

The National Center for Leadership in Visual Impairment: A Model for Consideration in Other Countries

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There is a significant shortage in the U. S. of individuals with doctoral degrees to:

- Take positions of leadership that are needed to prepare personnel to teach individuals who are blind or visually impaired;
- Direct special schools and public school programs at the state and local level for infants, children and youth who are blind or visually impaired:
- Conduct quality and much needed research; and
- Advocate and develop policy at local, state and national levels of influence

In the past decade the U. S, has only prepared an average 4 individuals annually at the doctoral level for such leadership positions. Rather than each of 14 Universities individually soliciting government funds to support one or two students as they have done in the past, and having one or no program supported, the Pennsylvania College of Optometry developed the concept of the NCLVI.

The NCLVI is a consortium of all 14 Universities in the US that presently have the capability of providing doctoral programs with an emphasis in blindness and visual impairment, and a group of Public Advisors that represent 15 national organizations of and for the blind and others related to higher and state education programs. The funding obtained from the US Department of education will fund 4 years of full-time tuition for 21 NCLVI Fellows along with a modest living stipend.

In addition to studying the curriculum offered at one of the university of their choice within the consortium a special added-value enrichment program is required. The enrichment program is being designed by the University Consortium with input from the Public Advisors. The 21 students will join together as a cohort through listservs, on-line study, attendance at national conferences and special seminars designed for them. This Collaborative model can be applied to other levels of personnel preparation to form national cohorts. For more information on the NCLVI visit www.pco.edu/nclvi.htm.

Goal, Mission and Objectives

The goal of NCLVI is to develop a collaborative leadership-training program in education of students with visual impairments as a way to address the critical shortage of leadership personnel in this field. In its first face-to face meeting in December of 2004 the NCLVI University Consortium refined this goal into its mission statement:

“To increase, through specialized doctoral training, the number of quality leadership personnel competent in the areas of research, public policy, advocacy, administration, and higher education to improve services for individuals with visual impairments from birth through age 21.”

The objectives of NCLVI are to:

1. **Develop a collaborative model** for producing leadership personnel in special education with an emphasis on VI through the establishment of a national consortium of Carnegie doctoral/research-intensive and doctoral research-extensive institutions.
2. Facilitate the preparation of leadership personnel in education of students with visual impairments **to increase the numbers of doctoral graduates available for positions in one or more areas of emphasis, such as higher education teaching and research, public policy, administration at national state and/or local levels, curriculum development and supervision and/or general research.** In particular, prepare sufficient leadership personnel to meet the needs of university personnel preparation programs.
3. **Enhance the training of leadership personnel by the creation of enrichment activities** such as special topic seminars, special meetings, specialized lectures, or listserv discussions developed for the cohort of doctoral students.
4. **Conduct an evaluation of the collaboration** --both outcomes and process --that will provide formative and summative data to assist in improving the project, and detailed information about the development of the collaborative model for replication purposes.

- Disseminate information about the model, including evaluative findings, for possible replication in other areas of leadership training.

Key Personnel

Pennsylvania College of Optometry. The NCLVI Staff at Pennsylvania College of Optometry includes two Co-Directors, a Project Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant, and a Technology Manager.

University Consortium. Each of the 14 universities participating in the NCLVI Consortium is represented by a faculty member from that institution. Table I-1 lists the NCLVI Consortium universities and their representatives.

Table I-1

Key Personnel: NCLVI University Consortium

Consortium University	Representative for NCLVI
California State University	Diane Fazzi, Ph. D. & Sharon Sacks, Ph.D.
Florida State University	Sandra Lewis, Ed.D.
Northern Illinois University	Gaylen Kapperman, Ed.D.
Ohio State University	Peter Paul, Ph.D.
San Francisco State University	Amanda Hall Lueck, Ph.D.
Teachers College, Columbia University	Virginia Stolarski, Ed.D.
Texas Tech University at Lubbock	Nora Griffin-Shirley, Ph.D.
University of Arizona	Jane Erin, Ph.D.
University of Louisville	William Penrod, Ed.D.
University of Northern Colorado	Kay Ferrell, Ph.D.
University of Pittsburgh	George Zimmerman, Ph.D.

University of Utah	Jan Day, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University	Robert Wall, Ph.D.
Vanderbilt University	Anne Corn, Ed.D.

