will expand to incorporate seventh graders.

- With a generous gift from Toni and Andy Crawford, two new FIE research projects were implemented, the Young Florida Naturalists project (with additional funding from the UNF Environmental Center) and the Healthy Habits Through Literacy project (with additional funding from UNF Foundation) were designed to improve children's early literacy skills and conceptual

development. The Young Florida Naturalists project established a butterfly garden, and the Healthy Habits Through Literacy project included planting a container vegetable garden. Results indicate that these activities expanded children's vocabulary and increased their background knowledge, both precursor skills for reading comprehension.

- The Duval County Public School/FIE Partnership – PK-3: Success By Design project aims to create seamless transitions beginning with prekindergarten and moving through third grade. The partnership will build on the improvement in children's kindergarten readiness resulting from the implementation of VPK throughout Florida.

FIE is committed to improving learning opportunities for Florida's children. Our commitment includes helping schools create a safe environment for children to learn and grow. Our commitment begins with children in preschool, continues through middle and high schools, and extends to post-secondary education. FIE is committed to continuing to make a difference in the lives of Floridians by applying the lessons learned from research.

Cheryl A. Fountain
Executive Director

OUR MISSION

The Florida Institute of Education provides statewide leadership to improve education at all levels by working collaboratively with Florida's universities, community colleges, public schools, school readiness agencies, and communities to:

- Foster collaborative programs that address critical educational needs by supporting innovation and engaging in problem-focused research;
- Increase access to and use of the knowledge and skills needed to improve practice and inform decision-making; and
- Enhance achievement for all students, especially those at-risk.

The FIE Vision for Educational Excellence

- Every child will enter kindergarten eager **and ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed** in school regardless of the geographical location where he/she lives.
- Florida's prekindergarten through postsecondary **students will rank at the highest levels of academic performance**, and **achievement will not be differentiated** by race, gender, or socioeconomic status.
- Practitioners and researchers will view themselves as members of **shared learning communities** committed to collaboration, ongoing learning, inquiry, and continuous improvement.
- **Families and communities will be fully engaged partners** committed to improving children's learning and social, emotional, and healthy development.

Achieving this vision will require dramatic educational improvements on many fronts—all of which depend on a sustained commitment to research, university/practitioner collaboration, innovation and development, dissemination of evidence-based tools and strategies, and data-informed decision- and policy-making. FIE works toward achieving this vision using a systematic framework for improving practice and informing policy through research. (See Figure 1.)

