

# FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the



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## Newsletter Editor

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## President's Message

### A Welcome to the DR Community

Wendy Oakes, PhD  
*Arizona State University*

It is my honor to serve as the incoming president of the CEC Division for Research (DR). First, I want to acknowledge the many special educators and leaders who have partnered with researchers over their careers in a quest to build the knowledge-base to improve educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. I would like to thank the leadership of DR and their role in promoting these research endeavors—those on whose shoulders we stand. I am grateful for the leadership of the DR board and committee members, the mentorship of the presidential line during my tenure on the board (Chris Lemons and Kathleen Lane), as well as the partnership of those who will serve in this role following me, Audrey Sorrells and Emily Solari.

As I begin my term serving DR in this role, I reflect on the challenges faced and endurance shown by the educational community over the past nearly two years. When school doors were closed to help protect students, educators, and communities from the spread of COVID-19, educators were relentless in their efforts to continue to provide students with instructional opportunities in non-traditional ways. We heard inspiring stories of educators delivering learning materials to students' homes, teaching students through their front storm doors, and staying connected with students through Zoom, Google Classroom,

and other online platforms. We also saw a coming together of educators and families as they worked together in new ways in an effort to keep students connected both to each other and their school communities, and to continue their educational progress. All the while, educators, families, and students were facing tremendous hardship and loss.

During this time, we also saw funding priorities for COVID-related educational research regarding the impact of the pandemic and effective responses on behalf of our nation's students. The special education research community responded in innovative ways—by shifting professional learning for educators to online and open access formats, adapting family support programs for online delivery, and creating online and telehealth access for individuals with disabilities to continue to participate in educational interventions, to mention a few. In the coming issues of our professional journals, I anticipate reading about the innovative ways that researchers adapted to this changing context as well as the findings of this work. The current competition by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) on *Improving Pandemic Recovery Efforts in Education Agencies* (84.305X) continues the priority of recovery with a

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## An Overview of the 2021–2022 Special Education Academic Job Market



Jessica Rodrigues, PhD



Lindsey Mirielli  
University of Missouri

An understanding of the current U.S. special education faculty job market has implications for special education doctoral training programs, higher-education faculty teaching future leaders, and doctoral students preparing for the next job market cycle. Several studies published from about 2001–2012 reported on the supply of and demand for special education faculty. The studies indicated that there was a shortage of scholars prepared at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels to fill higher education special education faculty positions (e.g., Smith et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2011). Importantly, a shortage of special education faculty contributes to a shortage of special education teachers and ultimately has a negative effect on the services provided to students with disabilities and/or who are gifted (Smith et al., 2010). Yet, to our knowledge, the last profile of the demand for special education faculty used 2010 data (i.e., Montrosse & Young, 2012).

This article shares a descriptive profile of special education faculty advertisements posted within the 2021–2022 academic year, including an overview of positions by type (e.g., assistant professor), the number of faculty advertisements by state, and the months during which most special education faculty advertisements were posted online. We conclude the article with ideas for next steps, as we are planning to again track faculty advertisements for the upcoming job market cycle starting in August 2022. We welcome feedback for informing the design of the study so that it aligns with and is equipped to address the needs of those impacted by trends of the special education academic job market.

### #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs Outreach via Twitter

Tracking special education faculty advertisements started as an outreach effort. We were inspired by a trend on Twitter in other fields: Scholars were tweeting faculty advertisements as an effort to share new openings with scholars in the job market. Tweets included discipline-specific hashtags, such as Dr. Benjamin Heddy's hashtag #edpsychjobs for sharing job openings in educational psychology. Motivated by these efforts and a desire to support scholars navigating the oftentimes stressful job market, we created the hashtag #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs. We added new special education faculty postings to an open-access spreadsheet every two weeks and periodically shared the link on Twitter via a personal faculty Twitter account (@rodriguesjm6). Tweets included the hashtag #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs and encouraged people on Twitter to share the list with students and scholars in the job market.