The role of University Consortium members is to

- Disseminate information about the project
- Recruit potential Fellows
- Participate in the doctoral student application process at their respective universities
- Direct doctoral student/Fellow’s course of study at their host institution
- Participate in on-going communications through listserv and discussion boards used to develop NCLVI policies, practices, stipend and scholarship formulas, enrichment activities, and project evaluations
- Convene face-to-face annually
- Vote on matters affecting the development, policies, and operations of the Consortium
- Serve on NCLVI subcommittees
- Participate in the development and implementation of NCLVI recruitment plan, enrichment program, and project evaluation
- Contribute to and participate in enrichment activities
- Facilitate Fellows’ participation in NCLVI enrichment and evaluation programs
- Mentor faculty members at new Consortium Universities
- Participate in evaluation of NCLVI activities.

In addition to the role University Consortium members fill individually and as a group, there are currently eleven NCLVI University Consortium committees.

There is a **Steering Committee** for each year which consists of six individuals elected by the Consortium as a whole to represent the wishes of the group when a decision needs to be made quickly and when communication with the entire Consortium is not possible. This committee changes annually. Representatives are nominated and then voted on. Authority for decision-making by this group was granted by the Consortium at its first face-to-face meeting.

The NCLVI **Application Form Committee** developed the fellowship application form.

There have been two **Application Review Committees** who ranked and selected NCLVI Fellows for the first and second cohorts.

There are four **Enrichment Committees**: Public Policy 2004-05, Research 2005-06, Higher Education 2006-07, and Public Policy 2007-08 which focus on the enrichment component of the project.

There is also a **Portfolio Committee** to help guide the fellows in the preparation of their annual portfolio submissions and an **Evaluation Committee** to assist in all evaluation effort.

Public Advisory Council (PAC). Fifteen individuals representing national organizations, institutions, or projects participate as members of the NCLVI Public Advisory Council. See Table I-2

Table I-2

Key Personnel: NCLVI Public Advisory Council

Organization	Representative for NCLVI
American Council of the Blind (ACB)	Melanie Brunson, Executive Director
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)	Susan Spungin, Vice President, International Programs and Special Projects
American Printing House for the Blind (APH)	Bob Brasher, Vice President, Advisory Services and Research
Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)	Greg Goodrich, Executive Director
Association of State Education Consultants for the Visually Impaired	Karen Blankenship, Representative and Iowa State Vision Consultant
Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB)	William Daugherty, President and Superintendent, Kansas State School for the Blind
Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual	Deborah Hatton, Principal Investigator

Impairments

Gallaudet University	Tom Jones, Professor, Department of Education
Higher Education Consortium in Special Education (HECSE)	Herbert Reith, President and Professor, University of Texas at Austin
National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI)	Mary Zabelski, President and Parent
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE)	Bill East, Executive Director
National Center on Low-Incidence Disabilities (NCLID)	Kay Ferrell, Project Director
National Council of Private Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCPABVI)	Chris Tompkins, Executive Director Foundation for Blind Children
National Federation of the Blind (NFB)	Betsy Zaborowski, Executive Director, Jernigan Research Institute
National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC)	Barbara Cheadle, President and Parent

The role of NCLVI Public Advisors is to

- Serve as entry points into greater community of practice in blindness and visual impairment
- Participate in all communication related to the NCLVI PAC
- Convene face-to-face at least twice during project
- Host PAC meetings and face-to-face meetings of Fellows
- Communicate to constituencies about NCLVI project
- Participate in development of recruitment, enrichment, and evaluation components of NCLVI
- Recruit potential Fellows
- Assist in the development, facilitation and implementation of enrichment activities
- Host Fellows for short-term residencies and/or internships

- Participate in evaluation of NCLVI activities
- Participate in continuous revision of objectives and activities of NCLVI
- Participate as agents of change in the field of blindness and visual impairment
- Link the blindness and visual impairment community of practice to organizations and agencies in other disability areas.

Fellows. Fourteen scholars became NCLVI Fellows beginning in academic year 2005-2006 and another seven beginning in academic year 2006-07. This concludes recruitment and fills all the available fellowships. See Table I-3

Table I-3 Key Personnel: NCLVI Fellows (2005 Cohort *and 2006 Cohort*)

Fellow	Home State	Consortium University
Jennifer Arnold	Georgia	Florida State University
Shawn Barnard	Oregon	University of Northern Colorado
Donna Brostek	Michigan	University of Pittsburgh or University of Louisville
Julie Durando	Florida	University of Northern Colorado
Stacy Haack	Illinois	Northern Illinois University
Beth Harris	Georgia	University of Arizona
Lori Johnson	Louisville	University of Louisville
Holly Lawson	Arizona	University of Arizona
Heather McDonough	Tennessee	Vanderbilt University
Derrick Smith	Alabama	Texas Tech University
Tilly Steele	Georgia	Florida State University
Eric Sticken	North Carolina	University of Arizona
Sharon Summers	Texas	Texas Tech University