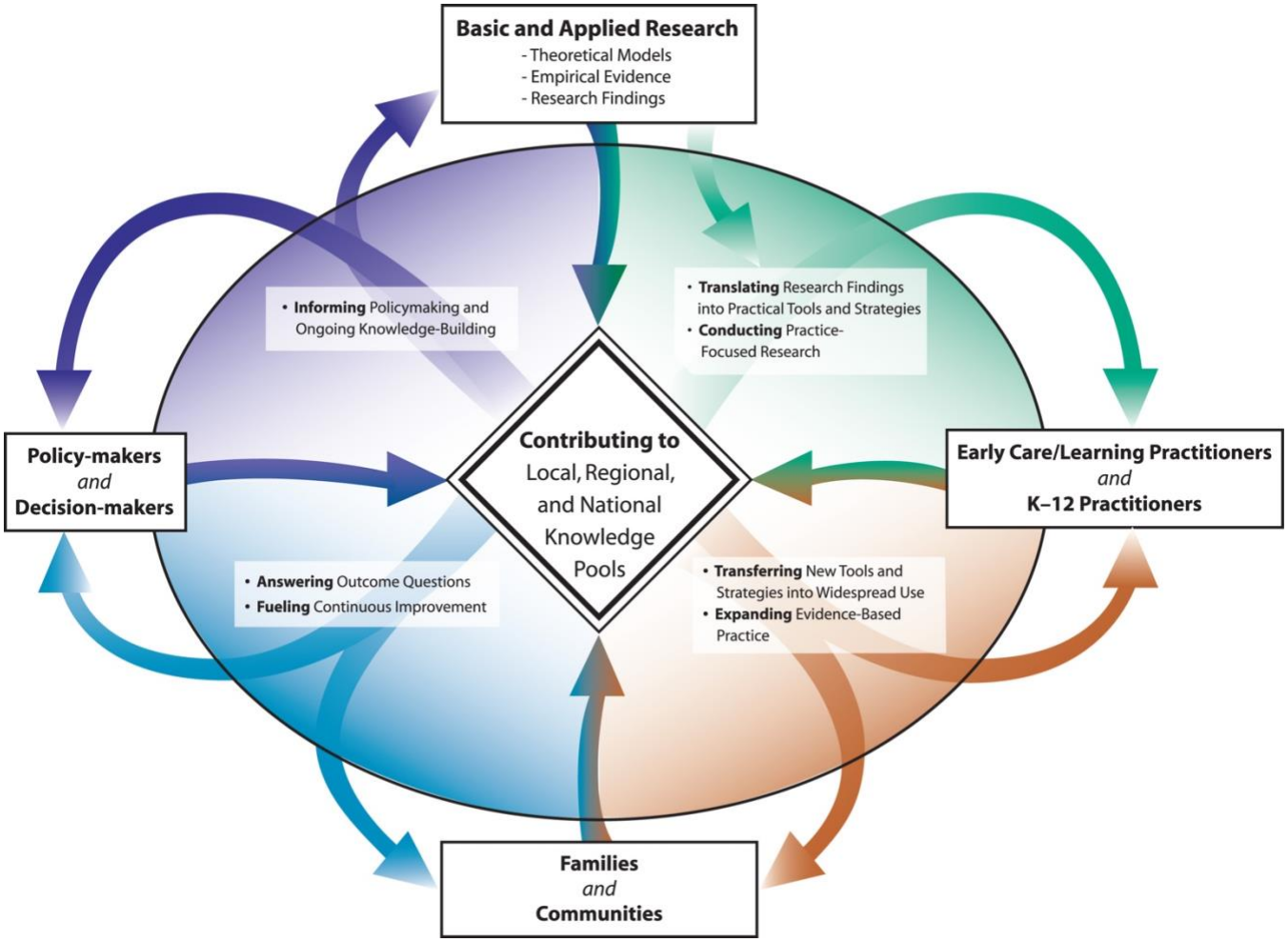

Figure 1 Florida Institution of Education (FIE) Framework for Improving Practice and Informing Policy through Research

FIE organizes its work around four Strategic Goals:

Goal 1: Foster and Sustain Collaborative Partnerships to Address Pressing Educational Needs

Goal 2: Engage in Practice-Focused Research, Development, Dissemination

Goal 3: Increase Community Awareness of and Engagement in Educational Improvement at All Levels

Goal 4: Carry Out Support Functions in an Efficient and Effective Manner

The following pages provide a summary of important milestones and achievements in each of these four areas of focus.

Goal 1: Foster and Sustain Collaborative Partnerships to Address Pressing Educational Needs

In 2007 FIE actions were organized around three education sectors: school readiness sector, K-12 education sector, and postsecondary sector.

School Readiness Sector

- FIE staff refined and pilot tested an 8-week family involvement intervention. The successful family engagement training package will be disseminated during 2008-09.
- FIE established a state level partnership with the Volunteer Florida Foundation and the Florida Mentoring Partnership.
- The FIE executive director continued to serve as a member of the citywide Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP). FIE assumed responsibility for developing and pilot testing an intensive professional learning intervention for preschool center directors.
- FIE continued researcher/practitioner partnerships with the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc. and the Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Program.
- In response to evaluation findings, FIE staff developed an explicit intervention to improve children's knowledge of conventions of print. The intervention was successfully implemented in coached classrooms. The Print Concept Learning Packet was refined and will be disseminated.
- FIE continues its statewide partnerships with the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning and the Florida Department of Education/Office of Early Learning. FIE continues to host the Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office in Tallahassee. FIE continues its statewide distribution of the Florida Birth to Three Learning and Development Standards, Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for Three-Four-, and Five-Year-Old Children, and Florida VPK Education Standards.
- The FIE executive director served as a member of the task force convened by FLDOE to revise VPK Mathematics Performance Standards.
- FIE, working in collaboration with Brewer Center staff, continued to implement a problem-focused research agenda. As part of that agenda, Dr. Janice Hunter was awarded a grant from the UNF Environmental Center to implement the Young Florida Naturalists, an exploratory study targeting young children's conceptual development using science and the environment as the content focus. One important outcome of the study was the development of a strategy to use concept mapping to help children and adults make their thinking more explicit.
- FIE was awarded a $20,000 grant from the UNF Foundation to extend the work of the Young Florida Naturalist study - building children's conceptual development.
- Dr. Janice Wood was invited to serve as a member of the Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Advisory Board. Dr. Madelaine Cosgrove was invited to serve as a member of the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc. Board of Directors.

