Symposium on Equity and Innovation in Education

DATE: Wednesday, October 25, 2017

PLACE: 1 Dupont Circle, NW
        Washington D.C. 20036

TIME: 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Thank you all for joining us! ACTNext and the ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning have convened today’s symposium to discuss the serious challenges we face, but also the formidable strengths we possess, when it comes to innovation and meeting the needs of our underserved learners.

Achieving equity in the approach to innovation in education has never been more important than right now. Educational technologies are moving forward at break-neck speed and the pace is only accelerating. On one hand, this swiftness in assessment and technological innovation provides us with unprecedented means to reach a global community of learners and help them succeed in a workplace and scholastic landscape, the focus of which is shifting to the importance of developing and assessing 21st century skills. On the other hand, there is a possibility that innovation will outpace those with unequal or unreliable access to these technologies and they will be left behind more quickly and in greater numbers; a fact reflected in the U.S. Department of Education - Office of Educational Technology’s decision to update the National Education Technology Plan on a yearly basis, rather than the previous five-year cycle. That change alone highlights the pressures students, educators, and the developers of educational and assessment technologies are under: all stakeholders will be expected to do more, in less time, with greater accuracy.

It is imperative that we take a clear-eyed view of the challenges we face as innovators, educators, policy makers, and as a society in addressing the needs of those most at risk. We are at an historical precipice; 10 years ago, no one knew what a “smart” phone was or what an “app” did. Where will we be 10 years from today? Where will those without equal access to the technological revolution already underway find themselves? We have the means to influence that future, and therefore the responsibility to shape it to our vision. Equity in learning must not fall into the realm of privilege; it must rise above it. Equity must remain a central topic of conversation as we address the innovations we are pursuing and methods with which we pursue them.

The panelists gathered here today have broad expertise across multiple domains and are representative of the some of the best and most creative efforts underway in meeting the needs of the underserved. The purpose of this symposium is to raise awareness and keep the spotlight on the role of equity in innovation and education. The goal of this symposium is to not only extend the dialogue regarding underserved learners and innovation, but to extend a hand across the digital divide and help them leap over it.

Sincerely,
Alina A. von Davier, PhD Jim Larimore
Vice President, ACTNext Chief Officer, ACT Center for Equity in Learning
The Agenda
Wednesday | Oct 25

8:30  Networking and Coffee

9:00  Equity and Innovation: A Way Forward For Inclusion (Opening Remarks)
      Jim Larimore
      Alina A. von Davier

9:05  Equity and Diversity
      Jordana Barton
      Greg Ratliff
      Maria Vasquez

10:05 Educational Technology, AI, and Equity
      James W. Pellegrino
      Burr Settles
      Calvin Shum
      Alina A. von Davier

11:05 Break

11:15 Approaches to Address Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation
      Esther Care
      Heather Hiles
      Jim Larimore
      Alina A. von Davier

12:15 Wrap Up and Next Steps

12:30 Adjourn
The Panels
9:05 Equity and Diversity
Jordana Barton  Greg Ratliff  Maria Vasquez
This panel will examine the needs and challenges to successful technology adoption and use within education.

10:05 Educational Technology, AI, and Equity
James W. Pellegrino  Burr Settles  Calvin Shum  Alina A. von Davier
This panel will focus on ways that technology and science improve educational outcomes.

11:15 Approach to Address Diversity, Inclusion, and Innovation
Esther Care  Heather Hiles  Jim Larimore  Alina A. von Davier
The panelists will synthesize and discuss the information shared in the first two panels and examine ways to ensure quality educational experiences through the use of technology.
Jordana Barton  
Senior Community Development Advisor, San Antonio Branch  
Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas  

Jordana Barton is senior advisor in community development for the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, San Antonio Branch. Prior to working with the Federal Reserve, Barton served as vice president for community development banking, Capital One Bank. Barton holds an MPA from Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Esther Care  
Senior Fellow - Global Economy and Development, Center for Universal Education - The Brookings Institution  

Dr. Care works to promote effective assessment practices that inform both policy and classroom practice. She has worked primarily in the Asia Pacific with a focus on providing evidence-based advice to ministries of education implementing or planning to implement major education reform. Her work is characterized by consideration of the interactions between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy. With the increasing focus globally on the need to promote generic skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration, she has worked with ministries of education to identify how to incorporate these skills into the educational process.

