Greetings IEDP Friends and Colleagues,

Much has been afoot at the GSE hub. Of course, there is the typical daily buzz of researching, the necessity of coffee sipping, and the mounds of reading. But there is much more than what meets the eye on a day-to-day glance.

November hosted two special lectures in the IEDP series. Penn and IEDP professor, Dr. Michelle Neumann, shared her work on early childhood education within the World Bank. Executive Director of Azim Premji Foundation in Bangalore, India, Dileep Ranjekar, also shared his expertise with IEDP in a talk about education and educational reform in India. The invitation for attendance to future IEDP lectures remains open to you with hopes that you will share in these marvelous learning opportunities.

Amidst the happenings and conferences below, the newsletter will introduce research specialist, Dr. Rebecca Maynard, this month’s faculty spotlight interview. And be sure to enjoy the interview with alumna Leydy Abreu. If you fancy tweeting and other networking, please connect with IEDP through all of our social media. Cheers!

Your humble editors,
Kara Doriani, Adam Saks, and special guest editor Mia Sasaki

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IEDPers Maha Laziri and Amy Saul celebrated their birthdays with some Moroccan culture

Faculty Spotlight

This month we introduce Dr. Rebecca Maynard, University Trustee Professor of Education and Social Policy. A leading expert in the research and design of randomized controlled trials in the areas of education, health, and social policy, Dr. Maynard has developed and applied methods for program evaluations around the world. Dr. Maynard was trained as an economist, was the Senior Vice President at Mathematica Policy Research, and recently returned to teaching after a two-year leave as Commissioner of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) at the Institute of Education Sciences. Dr. Maynard developed and directs the Interdisciplinary Pre-Doctoral Training Program in Educational Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. The international aspect of her work began as cross-national comparative research. When evaluating health education programs in the United States, she found issues of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS were applicable to international settings in Africa and parts of Asia. Similarly, when working on vocational education in the US and elsewhere, Dr. Maynard found that some European countries, like Germany and Switzerland, had models that were highly relevant to education needs in contexts such as China.

Research Perspective

Dr. Maynard believes that evaluation research is as much an art as a science: "You need to think about how you can get the most relevant, reliable information to inform the problem-and the designs of such evaluations are not found in textbooks. There's an art to doing evaluation; it's not formulaic," she said.

She cited research design as the single most fundamental aspect of any project. When designing a research study, one must be clear about what questions are being asked and what kind of data gathering strategy will be most effective in mapping to those questions. She also stressed that analysis must yield answers which the researcher can stand behind. "I should not be doing research to prove a point...it should be in order to answer a question objectively," she stated. One should be willing to change his/her beliefs based on what is discovered, even if a different outcome was expected or desired. When asked to give advice on how to become a good researcher, Dr. Maynard said, "You need to commit to looking for truth in research."
In addition, ethical considerations are always present when a researcher invites participants into the study. "I emphasize give-back," Dr. Maynard said. Participants should believe that something in the study will positively impact them. In addition, including program partners on the team is an important aspect of the process.

For students or young professionals who are not pursuing research as a career, Dr. Maynard suggests you should not be "afraid to ask questions of people who have more experience than you do." Second, no matter what profession you seek, you should challenge yourself to identify the issues that could be problematic and consider what additional information you need. A useful skill for managers, researchers, or front-line service deliverers.

**Current Work**

Dr. Maynard teaches Program and Policy Evaluation (591), the Economics of Education (601), and Research Synthesis Methods (990) at Penn. In Program and Policy Education, students survey different modes of research, from basic statistics to qualitative study. The Economics of Education addresses contemporary issues of education from an economic perspective, focusing on principles of scarcity and rational decision-making. And, students in the Research Synthesis Methods course actually conduct a systematic review following the Campbell Collaboration systematic review guidelines.

Her current research focuses on online and blended instruction for students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields and on an evaluation of a vocational training and internship model for employment preparation of disadvantaged young adults. Dr. Maynard is part of a Penn/GSE team working with a group in India dedicated to improving their model for training young males in the countryside for high demand jobs in emerging markets.

**IEDP Out and About**

IEDPers Kara Doriani and Jessica Fan enjoyed a hike in Valley Forge (photo by David Reinersmann)
I graduated from IEDP in August 2012. As part of my internship, I traveled to Santiago, Chile to assist the Regional Education Program Coordinator at the UNESCO-OREALC in managing program activities in Latin America. At OREALC I engaged in a range of activities including: updating work plans and extra-budgetary project reports; translating OREALC's Framework of Action for its website; and compiling information on possible donors for future projects. One of my major contributions entailed conducting research to support the upcoming development of a financial literacy program for students.

Today I work at Teach For All, which partners with independent social enterprises around the world to implement the Teach For America model to their individual contexts. I am based out of New York City and currently support programs in six Latin American countries. My daily work includes a combination of administrative and projects work-including finance/budget management, diverse special projects, helping local staff access network resources and data, and working with our Senior Director on our regional strategy. Through this work I have seen the great benefits of sharing best practices to improve the quality of education globally.

My experience in IEDP certainly influenced my career choices and the values I hold towards my work. IEDP showed me how imperative it is to think critically about development work and how important contextual needs, values, and desires are in shaping our own efforts as international development workers. Around this time two years ago I was reconsidering whether I should pursue a career in international development; I was scared I would help replicate some of the hindrances this field has caused to different communities. But having the opportunity to engage with such an intelligent, analytical, and humble cohort made me believe that IEDPers can truly have an impact on educational inequity and low educational quality around the world. I am truly grateful to have lived the IEDP experience and to have the capacity to apply that learning every day.