K-12 Education Sector

- The PreCollegiate program was refocused to support the PreCollegiate Connections and College Reach Out Program as a middle school pilot for the Jacksonville Commitment initiative. Funds from Academic Affairs and FIE were leveraged with FLDOE funds to implement the pilot at two high-needs middle schools – Eugene Butler and Paxon Middle Schools.

- FIE established a partnership with the Duval County Public Schools to strengthen children's outcomes in PreK- Grade 3. The goal of the PreK – 3: Success by Design initiative is to develop a model for a well-coordinated early learning and transition system that improves children's achievement, promotes meaningful family involvement, and provides professional learning opportunities for PreK-Grade 3 practitioners.
- FIE partnered with the Florida Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Schools, to educate and inform both the community and K-12 public schools about the harmful affects of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, bullying, and other such deterrents to health and education of Florida's students and families.
- The FIE executive director served as chair of the Jacksonville Commitment design team, a multi-organizational team charged with developing a framework for the Jacksonville Commitment program. She also continued to serve as a member of the Jacksonville Commitment Steering Committee.
- FIE, working in collaboration with the FLDOE, the Governor's Office, and community college, university, and K-12 science and mathematics faculty across the state successfully implemented the 11th annual statewide Sunshine State Mathematics and Science Scholars Program. Florida Education Commissioner Dr. Eric Smith served as the keynote speaker with participation of Florida's K-12 Chancellor, members of the Florida Legislator, officials of the Florida Lottery, and selected business partners.

Postsecondary Sector

- FIE supported (financially as well as with access to FIE staff expertise) the work of four UNF/COEHS doctoral students. Dr. James Young, a FIE-affiliated doctoral student, received the COEHS Mulkeen Award for Excellence in Practice Centered Research.
- FIE established a partnership with ENLACE, a community-focused initiative at the University of South Florida to increase the number of minority students, particularly Hispanic students, applying to, enrolling in, and graduating from college.

Goal 2: Engage in Practice-Focused Research, Development, Dissemination

- In 2007 FIE completed several major research initiatives. As a result, FIE faculty and staff began the process of developing a new 5-year research/development/dissemination agenda and discussions resulted in identification of four areas of focus: early learning and literacy, family engagement, precollegiate connections, and evaluation research.
- Four major grant proposals, three in the school readiness sector and one in the K-12 education sector, were developed and submitted to the USDOE and the FLDOE.
- FIE researchers refined and resubmitted an article describing results from the Preschool Curriculum Education Research (PCER) program. FIE researchers continued to collaborate with PCER researchers from other universities to prepare a chapter for a book chronicling the PCER research initiative including results and lessons learned.
- FIE researchers presented research findings at several state and national conferences and meetings.
- The FIE-developed ELLM/Plus preschool curriculum was approved by the FLDOE as one of the research-based curricula approved for use by low-performing early care and learning programs offering Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services. FIE staff also participated in several curriculum fairs hosted by school readiness coalitions across the state.
- FIE researchers completed a study using FLKRS data. Findings were shared with the Early Learning Coalition of Duval County and other community partners.

Goal 3: Increase Community Awareness of and Engagement in Educational Improvement at All Levels

- FIE redesigned its website that resulted in a more user-friendly tool. A counter was added in 2007 to monitor activity, approximately 2,300 visits were made to the site.
- FIE continued to prepare the daily publication of the UNF e-News website working in collaboration with the UNF Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives.
- FIE prepared and disseminated the annual evaluation report on the impact of early literacy activities supported by Early Learning Coalition of Duval and Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership.
- Dr. Janice Wood and Dr. Janice Hunter appeared on Ask the UNF Experts program.
- At the request of the Jacksonville Journey Educational Task Force, FIE prepared and disseminated a policy brief, *High-Quality School Readiness: Why We Need It, What We Know, and Where We Are in Jacksonville*. The policy brief may be downloaded from the FIE website http://www.unf.edu/dept/fie