Dr. Care is a director of the Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in the Philippines), which conducts large and small-scale research in the Philippines to inform that country’s major K-12 education reform. This work emphasizes the dependencies across curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, and is designed to provide quick feedback to the government on the roll-out of the reforms. Dr. Care has had long-term working relationships with Australian education providers in early literacy development, and working with teachers to improve skills in data interpretation and use to drive student learning. Resulting from her research as chief investigator on several Australian Research Council grants, she has published in journals and books spanning vocational and educational psychology through to education assessment and policy, with most recently an emphasis on the assessment of 21st century skills.

She was the international research coordinator for the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S) project, which was supported by Cisco, Microsoft and Intel, and by the governments of Australia, Finland, Portugal, Singapore, UK
and the USA. This project, with multiple international government, commercial and academic partners, showcased innovative approaches to the assessment of complex skill sets, with implications for student learning, teacher pedagogy, and government policy.

As the stimulus for developing student skills beyond traditional academic subjects increases, Dr. Care’s work in the assessment and teaching of 21st century skills contributes technical and policy expertise for both developed and developing countries as they confront the challenge of educating their youth to navigate the 21st century world of work.

Heather Hiles
Deputy Director, Solutions for Post-Secondary Success
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Heather Hiles is a Deputy Director for Postsecondary Success at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Heather manages a team focused on higher education models and solutions.

Prior to joining the foundation, Heather was founder and CEO of Pathbrite, the world’s leading Portfolio Learning Platform. Before founding Pathbrite, Heather built a solid career in education, workforce development, and finance spanning more than 20 years. A successful serial entrepreneur, her leadership experience includes positions as a founder or leader of several private and public sector organizations, including: Commissioner for the San Francisco Unified School District; Executive Director of Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2); co-founder of EARN; and CEO of SFWorks, a nonprofit that transitions women from welfare into career.

Heather received her B.A. from University of California at Berkeley in Economic Development and Ethnic Studies and holds an MBA from Yale University, with a concentration in Finance and Strategic Planning. She has served on the boards of Leadership Public Schools, Alonzo King Lines Ballet, AIDS Legal Referral Panel, and Communities United Against Violence (CUAV).

Jim Larimore
ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning

Jim Larimore is Chief Officer for the Center for Equity in Learning at ACT, where he leads ACT’s strategy to engage students, families, educators and communities to promote equity in learning and success. Jim’s team develops programs, research
and partnerships to improve college and career readiness for all students. Jim’s career in higher education focused on college access and student success. He served as deputy director for student success at the Gates Foundation, and as a student affairs leader at campuses including Stanford, Dartmouth, Swarthmore and NYU Abu Dhabi.

Jim served on the Advisory Council for the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, and now serves on the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions Advisory Council and the International Student Affairs Advisory Board for the Universidad de Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico.

James W. Pellegrino
Distinguished Professor and Co-director of the Learning Sciences Research Institute - University of Illinois at Chicago

James W. Pellegrino is Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor and Co-director of the Learning Sciences Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research and development interests focus on children’s and adult’s thinking and learning and the implications of cognitive research and theory for assessment and instructional practice. He has published over 300 books, chapters and articles in the areas of cognition, instruction and assessment. His research is funded by the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Education Sciences, and private foundations. He has served on several National Academy of Sciences study committees, including chair of the Study Committee for the Evaluation of the National and State Assessments of Educational Progress, co-chair of the Committee on Learning Research and Educational Practice, and co-chair of the Committee on the Foundations of Assessment which issued the report Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment. Most recently he served as a member of the Committee on Science Learning: Games, Simulations and Education, as a member of the Committee on a Conceptual Framework for New Science Education Standards, as chair of the Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, and co-chair of the Committee on Developing Assessments of Science Proficiency in K-12. He is a past member of the Board on Testing and Assessment of the National Research Council, a lifetime Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, a lifetime member of the National Academy of Education and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
Greg Ratliff
Vice President for Philanthropic Partnerships and Strategic Communications - ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning

Greg Ratliff joined the ACT Center for Equity in Learning in September 2017 as the vice president for philanthropic partnerships and strategic communications. Greg worked at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation from 2007 to 2017 where he was responsible for developing strategies to increase the engagement of low-income young adults in postsecondary education. His program development and investment activities focused on restructuring financial aid to create incentives for college completion and designing information choice architecture to help students make better decisions. At Gates, Greg led the Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success initiative that built better support systems to guide, advise and mentor students along their path to college success. Greg also served on the foundation’s Impact Investing Committee that reviews potential investments across program areas.

