Building communities, creating relationships

annual report 2007–08

PURDUE UNIVERSITY
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We welcomed France A. Córdova as Purdue University’s 11th president in July 2007. As the president and her staff began to work on a new strategic plan for the University, the Center for Families also began to think about our own strategic vision for the years to come. Just as the University’s strategic plan emphasizes engaged scholarship through meeting global challenges, promoting discovery with delivery, and launching tomorrow’s leaders, the center also focuses on the idea of engaged scholarship.

Engaged scholarship is predicated on the idea that major advances in knowledge tend to occur when human beings consciously work to solve the central problems confronting their society. What better place to see these concepts applied than by our talented faculty, staff, and students.

On the following pages, you can read about some of the exciting things the center is working on, from advising policymakers on key family issues to supporting military families. Thank you to those who give their time, talent, and treasure in support of the center. Your efforts are tremendous and they do not go unnoticed. We look forward to another outstanding year. Hail Purdue!

Shelley MacDermid
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR FAMILIES
Council Provides New Direction

Each year the Center for Families (CFF) advisory council gathers to discuss the year’s accomplishments and looks for ways to further the mission of the center. In October 2007, the council met to discuss strategies to make the center more visible to the state and to the nation. In order to communicate the many accomplishments, the council advised hiring a communications specialist as well as an assistant director to assist with administration duties. To enhance and broaden the scope of research conducted, faculty “theme leaders” were recommended. Theme leaders will generate project and program ideas as well as provide input on the center’s strategic plan.

- **Strategic goal #1**
  Conduct innovative family research that enhances Purdue’s preeminence in discovery

- **Strategic goal #2**
  Positively impact the ability of policymakers, employers, human service professionals, educators, and students to improve the quality of life of families

- **Strategic goal #3**
  Engage partners and stakeholders in the mission of the Center for Families
Jim Elicker, Melissa M. Franks, and Cleveland Shields, professors in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies (CDFS), joined the Center for Families as its first faculty theme leaders.

In this role, they have assisted in attracting other faculty to affiliate their research with the center, generated project and program ideas, and provided input on the center’s strategic plan. Elicker leads the theme area of Families Nurturing Young Children, while Franks and Shields collaborate in the area of Families Facing Challenges.

“I’m extremely pleased to have these energetic and creative faculty joining the Center for Families,” says CFF Director Shelley MacDermid. “Their ideas will help the center extend its impact into new areas of study and engagement, addressing key issues facing families today and in the future.”

- **Elicker** is an associate professor and director of early childhood programs in CDFS. He’s currently working on a project to evaluate Paths to QUALITY, Indiana’s new child-care quality rating system, funded by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.

- **Franks** is the newest member of the family studies program in CDFS. Her teaching and research interests involve aging families and health. She investigates health lifestyles and marital interactions. The National Institute on Aging funds her current work.

- **Shields** focuses his research on families coping with medical illness and healthcare-provider communication. He is currently funded by the National Cancer Institute to study physician communication with cancer patients.
Accomplishments abound for faculty partners. Below is a sampling of the honors bestowed upon partners over the last year. The center is proud to be affiliated with such distinguished individuals.

CFF faculty partner Ximena Arriaga was one of six exceptional teachers honored with the Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award in Memory of Charles B. Murphy. The Murphy, the University’s highest undergraduate teaching honor, is given annually in recognition of outstanding teaching in all phases of undergraduate instruction at the Purdue-West Lafayette campus.

Patrice Buzzanell, professor in the Department of Communication and CFF faculty partner, was recently elected president of the International Communication Association, an organization with more than 4,000 members in 76 countries. As a CFF faculty partner, Buzzanell has served on the selection committee for the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research.

JoAnn Miller, a sociology professor and CFF faculty partner, serves as the academic partner for the Downtown Lafayette Weed and Seed initiative.