Goal 4: Carry Out Support Functions in an Efficient and Effective Manner

- The development and implementation of an internal document tracking system has fostered seamless interactions between FIE and other UNF campus offices and departments. The tracking system is effective in monitoring the status and location of time sensitive materials related to payroll, human resources, travel, contracts, grants, and other critical paperwork.
- An internal accounting system is used to monitor the budgets and financial obligations of FIE. Budgets are tracked through a "shadow" system and cross-referenced with the university's Banner ledgers.
- Personal and professional development opportunities are essential components to the growth of FIE. All FIE employees are encouraged to and actively participate in UNF sponsored professional development, sharing what they learn with other staff members.
- FIE Leadership Team meets regularly every 6 weeks and the support staff, under the direction of Leadership Team members, meets once a month. Agendas are developed collaboratively by FIE associate directors with input from staff. The meetings have resulted in a more unified team striving to improve the services FIE provides to the students and community we serve.
- Leadership and support staff alike have taken initiative to implement small office events that recognize and celebrate the successes and accomplishments made along the way. Events recognize both personal and professional accomplishments while improving office productivity, communication and team building.

Presentations and Publications

Florida Institute of Education produced a number of scholarly works, including the following:

Refereed Journal Articles

Wehry, S., & Algina, J. (2007). Analysis of unbalanced groups-versus-individual research designs using three alternative approximate degrees of freedom tests: Test development and type 1 error rates. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods*, 6, 53-65.

Refereed Presentations

Cosgrove, M., McLemore, B., & Wood, J. (2007, May). *Understanding and influencing the change journey*. Paper presented at International Reading Association (IRA) 52nd Annual Convention: Literacy without Boundaries, Toronto, Canada.

England, R. (2007, May). *Family involvement: Linking literacy with the arts*. Paper presented at Open Minds Open Books: The Florida Literacy Conference, Orlando, FL.

England, R., Adams, A., & Fountain, C. (2008, June). *Characteristics of participants and non-participants in a literacy-oriented family involvement program*. Poster presented at the Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, DC.

McLemore, B., & Wood, J. (2007, May). *Literacy across the preschool curriculum*. Paper presented at the Association for Childhood Education International Conference, San Antonio, TX.

McLemore, B., & Wood, J. (2007, September). *Boosting vocabulary and concept development in preschool children*. Presented at the Early Childhood Association State Conference, Orlando, FL.

McLemore, B., & Wood, J. (2007, September). *Using the word wall to boost vocabulary and concept development*. Paper presented at the Florida Reading Association State Conference, Orlando, FL.

Creative Works: Instructional Materials

England, R., & Morales-David, G. (2007). *Linking literacy with the arts: Family arts and literacy activity kits*. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, www.unf.edu/dept/fie)

England, R., & Morales-David, G. (2007). *Linking literacy with the arts: Family literacy lessons*. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, www.unf.edu/dept/fie)

Wood, J. (2007). *2007-2008 ELLM family calendar*. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, 12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224)

Wood, J. (2007). *ELLM/Plus family tips*. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, 12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224)

Other Publications

Wehry, S. (2007). *Early Learning Coalition of Duval 2006-07 report*. Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

Wehry, S. (2007). *ELOA/BEST project evaluation* Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

Wehry, S. (2006). *Florida kindergarten readiness across the Jacksonville community: Fall 2006*. Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

FIE Strategic Partnerships

To fulfill its mission and provide statewide leadership to improve education at all levels, FIE has established partnerships throughout Florida