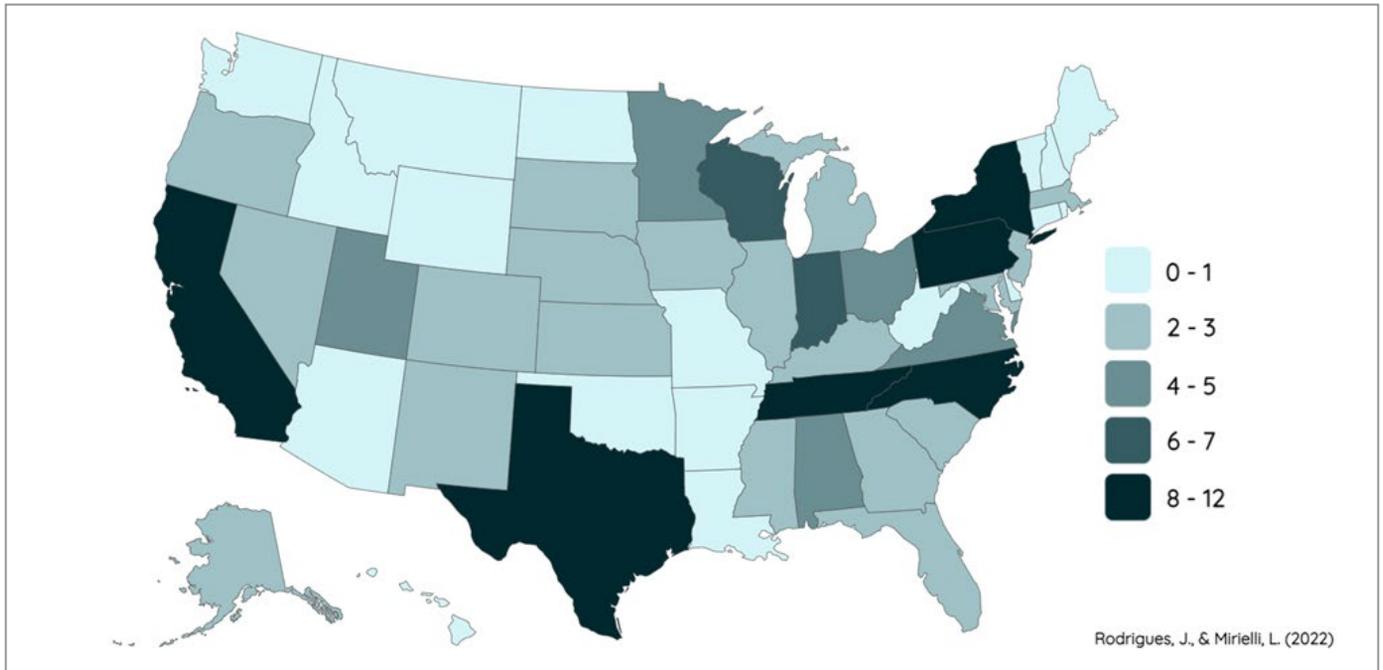
A look at Twitter analytics suggests that Twitter was an effective avenue for reaching an audience interested in the #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs spreadsheet. The first tweet posted on July 17, 2021, about the plan to start curating the list and to encourage users to “tag people on the job hunt” garnered 17,710 impressions (i.e., times the tweet was seen on Twitter), 115 likes, 27 retweets (i.e., re-posts of the tweet by other Twitter users), and 826 total engagements (i.e., total number of times users interacted with the tweet). Using Twitter helped us spread the word about the running list and led to opportunities such as an invitation to share about the list to the CEC-DR Academic Job Search Webinar series for helping early career scholars prepare for the academic job market.

### Method

We identified advertisements for special education faculty positions in the United States posted between August 2021 and February 2022 via the search term “Special Education” on three websites: HigherEdJobs, Inside Higher Ed Careers, and The Chronicle of Higher Education Jobs section. Searches were conducted approximately every two weeks. Advertisements for

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Special Ed. Academic Job Market (continued from page 2)



**Figure 1.** Number of Special Education Faculty Advertisements by State.

school-level administration positions related to special education, nonfaculty positions, and part-time/adjunct positions were excluded from the spreadsheet. Only job postings for full-time special education faculty positions (i.e., assistant, associate, full professor, and open rank) with a start date of Fall 2022 were included on the list. We collected the following information about each advertisement: position type (e.g., assistant professor), tenure track status, start date, university location, and date the advertisement was posted. Details regarding specialization (e.g., “emphasis on early childhood”) were collected from the advertisement title only and thus may not have been captured for each advertisement by the current data collection procedures.

