Greetings from the Executive Director

Laura Knight Lynn, PhD
Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

In this issue of re: Research, we bring you updates on research support for students and faculty and intervention services for proactive outreach to students. Additionally, we are happy to introduce you to some of our team members working hard to support student progress.

As you will see, our focus for doctoral research support continues to be two pronged: directly helping students during the dissertation and doctoral study phase through weekly real-time methodology advising, and helping our new faculty be as ready as possible to support quality and progress for our students working hard in this phase.

Dr. Deborah Inman’s articles provide useful information on our Research Mentoring ProSeminar for new doctoral faculty, as well as how you can direct students to methodology office hours for additional support when they are struggling with research concepts or data analysis.

Alex Dohm and Dr. Louis Milanesi provide insight into our intervention outreach efforts. In their articles, you will see the approach and strategy for reaching out and supporting committees for students who struggle to make progress.

Additionally, we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Michelle Brown to the Center for Research Quality (CRQ) to focus on doctoral progress and completion efforts. Her immediate focus is support of our legacy KAM students and the faculty mentors serving them.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions at CRQ@mail.waldenu.edu.

Best,
Laura
**Associate Director, Progress and Completion Initiatives**

**Michelle Brown, EdD**  
Associate Director, Progress and Completion Initiatives

On May 1, I joined the Center for Research Quality in a role that is new to the Center: Associate Director, Progress and Completion Initiatives. In this role, I support the progress of Walden’s doctoral students, particularly students in programs with knowledge area modules (KAMs). Specifically, I serve Walden’s KAM students and faculty mentors through my work related to practices and policies, communication and training, and support through capstone completion. In addition, I am working on other initiatives within the Center related to capstone committee member training and doctoral program completion.

The key tasks undertaken in this new role include providing a comprehensive KAM website with new submission links for learning agreement (LA) and KAM rubrics. This new site will include best practices, as well as links to LA and KAM resources on the Walden Library and Writing Center sites. The page will be housed on the Center for Research Quality website and will go live later this month. Additionally, the SBSF 7100 course is currently being updated to an 11-week course to better align with other Walden University PhD courses.

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**Research ProSeminar**

**Deborah Inman, EdD**  
Director, Office of Research Quality Management

We are excited to share with you the success of the Research ProSeminar for new doctoral faculty. We have been piloting a mentor-the-mentor Research ProSeminar since February 6, with two additional sections that began April 3 and another on May 1. The current instructors (Senior Mentors) include Drs. **Lee Stadtlander**, **Paul Englesberg**, **Michael Schwab**, and **Cheryl Keen**. We are pleased to announce that Drs. **Gary Kelsey** and **Anne Hacker** will be leading our Research ProSeminar sections starting in July.

Over 60 new faculty volunteered to participate in the pilot. This pilot has proven to be very successful, and this training will become required of all new doctoral faculty beginning in July as part of the onboarding process for new doctoral faculty within Walden. The Research ProSeminar will follow successful completion of the required Dissertation/Doctoral Mentoring training.

The purpose of this year-long mentoring community is to provide additional support and guidance as faculty are assigned to their first committees to help
them through various milestones of the dissertation/doctoral study process required at Walden. To ensure that new faculty hires can manage expectations, we are asking that program directors share this requirement with all new hires during their onboarding conversations. Expectations for participation in the ProSeminar will be approximately 4 hours per month, and faculty will receive monthly payment for their engagement. It will be important for program directors to assign these new faculty to committees as early as possible after they successfully complete the Dissertation/Doctoral Study mentor training so that once they begin the Research ProSeminar, they and their students can benefit from this additional support.

Senior Research Progress Intervention Coordinator

Alex Dohm
Senior Research Progress Intervention Coordinator

Walden University has introduced several initiatives designed to promote student progress. To support one of these initiatives, I was assigned to take the lead and to work collaboratively to develop a system of quarterly data extraction and email outreach to faculty, which will be focused on resolving issues students or faculty may be facing in making sufficient progress.

In my new role as Senior Research Progress Intervention Coordinator in the CRQ’s Office of Student Research Administration (OSRA), I work closely with Dr. Lou Milanesi, Director of Committee Support & Doctoral Student Progress, in further developing and refining this intervention outreach approach. This refinement created an organizing framework to contact committees in doctoral programs during the past 7 months, based primarily on the number of unsuccessful URR reviews. A summary of those efforts is below.