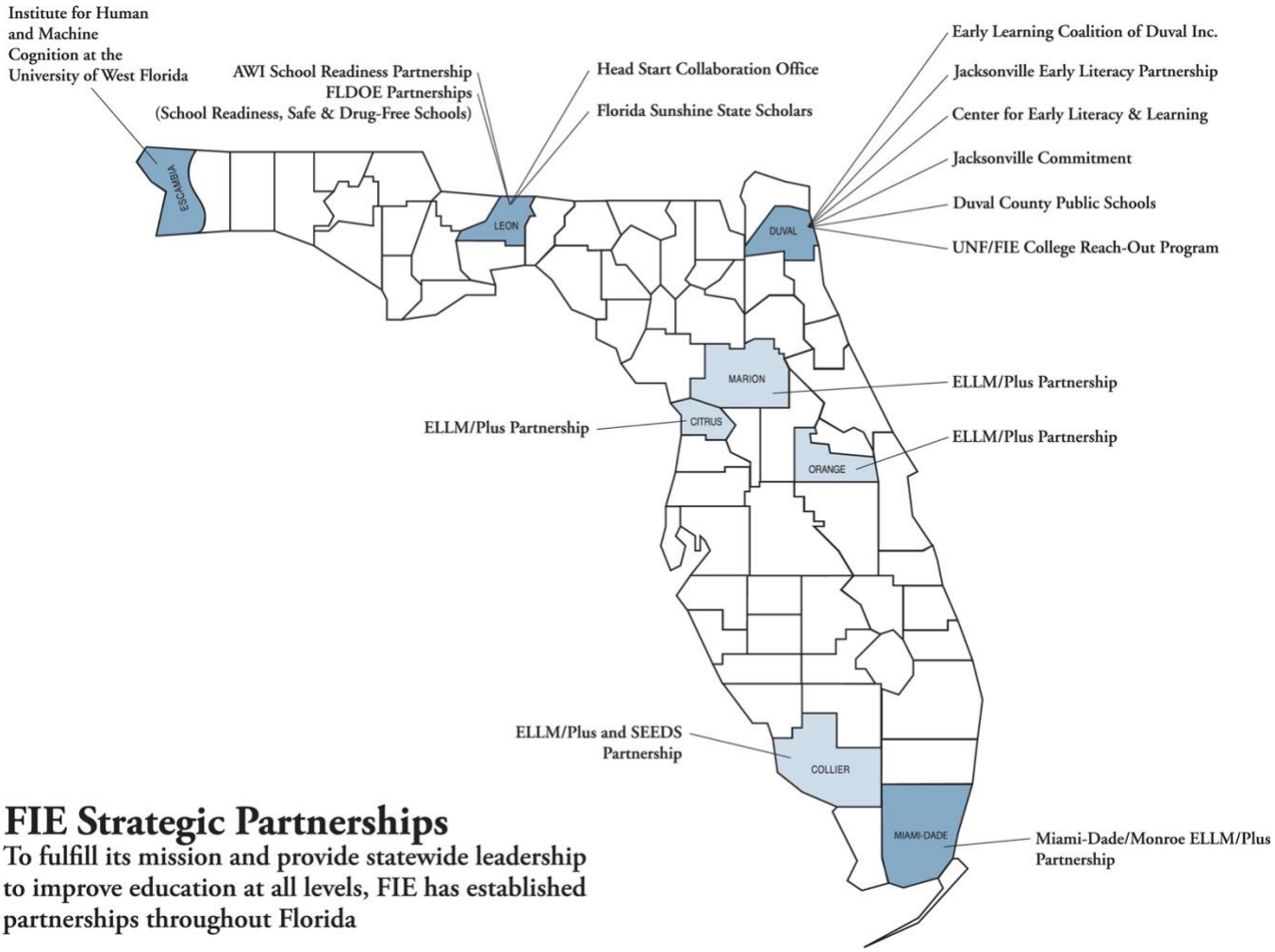

Figure 2 FIE Strategic Partnerships 2007

Jacksonville Faculty and Staff

Dr. Cheryl Fountain, *Executive Director, Professor of Education*
Dr. Afesa Adams, *FIE Senior Research Associate, Professor Emeritus of Psychology*
Justin Bergstrom, *Graphic Designer/Communications Coordinator*
Dr. William Caldwell, *FIE Senior Faculty Fellow, Professor of Mathematics and Statistics*
Terri Cook, *Coordinator, Grants Accounting*
Dr. Madeleine Cosgrove, *Associate Director for School Readiness*
Alice DeLeon, *Graphic Designer/Communications Coordinator*
Cindy Dickerson, *Associate Director and Business/Project Manager*
Dr. Rebecca England, *Family Involvement Specialist*
Dr. Linda Goudy, *Associate Director for Administration/Project Manager*
Dr. Janice Hunter*, Research Fellow for Early Learning and Literacy*
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David Lacy, *Computer Applications Specialist*
Penny Mayer, *Senior Research Assistant*
Dr. Bronwyn McLemore, *ELLM/Plus Literacy Specialist*
Dena Norman, *Senior Secretary*
Heather Monroe-Ossi, Director, *College Reach-Out Program: PreCollegiate Connections*
Howaida Mousa, *Senior Grants Specialist*
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