MEMO

To: Francisco Rios, Dean, Woodring College of Education
From: Sandra Daffron, John Korsmo, Don Larsen, Bruce Larson, Victor Nolet, Rosalie Romano
Date: December 14, 2012
Subject: Innovation Fund Grant Report on the Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute (PREPI)

Brief Description of the Proposal

We requested funds to investigate the creation of an institute that would employ interdisciplinary approaches to researching policy pertaining to human development. Policy research is the process of conducting research on fundamental social problems with the goal of providing policy makers with pragmatic, actionable recommendations for addressing those problems (Majchrzak, 1984). Policy research is multidimensional in focus, empirical and evidence based, addresses past, current, and future perspectives, responds to stakeholder and user needs, and is values-based. Policies can include rules, laws, guidelines, plans, and decisions implemented in the public or private sector at any level from local to international. This project we proposed employed a broad conception of policy to include a wide variety of policy related issues that impact the health and well being of children, families and communities. Our work will be informed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition of human development, which is

> a process of enlarging people’s choices and enhancing human capabilities (the range of things people can be and do) and freedoms, enabling them to: live a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge and a decent standard of living, and participate in the life of their community and decisions affecting their lives (UNDP, 1990, 2012).

Beginning in May, 2012, and lasting through Fall, 2012, the six faculty involved in this project met, thought, and engaged in the following activities:

1. Investigated existing organizational structures and policy research institutes that might work as models.
2. Conducted a preliminary literature review pertaining to policy research and human development.
3. Devised Mission and Vision statements for a Woodring-based policy institute (currently called The Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute).
4. Identified shareholders and constituents and markets for institute outcomes and services
5. Identified the types of documents and potential work of the institute (e.g. issues briefs, research briefs, emerging issues, etc.)

A significant amount of our time and thought was spent on items 1-5 above. Investigating existing policy institutes and conducting literature reviews led to the development of the mission statement and subsequent vision. Given that this Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute was being created, time was well-spent establishing a solid and research-based foundation. Each of the participants represented a different and important perspective on educational policy, which ensured a solid theoretical base for the
institute. While we submit a report of our work now, December, 2012, this is an ongoing project that will continue into the future. For example, the following activities need to be addressed in more detail:

1. Identify existing indicator systems that could be adapted for policy research (e.g. the UNDP Human Development Index)
2. Investigate long term funding and sustainability strategies
3. Identify potential partners and other collaborators, including other WCE faculty.
4. Develop work plans and process for integrating the institute into the ongoing work of the College
5. Develop an institute budget and identify sources of startup funding

**Key components of the Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute (PREPI)**

A policy institute such as the one we describe in this section is critically important for a college of education. This needs to happen in our college, and once a well-designed policy institute is developed that has broad-based support and involvement, financial support will follow. Constituent groups want to know about important issues. They will have new reasons to support the institute, the college, and the university if we do our work well. In addition, the work of the institute would be very consistent with the priorities of a number of large and medium sized philanthropic foundations that could be approached for funding. Examples of those foundations include the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. We also would seek to develop synergies with other existing and emerging centers in the College to develop a long term funding strategy associated with the University Comprehensive Campaign and strategic planning process.

The **mission** of the PREPI is currently stated as follows:

> The Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute promoted the exchange of ideas and thought and mobilizes global research on practices and innovations in education that advance the richness of life in all of its forms.

The current **vision** of the PREPI is:

> We envision flourishing, just communities where people are interconnected locally and globally and interact with one another about public issues and the common good.

Tied to the vision are beliefs that direct the types of policy recommendation that the PREPI will make. These beliefs are under development, but will likely include: a) We believe that we make better decisions when we take into account multiple and various perspectives; b) We believe that education is essential to human development and to advancing the richness of human life.

The mission, vision, and emerging beliefs will direct the tasks and objectives of the PREPI. At this point, we have identified the following key tasks as part of the Institute:

1. Promote the exchange of ideas and thought by:
   a. Publishing policy documents
   b. Convening a variety of meetings (e.g., summits, conferences, seminars) that facilitate collaborative discussions about the impact of policies on the quality of human life and education.
2) Mobilize regional and global research on practices and innovations in education that advance the richness of human life by:

a. Publishing research briefs, monographs, blogs, and research reports
b. Conducting policy research
c. Facilitating international exchanges of faculty, students, and local shareholders.

For example, we could envision a research-based policy paper on current issues such as: charter schools; relationships of teacher preparation programs and private programs such as Teach for America; and, relationships between community health organizations and local school to promote healthy children, healthy families, healthy schools, and healthy communities. The intersection of education, policy research and a focus on human development provides a unique opportunity for application of the wide range of expertise and knowledge represented in the Woodring College of Education to address some of the most pressing and intractable issues that affect children, families, and communities. The lens of human development provides a holistic and assets-based context that is at the nexus of PK-12 education, human services and adult education. As guided by the UNDP, some issues considered most central to human development include: social progress (access to information, better nutrition, and health services); economic growth to reduce inequity; efficient use of resources to benefit the poor, women, and marginalized groups; equity; democratic participation and freedom; ecological sustainability; and, human security. Education is viewed as essential to human development. We envisioned that a human development policy research institute would enable faculty from across departments and specialty areas within the College to collaborate in disciplined inquiry with the goal of producing actionable recommendations for stakeholders in a variety of sectors, including educators; local, state and national policy makers; nonprofit organizations and business and industry entities. The institute likely would produce a variety of documents, such as descriptions of emerging issues or trends, issues briefs to frame and describe issues, research briefs, white papers, and research reports. The institute would be futures focused, and by identifying and tracking emerging trends and issues, could become an incubator for further innovation in the College. The institute would provide a mechanism for the College and University to voice an authoritative education oriented perspective on a wide range of public policy issues pertaining to the health and well-being of children, families, and communities. Currently, no entity in the college or for that matter, at Western performs this function.

The formation of a Pacific Rim Education Policy Institute addresses the College mission and goals in several areas. First, the very nature of a policy institute would promote the integration of educational leadership, human services and rehabilitation, and teacher education. Promoting the development of the whole child will lead to the very specific mission of constructing, transforming, and conveying knowledge by integrating research, theory, and practice; Second, a policy institute will provide the framework and location for developing “collaborative partnerships that promote the learning and well-being of individuals, families, and the community;” yet another mission of the college. Moreover, the vision of the college mirrors the vision of a policy institute. What better venue than promoting within a college education a institute that “fosters community relationships and a culture of learning that advance knowledge, embrace diversity and promote social justice.” We do not have such an organization in place, but the need for such an entity is critically important.

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