Weed and Seed is a community-based approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization that creates an environment for agencies to work together in weeding out local crime and planting seeds for crime prevention and neighborhood restoration.
The Center for Families offers fellowships to support Purdue University graduate students and faculty as they generate new insights and tools that can help families. In 2007, three fellowships were awarded to further research for the center.

Gwen Parks, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, received the Van Scoyoc Fellowship for her project, “When Pink Ribbons Bind: The Effect of Breast Cancer on Mother-Daughter Relationships.” Her research interests focus on family and the life course.

The Center for Families awarded another Van Scoyoc Fellowship to Kyong-Ah Kwon, a doctoral student in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue. Kwon plans to use the financial support during her dissertation project, “Coparenting, Parenting, and Socio-Emotional Development in Toddlers,” which will highlight the importance of supportive coparenting and positive parenting.

The Kontos Faculty Fellowship went to Jennifer Dobbs, an assistant professor of developmental studies in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies. Dobbs will use the funds to evaluate “Ready to Read,” a randomized controlled trial of a volunteer shared-reading program in preschools.
While high school drop out rates are lower in the Midwest than they are in other areas of the country, Indiana still lags in on-time high school graduation. Twenty-seven percent of Indiana high school students do not complete the necessary courses to graduate in four years.

On November 19, 2007, the 10th Family Impact Seminar in a continuing series to address family issues convened to discuss how to meet the challenges of moving youth into the workforce. In order to meet these challenges, researchers first looked at the factors surrounding why students dropped out of school and how to remedy the reasons students cited. The four approaches to addressing this issue that have been widely tested are: adding services to the standard curriculum, whole-school reform, alternative schools, and second-chance approaches — intervening after dropout. What many researchers found is that early intervention can be more cost effective than becoming involved later on.

Seminars such as this one provide state-of-the-art research on current family issues for state legislators and their aides, governor’s office staff, state agency representatives, educators, and service providers. The seminars provide objective, non-partisan information on current issues and do not lobby for particular policies. Seminar participants discuss policy options and identify common ground where it exists. Evaluations of seminars have shown positive outcomes such as increased knowledge of the topic by policymakers and the development of policy to address the issues raised by the seminar.
In communities across the country, men and women in the National Guard and Reserves are leaving behind families, friends, and careers as they are called for active duty. Due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, many of these part-time service members are facing repeated deployments.

In October 2007, the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI), an initiative of the Center for Families, received an $8.9 million grant from the Lilly Endowment to expand its study of military members during active duty and as they reintegrate into civilian life after deployment. The gift to MFRI, the only gift of its kind in the country, is designed to help military families better adapt to the challenges of repeated deployments and the stresses of raising and connecting with their children during wartime.

About $1.5 million of the grant will create a permanent home for the institute on the Purdue campus. Formerly housed in rented space, the institute will share quarters with the Department of Child Development and Family Studies in the new $11.5 million Bill and Sally Hanley Hall, which will be built beside Fowler House just west of the corner of State Street and Martin Jischke Drive. In the new space, 3,000-square-feet will be dedicated to the Military Family Research Institute.
Jeremy Reynolds and Lydia Aletraris of the University of Georgia received the 2007 Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research on May 21, 2008, at the WorldatWork Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The award is presented at a large ceremony of corporate practitioners and focuses on bringing the research directly to the people who shape work environments around the country.

Reynolds, an assistant professor of sociology, and Aletraris, a sociology doctoral student, won this year’s award for their article “Pursuing Preferences: The Creation and Resolution of Work Hour Mismatches.” The American Sociological Review published it in 2006.

More than 70 journal articles were nominated by judges for this year’s competition. Summaries of the top 20 articles are published in Best of the Best, a publication that allows work-life practitioners to quickly become familiar with the best scientific research available.

This international award is given to the authors who publish the best work-family research article during a calendar year. It raises awareness of high-quality work-family research among the scholar, consultant, and practitioner communities. No external nominations are accepted; instead, a committee of 35 scholars from eight countries generates a list of candidates by scrutinizing over 2,500 articles published in a number of scientific journals.
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