**Results**

Advertisement searches yielded 151 total special education faculty position advertisements. New faculty advertisements were most prevalent in the months of October and November. Searches conducted every two weeks

yielded between 2 and 22 original advertisements, with an average of 11 per search. The #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs spreadsheet was accessed more than 1,600 times between August 2021 and March 2022.

Most of the special education faculty advertisements were for assistant professor ( $n = 101$ ) and assistant/associate professor positions ( $n = 37$ ). Among the 140 positions that were tenure-eligible (i.e., excluding positions for associate/full professors [ $n = 3$ ], as well as clinical research assistant professor positions [ $n = 7$ ], and research assistant professors [ $n = 1$ ] that were all nontenure-track positions), a total of 129 of the advertisements indicated the positions were tenure track, 3 explicitly stated the positions were not tenure track, and 8 did not specify. Regarding specialization, 102 of the advertisement titles indicated “Special Education” without details regarding a specialization area. Of the advertisement titles that included a specialized area, the most common were early childhood/early intervention

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*Special Ed. Academic Job Market* (continued from page 3)

( $n = 15$ ), moderate/severe or significant disabilities ( $n = 7$ ), deaf and hard of hearing ( $n = 5$ ), and applied behavior analysis ( $n = 5$ ).

Advertisement positions were geographically located across 41 states and 1 in Washington, D.C., with the most being in New York ( $n = 12$ ), California ( $n = 11$ ), Texas ( $n = 11$ ), Pennsylvania ( $n = 10$ ), and Tennessee ( $n = 10$ ). See Figure 1 for an overview of the number of special education faculty position advertisements by state for the 2021–2022 job market. An interactive version of this map that allows the user to hover over each state to view the number of faculty advertisements is available at <https://bit.ly/3DdMlyM>.

### Planning for the 2022–2023 Job Market

We plan to collect data on special education faculty advertisements for the 2022–2023 job market. Goals for the next round of data collection include more rigorous data collection procedures and use of a larger set of online resources to identify advertisements (e.g., Academic Gates in addition to the websites we used in the 2021–2022 search). Other considerations include an exploration of how the faculty advertisement data integrate and compare with data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates and/or Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funding data. We welcome feedback for informing the design of the study so that it will contribute valuable insights for those interested in and/or impacted by trends of the special education academic job market.

Follow along with #SpecialEdHigherEdJobs tweets on Twitter by following @rodriguesjm6, and send inquiries or ideas about the research to [rodriguesjm@missouri.edu](mailto:rodriguesjm@missouri.edu). ■

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## CEC-DR Public Policy News



Elizabeth Talbott, PhD  
DR Public Policy Committee Chair  
William & Mary

### News from the Hill

CEC held its annual in-person legislative summit, in partnership with the Council for Exceptional Children Division for The Council of Administrators for Special Education (CEC-CASE), on Capitol Hill July 10–13, 2022. This event featured 1.5 days of professional development and state team meetings for 250 CEC members from 46 states, followed by a full day of in-person and virtual visits with representatives in Congress and their staff.

Our conversations with legislators focused on three big issues:

1. Appropriations for IDEA, which includes the IDEA Full Funding Act (*S.3213*; *HR 5984*) and increases in funding for IES's National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER);
2. special educator shortages; and
3. school mental health.

Conversations with legislators focused on creative solutions to these challenges and how federal dollars to the states can help to address them.

### Special Education Research Matters

CEC-DR continues to advocate for increases to National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) funding, working in partnership with our *Friends of IES colleagues*. However, as we all know, NCSER funding

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## President's Message *(continued from page 1)*

clear focus on students disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including students with disabilities.

