

## Changes, new opportunities as KUCRL looks to future

As the Center for Research on Learning completes its 36<sup>th</sup> year, amid numerous changes in the education field and at the Center itself, we have been grappling with two very important guiding questions as we look to the future. Don Deshler addressed each question—about the Center and about the SIM Professional Development Network—during the 2014 International SIM Conference. His comments are summarized below.

### **HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION THE CENTER TO CONTINUE TO BE A RELEVANT, VIBRANT ORGANIZATION?**

First, a little history. The Center formed in 1978 as the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities, jointly sponsored by the University of Kansas Department of Special Education and the Life Span Institute, one of the premier human development research organizations in the country.

In a move that brings the Center full circle, we have made a decision to reconnect with the Life Span Institute. On July 1, the CRL formally merged with the LSI. The LSI's mission is to find research-based solutions for the challenges of human and community development, disabilities, and aging. Disciplines represented within the organization include psychology, psychiatry, speech pathology, sociology, education, biology, pharmacology, physiology, and medicine.

"As we all know, the challenges that kids are facing in today's world are in many ways so much more complex than they were 30 years ago," Deshler said during his closing address at the conference. Solutions that incorporate perspectives and insights from a wide range of disciplines, he said, will be better solutions. "We see this as a tremendous opportunity for us to

### **New interim director a letter from Don Deshler**

Dear Colleagues,

Dr. Mike Hock will become the interim director of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning on August 1, 2014. Mike has served as the associate director of the CRL since 2002 and has been affiliated with the CRL since 1990. He has a deep understanding of and appreciation for the Center's 36-year history and will be the ideal leader for moving the CRL into the future.

Mike has a keen understanding of how quickly things are changing in education. Given that the students of today will face a dramatically different world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than anyone can imagine, our work as a center must change to respond to these new realities. As the 2020 *Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning* report states, "...the forces of change will dramatically reshape the landscape of learning over the next decade."

An indication of Mike's stature as a leading educational innovator is the fact that he has been asked to serve as a member of a think tank entitled the *Reimagining Learning Domain (RLD)*. The RLD is a collaborative of social entrepreneurs, funders, researchers, policy influencers, and members of the creative/entertainment community aligning actions to fundamentally reimagine the way learning happens in America. Mike's opinions are highly valued

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expand the pool of expertise that we can draw upon.”

The LSI, he said, is one of the largest and most highly regarded human development and disabilities research centers in the country. The work of its affiliated researchers truly spans the whole of human life from birth on, with some noticeable exceptions.

“They do terrific, cutting-edge work in the early childhood area. They do tremendous work in gerontology and aging,” Deshler said. “But there’s a big void in upper elementary, middle school, and high school. They see us as filling a huge void that they have, and we see our work being really informed by what they’re doing.”

The merger will benefit the Center in several other, important ways, including stronger infrastructure supports in key areas such as data analysis and graphic design. Having access to such supports will position the Center to be more competitive in the quest for increasingly difficult to obtain funding.

“We think we can come up with better, more powerful solutions more quickly,” Deshler said.

#### **HOW SHOULD THE SIM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK CHANGE TO CONTINUE ITS INFLUENTIAL ROLE?**

The answer to this question is a little less clear at this point. The network, born about 31 years ago, is unique, powerful, and effective.

“It never fails, when we have an outsider come and they interact with you, feel your spirit, hear about what you have done and what you are doing, they note how remarkable you are,” Deshler said. “We don’t want to lose that.”

But we do want to let go of faulty assumptions that may be a barrier

to progress. Our examination of this question leads to more questions: What is our identity? What should our professional learning look like as we continue to grow? What is our timeline for change?

Among the possible answers is one that Deshler believes will be key to the viability of the network in the future: a shift in which SIM Professional Developers take a more active role in the research-discovery side of the Center’s work. As we consider what such a change might look like, we may learn from other education networks, whose members see themselves as much on the discovery end of the work as on the practice end.

#### **WHAT NEXT?**

For the past year, Kathleen Lane served alongside Deshler as co-director of the Center. She was offered the position of CRL director but declined to give full attention to her faculty role and to continue her research and development work. Lane will still be affiliated with the Center, and her research projects will be conducted through the Center.

As of August 1, Mike Hock takes the reins as the interim director of the Center. Hock is well known to members of the network and deeply knowledgeable about our work and history. See *New Interim Director: A Letter from Don Deshler* on page 1 for more about the Center’s change in leadership.

Though Deshler is stepping down as director, he will remain active in advising the work of the Center.

