



# Incubate Ideas and WATCH THEM GROW

**The new Education and Human Development Incubator (EHDi) is open for business at SSRI-West.**

“Duke is really committed to education and human development,” says Carol Ripple, associate director for education research and engagement at SSRI, who is overseeing many aspects of EHDi. “And this is a strong expression of that commitment.”

SSRI-West is a natural home for EHDi, which will build on SSRI’s strengths in data services, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and educational innovation. “When the administration created this endeavor, they identified the power of leveraging resources at SSRI,” Ripple says. “There’s so much synergy with what we care about here already.”

Provost Peter Lange notes that many faculty members on campus have extensive interest, experience, and expertise in education and human development. “Bringing those folks together through the relationships the incubator can build is a very attractive prospect for us,” he says. “It’s part of our interdisciplinary approach to applying knowledge in the service of society.”

EHDi has three major foci: building a data infrastructure, facilitating interdisciplinary research, and fostering educational innovation. Within those broad categories, EHDi is committed to being responsive to the needs of the Duke community. The future direction of EHDi will in part be determined by who engages as the community grows and what

needs are uncovered in the process.

The first priority of the incubator is creating and maintaining a data infrastructure that facilitates collaboration. Lorrie Schmid, data infrastructure manager for EHDi, is heading up this effort, which will complement and enhance SSRI’s Data Information Services. “Having a person embedded in Data Information Services who’s dedicated to education and human development ensures their needs are being met,” Schmid says.

EHDi supports researchers in planning, implementing, and sharing data-heavy research. In particular, EHDi can build networks for private or sensitive data within SSRI’s Protected Research Data Network (PRDN) that is in development.



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Schmid is developing (with SSRI's web development group) an "EHD data portal," a searchable directory of existing data. "When studies end, it doesn't mean the end of the usefulness of the data," she says. But currently, the only way for a researcher to find that type of data is to start searching from scratch, which is time-consuming and often leads to incomplete results.


The data in the directory will come from local, national, and international sources. Data generated at Duke will be highlighted so researchers can be aware of what their colleagues across campus are doing.

One important way EHDi will facilitate interdisciplinary research is by supporting the Education and Human Development theme of Bass Connections. It is the only one of the five Bass Themes that is not associated with its own Duke Institute or Initiative, at least not until now. Bass Connections launched in the fall of 2013 and teams up professors, graduate students, and undergraduates to work in interdisciplinary groups to address issues of societal importance. In addition to supporting EHD

Bass teams, EHDi will issue a request for proposals in the spring of 2014.

As for promoting educational innovation and engagement, EHDi will foster innovation within SSRI's own education programs as well as across Duke. One project will aim to develop a more modular way of delivering cross-disciplinary tools. Another will develop mechanisms to better analyze and learn from existing data on Duke students—seeding opportunities to foster research using Duke institutional data to reflect on undergraduate education. "Nobody else is really doing that. This is a great model for higher education to reflect on educational practice," says SSRI Director Tom Nechyba.

And EHDi will bring together and support people around the campus who are involved in a wide variety of educational initiatives, from preschool on up, to share and learn from one another. When something is found to work well, EHDi hopes to spread the word and multiply the impact.

With EHDi, Ripple says, "We can have a broader impact by facilitating work across an entire community of researchers at Duke." 



Carol Ripple



Lorrie Schmid