Tiffany Wild	Ohio	Ohio State University
Frances D'Andrea	Mary Georgia	University of Pittsburgh
Amy Freeland	Michigan	Western Michigan University
Eric Grimmett	Texas	Texas Tech University
Martin Monson	Oregon	University of North Colorado
Amy Parker	New York	Texas Tech University
Rebecca Price	Pennsylvania	University of Pittsburgh
Tessa Wright	Tennessee	Vanderbilt University

The role of NCLVI Fellows is to

- Proceed fulltime through the doctoral program at their University Consortium host institution and complete their degree within four years
- Participate in the community of practice in field of blindness and visual impairment
- Receive full tuition funding and annual living stipend
- Agree to and fulfill OSEP Payback Agreement
- Remain students in good standing at their host institutions
- Travel to two national conferences per year (supported by NCLVI) and participate in an additional day of NCLVI enrichment activities attached to each conference
- Participate in a three-day concentrated enrichment seminar annually
- Participate in all NCLVI enrichment activities, including face-to-face seminars, online discussion boards, monthly topic board, and listservs
- Participate in all evaluation of NCLVI activities
- Participate as agents of change in field of blindness and visual impairment
- Serve as leaders.

Activities and Anticipated Outcomes

Rationale for Proposed/Future Activities

The main goal of NCLVI is to develop a collaborative leadership doctoral training program in education of students with visual impairments as a way to address the critical shortage of leadership personnel in this field. The project has six objectives, each of which is related to the main goal. Each objective has an anticipated outcome or outcomes and supporting activities. The project is on target with the two years of activities. This discussion will analyze the objectives of the project along with the anticipated outcomes for that objective and will indicate the activities that are proposed

for years two through five of the project. The rationale for the Proposed/Future Activities is being presented along with the objectives.

1. Develop a collaborative model for producing leadership personnel in special education with an emphasis on VI through the establishment of a national consortium of Carnegie doctoral/research-intensive and doctoral research-extensive institutions.

Outcome: Establish the National Center for Leadership in Visual Impairment. The collaborative nature of the center has been established, but continued efforts on the part of staff and the individual University Consortium Members as well as the Public Advisors will be required to produce the leaders and develop the model of leadership training.

Projected Activities:

- Utilizing the guiding principles and policy guidelines that have been developed by the University Consortium and PAC for operation of the collaborative
- Maintaining communication vehicles for NCLVI to function
- Convening annual face-to-face meetings of the university consortium to evaluate and discuss progress in meeting goals for leadership personnel
- Convening semi annual teleconference calls with the Public Advisory Council to update them and continue to involve them in the activities of the collaborative
- Convening a joint Consortium/PAC face-to-face meeting in the final year of the project
- Developing the annual contracts for the Fellowships with University Consortium Members
- Working with the collaborative to recruit additional members to the Consortium.

Rationale:

NCLVI is a collaborative effort. Regular open communication and annual meetings facilitate the effort. University Consortium meetings need to be face-to-face to facilitate leadership preparation and overcoming any barriers that may have emerged thus far. PAC does not make decisions for NCLVI but provides input and resources. PAC meetings can be held through teleconference calls during all but the final year of the project when having a joint meeting with the Consortium will help in evaluating the collaborative.

2. Facilitate the preparation of leadership personnel in education of students with visual impairments to increase the numbers of doctoral graduates available for positions in one or more areas of emphasis, such as higher education teaching and research, public policy, administration at national state and/or local levels, curriculum

development and supervision and/or general research. In particular, prepare sufficient leadership personnel to meet the needs of university personnel preparation programs.

Outcomes:

- NCLVI Fellows earn doctoral degrees from their universities.
- NCLVI Fellows seek and secure leadership positions related to their education.

Projected Activities:

- Creating annual contracts
- Distributing funds to the universities
- Maintaining the database of information about fellows
- Tracking Fellows advancement through their programs
- Setting systems in place to track Fellows after graduation for data collection on positions they seek and obtain

Rationale:

Preparing new leadership personnel is at the heart of this project. Facilitating and tracking their preparation is essential for possible replication of the model.

3. Enhance the training of leadership personnel by the creation of enrichment activities such as special topic seminars, special meetings, specialized lectures, or listserv discussions developed for the cohort of doctoral students.

Outcome: The NCLVI Consortium develops and implements a varied and competency based enrichment program for NCLVI Fellows.