“One of the things that I am most deeply committed to doing is to support Mike in whatever way he asks,” he said. “I think we’re positioned to do some great things. I look forward to being a part of it, just in a different role.”

and when he speaks, people listen carefully.

Mike has a stellar record as a researcher, having been funded by OSEP, IES, and NSF as well as several private foundations. He is committed to designing solutions and disseminating user-friendly products for practitioners (e.g., *Strategic Tutoring*, *Possible Selves*, *Fusion Reading*) and to improving the professional learning process.

I have total confidence in Mike as a leader, scholar, and professional. He is a person of impeccable integrity. He has my total support as the CRL’s new leader. I have encouraged Mike to make whatever changes he feels are necessary to ensure that the CRL has a place at the table in helping to define the next generation of innovations for all learners, especially those who struggle in the learning process.

It has been an extreme honor to serve as the director of the CRL and to team with you in advancing the Center’s vision. I’m excited about the CRL’s future and look forward to working under Mike’s leadership.

Most sincerely,  
Don

#### **WHAT’S NOT CHANGING**

**Our name, our location, our logo.** We will still be known as the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas. Organizationally, we fall under the LSI umbrella along with many related research groups.

# SIM EVENTS CALENDAR

Are you holding SIM Learning Strategies or Content Enhancement Routine sessions that are open to public registration (allow attendees from outside of the school or district)?

Are you presenting a session about SIM or CLC at a conference or seminar open to public registration?

We are contacted by hundreds of educators each year who have heard about SIM Learning Strategies, Content Enhancement Routines, or the Content Literacy Continuum and are looking for opportunities to learn. In the past, we have responded with contact information for active SIM Professional Developers located near the person making the inquiry, and they contacted those professional developers to see whether opportunities were available. This is awfully cumbersome! We are very excited to start spreading the word about learning opportunities in a more direct way.

We invite you to let us know about these opportunities so we can post them

on our SIM Events calendar and on our SIM Facebook page.

Submit details about these events to [simpd@ku.edu](mailto:simpd@ku.edu). To be listed on the calendar, you must submit the following information:

1. Name of event. This could be the strategy or routine or the title of the presentation you are presenting and the name of the conference.
2. All dates of the event (if there are follow up days, include those).
3. City and state where the event will occur.
4. Who to contact for more information or to register/enroll/sign up for the event, including email, phone number, and event website, if there is one.

Please contact me with questions, and start sending information about your SIM events today!

Mona Tipton, 785.864.0626  
[monatipton@ku.edu](mailto:monatipton@ku.edu)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORTING

Submit your SIM professional development session reports electronically. Visit the following link:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PostPDDDataSubmissionSurvey>

We use the information we get from you for the *Stratenotes* newsletter, to help shape future offerings, and for other SIM-related projects. We look forward to hearing about all the great work you're doing in the field!

## SIM TUTOR LIST

We frequently receive calls from parents who ask how to access **Learning Strategies** for their children. To meet this need, we have developed a list of people who provide this type of service or would like to. Specifically, our list includes SIM Professional Developers (active, inactive, retired, retiring, thinking of retiring) or teachers recommended by professional developers who provide this type of service or would like to. **This is an opt-in list.** If you are interested in being included on the list, please go to

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/SIM\\_Tutor\\_List](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SIM_Tutor_List)

to give us your information. When parents contact us, we will give them the names and preferred contact information for members of the SIM Tutor List who live nearby.

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# SIM CALENDAR

## November 13–14, 2014

Northeast Region Update  
Conference for SIM Professional  
Developers  
The College of Saint Rose, Lally  
School of Education  
Albany, New York

## January 12–February 8, 2015

Winter Virtual Update Conference  
for SIM Professional Developers  
Mandatory one-hour webinar  
February 11 or February 12

## January 27–29, 2015

Florida Update Conference for  
SIM Professional Developers

## February 5–6, 2015

West Region Update Conference  
for SIM Professional Developers  
Las Vegas

## March 10–11, 2015

Southeast Update Conference for  
SIM Professional Developers  
Charleston, South Carolina

## April 13–May 10, 2015

Spring Virtual Update Conference  
for SIM Professional Developers  
Mandatory one-hour webinar  
May 13 or May 14

For a complete list of SIM events, including those not coordinated by  
KUCRL: **[HTTP://SIM.KURL.ORG/CLASSES](http://sim.kurl.org/classes)**

**LIST YOUR OPEN SESSIONS ON THE SIM CALENDAR:** We are contacted by  
hundreds of educators each year who have heard about SIM or CLC and  
are looking for opportunities to learn more. Email information about your  
open sessions to [monatipton@ku.edu](mailto:monatipton@ku.edu) and be included on the online SIM  
Events Calendar.

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