

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

2012 Summer Internship Program in Educational Assessment and Accountability

The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc (the Center) is a small non-profit organization that occupies a unique and influential niche at the intersection of psychometrics and educational assessment policy. The Center is pleased to offer summer internships for up to two advanced doctoral students in educational measurement and/or assessment/accountability policy who want the opportunity to work with the Center's professionals on projects with direct implications for state and national educational policy.

The Center

The Center was formed in 1998 as a not-for-profit corporation with a mission to increase student learning through improved assessment and accountability practices. The Center is located in Dover, NH (10 miles from the seacoast town of Portsmouth, NH and about an hour north of Boston, MA). The Center's twelve professional staff members have earned doctorates in psychometrics, curriculum, or statistics and most have worked at high levels in state departments of education (assessment directors) or in testing companies. The combination of technical expertise and practical experience allows Center professionals to contribute effectively to cutting edge applications in educational measurement and policy.

The Center works directly with states (current contracts include more than 35 states or entities) and has working relationships with several national research and advocacy organizations such as the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO), The Center for Research on Student Standards and Testing (CRESST), Achieve, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Some sample current projects of the Center include:

- Helping states devise student longitudinal growth systems for school accountability, and analyze the factors affecting the validity and reliability of such systems
- Designing innovative, interactive assessment and accountability reporting systems designed to yield meaningful interpretations of student and school scores
- Working with all five multi-state assessment consortia on a variety of issues ranging from assessment design and development to structuring systems for assisting the consortia in receiving relevant and timely technical advice
- Helping states design new educator evaluation systems while trying to find the best balance between validity while satisfying, or suggesting ways to modify, some very stringent policy constraints

The Summer Internship Program

Each intern will work on **one major project** throughout the summer (to be negotiated between the intern and the Center mentor) and will participate with Center staff on multiple ongoing projects. The intern will have the opportunity to attend meetings and interact with numerous state assessment personnel. Interns will be expected to produce a written report, suitable for conference presentation and/or publication, as evidence of successful completion of their project. One of the Center's senior staff will serve as the intern's primary mentor, but the interns will interact regularly with all of the Center's staff. Potential intern projects for 2012 are focused on issues from three major categories—

educator evaluation systems, interim assessment, and large scale assessment (particularly assessment consortia)—and include the following potential projects:

Educator evaluation system

- ✓ **Educator Evaluation System Validation Argument:** One of the thorniest contemporary measurement challenges is how to evaluate teachers incorporating “measures of impact on student learning.” This project will involve conceptual and data analysis to help develop the validity argument for a state’s educator evaluation program.
- ✓ **Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):** SLOs are becoming the default family of approaches for addressing the non-tested subjects and grades (NTSG) issue in educator evaluation systems. Many organizations and individuals, including the Center, have promoted such uses and many states and districts are in various stages of implementing SLOs. Unfortunately, there is not a common understanding of how SLOs should be designed and implemented, nor is there much of a research base supporting one approach over another. The intern will draft a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating SLO programs.

Interim assessments

- ✓ **Interim Assessment Investigation:** Interim or periodic assessments are administered during the school year, as contrasted with end-of-year summative assessments. The purposes, design, and evaluative criteria for interim assessments have been investigated, including work by the Center for Assessment. This project will investigate the design of interim assessments intended to inform periodic program evaluation and periodic improvement of instruction. A key aspect will be the relationship of instruction and periodic assessment.
- ✓ **Interim Assessment Empirical Study:** Many interim or periodic assessments are administered because of the purported benefit of improving teaching and learning. This project will begin with a survey of the existing literature to summarize the types of assessment (including reporting and feedback) that might be necessary to at least have the potential of improving student learning. The project will include an empirical study whereby teachers and administrators in several New Hampshire schools will be interviewed to determine the ways in which teachers and principals interpret score reports from interim providers.

Large-scale assessment

- ✓ **“College and Career Ready” Validation Argument:** Over 45 states have adopted and are implementing the Common Core State Standards. (CCSS) In addition, five federally sponsored assessment consortia are developing summative assessments based on the CCSS for most students, students with severe cognitive disabilities, and English language learners. A key claim for the CCSS adopters is that these will help ensure that students graduate from high school “college and career ready.” This project will involve developing a validation plan for the claim of “college and career readiness” that can help the assessment development projects anchor their assessment results. The validation plan will address key challenges including how “college and career ready” might be established in terms of content and in terms of assessment performance.
- ✓ **Assessment Consortia Score Comparability:** There are two federally founded assessment consortia—PARCC and SBAC—that are interpreting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to develop test specifications for assessments for most students. Similarly, there are two assessment consortia—DLMAA and NCSC—that are interpreting the CCSS to develop assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities. This project will develop possible

definitions and criteria of “score comparability” and provide guidance on how the assessment consortia could achieve the various degrees of comparability.

- ✓ **Assessment Performance Interpretation:** It is increasingly the case that users of large-scale assessments wish to interpret student performance both in terms of scales and in terms of content and skills. However, most assessment scales are not easily interpreted in terms of specific content and skills. This project will review the various means developed to bring together scale and content-based interpretations, the challenges to doing so, and the implications of proposed contemporary assessment designs, including adaptive testing.

Qualifications

The intern must have completed at least two years of doctoral course work in educational measurement, statistics, research methods, or a related field. Interns with documented previous research experience are preferred. Further, interns must document their ability to work independently to complete a long-term project. We have found that successful interns possess most of the following skills and knowledge:

- ✓ Experience working with large-scale data bases
- ✓ Working knowledge of statistical analysis through multivariate analyses as well as fluency with one or more statistical packages, e.g., SAS, SPSS, R (preferred, depending on the specific project)
- ✓ A solid understanding of research design
- ✓ Psychometrics (both classical and IRT) with demonstrated understanding of the principles of reliability and validity
- ✓ An interest in applying technical skills and understanding major policy and practical issues

Logistics

The internship duration is 8 weeks and is **located at our offices in Dover, NH for the full 8 weeks**. The specific term will depend on the intern’s school schedule, but generally starts the first week of June. The Center will provide a housing allowance, reasonable relocation expenses, and a stipend of \$5000.

Application

To apply for the internship program, candidates should submit the following materials **electronically**:

- ✓ A letter of interest explaining why the candidate would be a good fit with the Center, what the candidate hopes to gain from the experience, and which project(s) the candidate would prefer
- ✓ Curriculum vita,
- ✓ The proposed dates (contiguous 8 weeks) for the internship, and
- ✓ Two letters of recommendations (one must be from the candidate’s academic advisor).

Generally, of approximately 20-30 applicants, six to eight are identified for a telephone interview. Those interviewees will also be asked to submit one recent sole (preferred) or first-authored academic paper. Please do not submit the paper until it is requested.

<p>Materials must be submitted electronically (<u>including letters of recommendations</u>) to: Scott Marion at smarion@nciea.org and received by February 15, 2012.</p>
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Applicants will be notified around March 15, 2012 regarding their candidacy. To learn more about the Center, please visit www.nciea.org or contact Scott Marion at smarion@nciea.org.