Projective Activities:

- Implement enrichment activities following the plans developed by the appropriate Enrichment Committees
- Work with University Consortium Members and PAC to evaluate plans for enrichment activities for each year and to solicit consultants, externships/internships, and other resources
- Evaluate competencies developed, develop syllabi, schedule courses and face-to-face meetings for each year of the program
- Hire consultants for Enrichment Program
- Maintain listserv for Fellows
- Maintain Blackboard Website for Enrichment Program
- Evaluate the program.

Rationale:

The Added-Value Enrichment Program, which is required for the cohorts, is what is unique about the preparation they will receive. It spreads the knowledge and expertise that exist in separate universities to the entire cohort. The competencies that the Blue-Ribbon Panel recommends for leadership training are being extended to the cohort through this Enrichment Program.

4. Conduct an evaluation of the collaboration --both outcomes and process --that will provide formative and summative data to assist in improving the project, and detailed information about the development of the collaborative model for replication purposes.

Outcome: Evaluative measures are applied throughout the project to provide the impetus for continuous revision and improvement.

Projected Activities:

- Administer the Wilder Collaborative Factors Inventory on an annual basis to the University Consortium Members and to the PAC
- Document activities of the collaborative
- Develop additional instruments as needed
- Maintain databases
- Create post degree tracking instruments and activities.

Rationale:

The heart of the project is the collaborative, which is being developed as a model. Collaboration evolves and is not static. Representation of the types of challenges faced and overcome in reaching consensus is key to the success of a collaborative, and examples of successful collaboration need to include those challenges and how they were overcome. Data about Fellows is key for comparison purposes and also for replication of this model and must be part of the evaluation.

5. Disseminate information about the model, including evaluative findings, for possible replication in other areas of leadership training.

Outcome: Information about the model is disseminated to others who may wish to replicate it.

Projected Activities:

- Regular communications to a variety of sources --identified in regular meetings of the consortium and PAC
- Maintain information on website
- Prepare press releases

- Submit required reports
- Publish monograph (year 5)
- Publish peer-reviewed articles (years 3-5)
- Present at appropriate national and international conferences
- Present at OSEP Project Directors' Meeting
- Publications by Consortium members
- Publications by Fellows

Rationale:

For the model to be replicated, information about the model must be disseminated in a manner that will permit others to ask questions in order to assess its relevance to their specific situations. The evaluative findings of the project will assist others in determining if they wish to use the model; other information will assist them in determining how to go about replication.

At the initial meeting with OSEP, which NCLVI Staff and several University Consortium Representatives attended, it was recommended, based upon comments made by reviewers and OSEP staff, that we provide full tuition for all NCLVI Fellows throughout their four years, and that we take the remaining monies and provide a stipend of a minimum of \$20,000 annually (the actual amount to be determined based upon a formula for cost of living depending upon which University the student was attending). Most likely this will mean that there will be some cost savings in the amounts that were designated to fellowships and tuition taken together, which can be accrued to carry forward into year six.

In year six, the second cohort will be in the final year of their Added-Value Enrichment Plan. That year is designated as the time when Fellows will be doing their internships/externships or completing their dissertations. Travel monies can be saved in year five for the first cohort, since it is anticipated that the internship/externship sites will contribute to the costs of travel. During year six there should be no costs for consultants for the enrichment program, but maintenance of the listserv would be required as would maintaining of the databases and tracking of Fellows who would have just graduated. Communication with the University Consortium and with the PAC will be held through teleconference meetings rather than face-to-face, and thus will incur minimal costs. The changes in numbers of Fellows and length of the years of support that have been made to the original proposal require some reworking to ensure that this last year provides Fellows with the same quality program that the first year cohorts received and that the monies available will stretch to cover administrative costs as well as tuition and stipends. This must be done as part of the Collaborative Agreement with OSEP to ensure that the funding will be available for project activities and to ensure a successful outcome of the collaborative effort.

Following a presentation of the overview of the NCLVI project, discussion will be encouraged to explore the potential of using NCLVI as a model for offering advance degrees in other countries through national collaborative efforts. Although the data have not all been collected, or analyzed for NCLVI, it is clear that it is a more economical approach to advance studies. It is a model that encourages collaboration and the development of national cohorts of students who have many vehicles by which to participate with each other as well as parents, consumers, and professionals in the greater community of practice. The first cohort will have Issue Briefs, which they developed as teams and presented to legislative officials in Washington, Dc., published in the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness in a coming issue. Four of the NCLVI Fellows are doing internships in public policy this summer in Washington, D.C., with the American Foundation for the Blind, and a fellow is doing another internship in Washington, D.C. with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Please feel free to contact Dr. Huebner for more information or to discuss possible applications in your country.