Welcome to the TESE Special Issue on the Study of Special Education Leadership Personnel

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Stemming from concerns about a possible shortage of special education faculty, a few small, disconnected studies about the supply and demand of special education leadership personnel were conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. A few of these studies examined faculty search data, others looked at career decisions of doctoral graduates and students enrolled in doctoral programs. Because of data collection difficulties and limited resources, most of these studies focused only on doctoral programs that were included in the membership of the Higher Education Consortium of Special Education (HECSE). In 1999, OSEP funded the first comprehensive study in this area: The Study of Special Education Leadership Personnel. The study examined four areas within the supply/demand construct: special education faculty searches, doctoral training programs in special education, graduates from doctoral training programs, and students enrolled in special education doctoral programs.

Articles in this special issue of Teacher Education in Special Education (TESE) describe the results of each component of The Study of Special Education Leadership Personnel. In the first article, Paul Sindelar and Mike Rosenberg describe their study of faculty searches within special education programs. In the second article, Deborah Deutsch Smith, Georgine M. Pion, Naomi C. Tyler, and Bob Gilmore explain the component of The Study of Special Education Leadership Personnel that entailed the identification and analysis of all special education doctoral programs in the nation. Georgine Pion, Deb Smith, and Naomi Tyler then discuss the findings of their survey of 1,090 special education doctoral graduates. Naomi Tyler, Deb Smith, and Georgine Pion discuss the fourth and final component of the Leadership study: characteristics of 1,267 students in doctoral programs and their career aspirations. Mike Hardman and Jane West conclude this special issue with an analysis of federal funding for doctoral programs, coupled with characteristics of the current generation of college recruits (generation X and generation Y-echo boomers), which provides interesting insights to support their suggestions for how to increase the pool of possible leadership personnel.

Leadership personnel are critical to special education teacher preparation efforts as well as to the knowledge generation necessary to enhance the educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Yet the results from the Leadership study indicate some worrisome trends. Doctoral graduates are sorely needed to fill faculty positions. Chairpersons of faculty searches report decreased numbers of applicants, many of whom they consider unqualified. Twenty-seven percent of all faculty searches failed. Yet the pipeline that produces doctoral graduates is experiencing a de-
crease in numbers. The nation's doctoral programs are producing 30% fewer graduates than two decades ago, and nearly half of those do not take faculty positions. Special education doctoral graduates tend to be older than graduates in other fields and less mobile. Relocation is a significant factor in both students' selection of doctoral programs and their subsequent career decisions. Diminished selectivity should be a concern: Most doctoral students apply to only one program, and most programs accept the majority of their applicants.

The articles included in this special issue describe a chronic, significant, and worsening shortage of special education faculty, a complicated problem requiring complex and comprehensive solutions. One purpose of this special issue is to initiate informed conversations that focus on ways to increase the nation's capacity to achieve a balance in the supply and demand of leadership personnel. We look forward to the discussions that we hope this study will initiate.

Without the contributions of many professionals, the research described in this report could not have been accomplished. Bob Gilmore persistently supported the idea that the study was important and should be funded, and participated as a full member of the research team from the project's inception to its conclusion. We also wish to extend our gratitude to Lou Danielson, Helen Thornton, Susan Marie Marsh, and Bonnie Jones from the OSEP team. The Department Chairpersons, Doctoral Program Coordinators, and the support staff who work at the nation's special education doctoral programs provided us with information about their programs, current doctoral students, and graduates. Karl Murray solicited assistance from each state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development committee, which helped identify the doctoral programs in special education in the country. Richard Mainzer of the Council for Exceptional Children, along with Al Pascal and Lynn Boyer of the Professions Clearinghouse, went beyond the "call of duty" to help make these results meaningful to broad audiences. And, finally, we thank and acknowledge those scholars on the Leadership Research Study Team. These members played critical and integral roles throughout the study. They brought to the effort vast experience gained from research they each had conducted previously. They contributed unselfishly in diverse and important ways: helping with the conceptualization of the study, validating the questionnaires, assisting with analyzing results, unraveling the implications, and actively participating with dissemination efforts. Their contributions were consistent and invaluable.

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- Candy Bos, University of Texas–Austin
- Vivian Correa, University of Florida
- Bob Gilmore, US Dept. of ED, Office of Special Education Programs
- Mark Goor, George Mason University
- Michael Hardman, University of Utah
- Susan-Marie Marsh, US Dept. of ED
- Herb Rieth, University of Texas–Austin
- Chuck Salzberg, Utah State University
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