UC CECH Systems Development & Improvement Center Provides Leadership to Ohio Deans Compact Statewide Initiatives

September 20, 2017. The Systems Development & Improvement (SDI) Center, located in Columbus, joined the University of Cincinnati College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Development (CECH) in July 2017. As a Center within CECH, SDI fosters the development, implementation, and evaluation of PK20 education research and demonstration efforts that improve opportunities to learn for children and youth, their families, and the professionals who support them.

At the core of many Center activities is a commitment to advocacy on behalf of all children, as well as partnerships – with school districts, with professional associations, with institutions of higher education, with regional providers, with the state – that improve conditions and outcomes for students with disabilities and other marginalized groups of learners (e.g., learners who are economically disadvantaged, learners at risk of school failure for a variety of reasons, etc.).

“The Systems Development and Improvement Center is a welcome addition to CECH,” remarked Dean Lawrence J. Johnson. “Their dedication to and work within the community is closely aligned with our college mission to address real world challenges and opportunities to create positive social change.”

The Ohio Deans Compact on Exceptional Children – operated through SDI with support from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), and the involvement of ODE and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) – serves as a forum for bridging theory to practice, fostering meaningful P20 partnership efforts, and identifying and responding to critical issues, such as personnel shortages that limit opportunities to learn for groups of Ohio students.

Two recent Compact initiatives – both grounded in a commitment to social justice and equity – have statewide impact. The Incentive Grant (IG) program provides funding to institutions of higher education in the state to design/develop preparation models that are based on inclusive pedagogy and incorporate authentic partnerships with PK12 partners. Twelve (12) new incentive grants are currently being awarded to Ohio institutions of higher education across the state.

The Compact also sponsored the first multi-institution post-baccalaureate licensure-only preparation program designed to increase the number of teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) in order to combat severe shortages of low incidence sensory disability providers across large areas of the state and, in particular, Ohio’s rural south and southeastern counties. Candidates accepted into the four-semester program will progress through the online coursework as a cohort and will allow be able to remain in their local communities while becoming TVIs.

Compact members and representatives from Compact-funded IGs meet quarterly to engage in shared learning opportunities, participate in community of practice or committee work, identify challenges, and celebrate accomplishments.
Partnerships with key national groups – such as the federally funded CEEDAR Center (University of Florida) and the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) – have helped to leverage change in Ohio while, at the same time, allowing Ohio representatives to gain a deeper understanding of issues and improvement opportunities affecting educator preparation.

For more information about the Ohio Deans Compact, visit the Compact website at www.ohiodeanscompact.org or contact Deborah Telfer, PhD, Director, University of Cincinnati CECH Systems Development & Improvement Center, at deborah.telfer@uc.edu.