As I reflect on these times, I am encouraged by the persistence of the special education community in continuing to conduct high-quality research to ensure educators and families have the best resources to promote the educational outcomes of individuals with disabilities. With this in mind, I hope to focus our Division on the following:

- **Collaboration.** This idea builds on Chris Lemon's theme of connections. We must continue to actively grow membership and participation in DR—expanding our membership to include a diverse group of researchers, state and local educational leaders and policy makers, school-based educators, family members, and individuals with disabilities. It is through these collaborations that the most pressing educational issues for individuals with disabilities can be identified and innovative research responses developed and tested. We encourage you to join the conversation through DR events, engaging in conversation at the annual CEC convention, joining committees, and applying for DR leadership positions.
- **Networks.** Multiple voices strengthen our collective effort. With this in mind, I would like to continue the work related to cross-divisional research and dissemination collaborations. DR is unique in that division members are most often members of other CEC divisions aligned with the specific population(s) they serve. We invite researchers across all divisions to consider joining DR and participating in conversations about how to develop new and expand existing research networks with others in their area or those who might bring new and diverse perspectives to their

existing work. Further, I would like to continue to strengthen the ties established by my predecessors with the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) within IES. These networked communities draw on the strength of diverse experiences and perspectives to continue to advance the field.

- **Diversity.** Under the leadership of Tisa Aceves for many years and now led by Federico Waitoller, DR continues to prioritize our commitment to promoting diverse perspectives in educational research. We have established new DR awards to recognize researchers and research teams who represent and work on behalf of traditionally underrepresented communities such as people with disabilities who are BIPOC, English learners, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and others. We look forward to recognizing these research contributions in Louisville at the 2023 CEC convention. Please watch the DR newsletters and the website for the award applications and nominate deserving scholars.

I look forward to the opportunity of renewal offered by a new academic year and sharing my appreciation for the meaningful work of special educators on behalf of individuals with disabilities, their families, and the profession. I also look forward to working with DR, CEC, and special education community leadership and members to advance these priorities during my year as president. I welcome advice, suggestions, or other input for how we might accomplish these aims. Feel free to contact me at [wendy.oakes@asu.edu](mailto:wendy.oakes@asu.edu). Thank you all for your continued, relentless efforts and meaningful collaborations to ensure that rigorous, high-quality, meaningful, and impactful research is designed, conducted, and disseminated to guide our work on behalf of individuals with disabilities, their families, and educators. ■

CEC-DR Public Policy News (continued from page 4)

remains persistently and devastatingly low, having never recovered from spending cuts following the financial crisis of 2009. Thus, we are working with CEC Executive Director Chad Rummel and Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor Kuna Tavalin to advocate more frequently and aggressively for NCSER on Capitol Hill. We have several ideas about how to do this; for example, in addition to our partnership with the Friends of IES, we seek to partner with the *Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)* to get our message out. Stay tuned for more information as we move forward!

In the meantime, how can you help? Send us your stories! Your stories make a difference in showing the vital contribution of special education research to the lives of children and youth with disabilities, their families, and their educators.

It's easy! Submit your story today using the *Research Matters* template on our website. Tell Congress how funding from NCSER has helped to advance research AND change the lives of young people with disabilities, and how far we have to go! Stay tuned for updates on the CEC-DR Campaign for NCSER.

If you wish to become involved with public policy and advocacy on behalf of NCSER, feel free to contact me at [ehtalbott@wm.edu](mailto:ehtalbott@wm.edu). ■

## 2022–2023 CEC-DR Doctoral Student Scholars: Call for Nominations

**DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2022**

**Directions/Nomination Materials are available at [www.cecdr.org](http://www.cecdr.org).**

The Division for Research invites nominations for outstanding doctoral student scholars to participate in the 2022–2023 Doctoral Seminars in Special Education Research. Selected student researchers will participate in discussions and professional development led by distinguished researchers recognized for making outstanding scientific contributions in special education. Three virtual seminars and online forums will be held during this coming academic year, and a colloquium bringing students and researchers together in a session dedicated to graduate student development will take place at the 2023 CEC convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Go to the DR website at [cecdr.org](http://cecdr.org) for the Nomination Materials and Directions outlining the nomination process, preparation of the nomination packet, and directions for faculty nominators.

**DON'T FORGET, THE DUE DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS SEPTEMBER 30, 2022.** ■