Prior to joining the foundation, Greg was a co-founder of GPS Capital Partners, a consulting practice focused on strategic planning and development of scalable business models that blend financial and social returns. Greg also spent ten years at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation where he directed and managed a $15 million grant program and a $190 million Impact Investing portfolio of program-related investments. During his tenure, both ventures broke new ground for MacArthur in its effort to create opportunity for low-income populations. Greg holds a BA from UCLA and earned his MBA from Northeastern University, while also completing graduate work in Urban Studies at MIT.

Burr Settles
Staff Scientist & Engineer - Duolingo

Burr Settles leads the research group at Duolingo, an award-winning website and mobile app offering free language education for the world. He also runs FAWM.ORG, a global annual songwriting experiment. He is the author of Active Learning — an introductory text on machine learning algorithms that are adaptive, curious, and exploratory (if you will). His research has been published in NIPS, ICML, AAAI, ACL, EMNLP, NAACL-HLT, and CHI, and has been covered by The New York Times, Slate, Forbes, and the BBC among others. In past lives, he was a postdoc at Carnegie Mellon and earned a PhD from UW-Madison. Burr currently lives in Pittsburgh, where he gets around by bike and plays guitar in the pop band delicious pastries.
Calvin Shum
Chief Executive Officer - Lovoco

Calvin Shum, CEO, leads asset management growth and manages strategic implementations. He completed his BBA in International Business and Marketing at Temple University and certification in Foreign Languages and International Economics at Tsinghua University. And prior to starting Lovoco, Calvin has worked with Tesla, LA Fitness, Verizon, Philadelphia International Airport, and Uber. He gained over 12 years in entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and business development.

Maria Vasquez
Program Director for Strategic Partnerships - ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning

Maria Vasquez is the Program Director for Strategic Partnerships at ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning. In her role, Maria works with new and existing partnerships to fulfill ACT’s mission of helping people achieve education and workplace success. Maria brings a history of strong partnerships with schools, businesses, and state education leaders to her position. Prior to joining ACT, Maria developed the international market for Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). Maria also served as Head of Strategic Initiatives at Promethean Inc. where she provided education advocacy for US and international education organizations and was instrumental in developing their research agenda. Additionally, Maria served in strategic capacities at Carnegie Learning and Apple Computer’s education technology Initiatives.

Maria is the 2008 recipient of The National Achiever Award given by the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE). Maria currently serves on the board of the Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Teacher Network (ITEN). Maria is a graduate from The University of Texas.

Alina A. von Davier
Vice President - ACTNext

Alina von Davier is the Vice President of the ACT, Inc. Research, Development, and Business Innovation Division, ACTNext, as well as an Adjunct Professor at Fordham University. She earned her PhD in mathematics from the Otto von Guericke
University of Magdeburg, Germany, and her MS in mathematics from the University of Bucharest, Romania. At ACT, von Davier and her team of experts are responsible for developing prototypes of research-based solutions and creating a research agenda to support the next generation for learning and assessment systems (LAS). She pioneers the development and application of computational psychometrics and conducts research on blending machine learning algorithms with the psychometric theory.

Prior to her employment with ACT, von Davier was a Senior Research Director at Educational Testing Service (ETS) where she led the Computational Psychometrics Research Center. Previously, she led the Center for Psychometrics for International Tests, where she managed a large group of psychometricians, and was responsible for both the psychometrics in support of international tests, TOEFL® and TOEIC®, and the scores reported to millions of test takers annually. Two of her volumes, a co-edited volume on Computerized Multistage Testing, and an edited volume on test equating, Statistical Models for Test Equating, Scaling, and Linking, were selected, respectively, as the 2016 and 2013 winners of the Division D Significant Contribution to Educational Measurement and Research Methodology award at AERA. In addition, she wrote or co-edited five other books and volumes on statistic and psychometric topics.

Her current research interests involve developing and adapting methodologies in support of virtual and collaborative assessments. Machine learning and data mining techniques, Bayesian inference methods, and stochastic processes are the key set of tools employed in her current research. She serves as an Associate Editor for Psychometrika and the Journal of Educational Measurement. Prior to joining ETS, she worked in Germany at the Universities of Trier, Magdeburg, Kiel, and Jena, and at the ZUMA in Mannheim, and in Romania, at the Institute of Psychology of the Romanian Academy.