EdD Pilot

In November 2016, we piloted the intervention outreach in the EdD program. I extracted data based on previously established criteria and sent communication to all committee members serving the identified students. The communication focused on determining the specific issues that were impeding student progress, such as methodology or alignment issues, concerns identified in the problem or in the scope of the proposed research, or problems identified in the literature review. We received responses from nearly all committees who were contacted. Many of the responses indicated positive progress was indeed being made, some responses required immediate action to resolve administrative issues, and others required continued monitoring and subsequent follow-up in a cooperative effort with individual programs. A follow-up communication was sent in January 2017, and a second wave of email outreach was conducted in April 2017.
Expansion to PhD Programs

In March 2017, we expanded our intervention outreach efforts to the PhD programs, reaching out to the committees of students with 4 or more unsuccessful URR reviews. This outreach communication again focused on specific issues impeding student progress and, again, we received a very positive response to the outreach. With Dr. Milanesi’s input, we were able to immediately resolve some issues and continue working with committees to help resolve others.

Future Efforts and Collaborations

Looking toward the future, we hope to introduce time-in-stage intervention efforts into the PhD programs, as well as URR returns and time-in-stage efforts in the DBA program. We’ve also begun collaborating with the doctoral specialists in the Academic Advising unit to create a more comprehensive approach to promoting student progress.

Intervention Outreach

Lou Milanesi, PhD
Director, Committee Support & Doctoral Student Progress

Since my last contribution to this newsletter, I have had the pleasure of working with Alex Dohm in the OSRA in supporting the development, implementation, and expansion of the intervention outreach he describes above. The model we have implemented includes quarterly data extraction to reveal new cases and update student progress for existing cases. Faculty responses have illuminated a variety of anticipated and unanticipated challenges to student progress.

Several anticipated factors raised were related to student preparedness to engage in doctoral level study, and not surprisingly, scholarly writing and experiencing stressful life events. The anticipated effects resulting from turnover of committee members also were reported, as were issues related to communication within the committee and to the student as timely and specifically actionable feedback to facilitate progress.

What was not anticipated was that some faculty, including chairs, were unaware of how many URR member review cycles had occurred to date. This lack of awareness of previous reviews was sometimes attributable to turnover on the committee; however, we found that long-serving members were also sometimes unacquainted with the historical reviews of their students. Consequently, we encourage faculty to refer back to their individual documentation of student feedback, and to exploit the information archived in the Evaluation History at each stage in the MyDR/Taskstream evaluation grid.
As mentioned previously, we will be extracting data on a quarterly cycle and extractions will be staggered across programs to afford a more consistent and manageable workflow for the outreach communications. We have established four general triage categories based on our analysis of faculty responses to organize our work moving forward.

- **Continued monitoring**: cases where faculty feedback indicates substantive improvement is being made. These cases are then slated for review in the following quarter data extraction.

- **Resource referral**: cases where existing university resources align to the problems reported by the faculty, such as specific Writing Center services or the availability of the CRQ methodology advisors (see Marydee Spillett’s article below).

- **Program referral**: this category commonly includes cases where issues related to the committee structure and/or interaction are presented, including missing committee members due to retirement or, for whatever reason, a member who is nonresponsive in intra-committee communication.

- **Direct CRQ engagement**: cases in which direct support from the CRQ intervention team can help facilitate communications or resolve technical barriers for faculty unfamiliar with Walden processes. This category also includes cases brought to our attention by individual program directors.

It is quite rewarding to see students in these situations advance to the next stage in the dissertation or doctoral study journey, and Alex and I look forward to providing any and all assistance we can to support committees in achieving that goal.

**Research/Statistics Student Support**

Deborah Inman, EdD  
Director, Office of Research Quality Management

The transition of the Academic Skills Center’s research/statistics support at the doctoral capstone stage to CRQ became effective June 1. The primary reason for this change is to ensure continued communication among students and the students’ committees, especially the methodologist, when students have questions specific to their approved research proposal, data collection, and analysis.

Doctoral candidates with questions about research design/methods support should work closely with their committee/methodologist and reach out to the CRQ methodologists for advice by attending methodology office hours (see article below by Marydee Spillett). For questions about stats tutoring at the course level, however, students should contact StatSupport@mail.waldenu.edu.
**Coming soon!**

Annie Pezalla, our research courses lead, is currently working with Educational Product, Technology, and Innovation (EPTI) on creating a website with a curated set of RSCH course resources that will be available to all Walden students throughout the entirety of their doctoral program. That website will be organized around all six research courses, including videos, datasets, and Acrobatqi Skillbuilders. This website will be a helpful resource for students who are seeking methodological refreshers. The estimated launch date for the website is within the next month. We expect this site will be a very useful resource for our faculty and students, especially ones who are seeking methodological refreshers. Watch for a link on the CRQ homepage.

**Methodology Advice Office Hours for Students**

Marydee Spillett, EdD  
Associate Director and Qualitative Methodologist

The CRQ provides office hours to answer student questions about designing and conducting dissertation or doctoral study research. Students are welcome to attend at any time during the research design or implementation process. Office hours provide an informal setting in a group advising format, using the Adobe Connect platform. Students may ask quick questions and receive brief advice about designing or conducting qualitative or quantitative research studies.

Office Hours are appropriate for students with short questions about specific research topics. Time does not allow for in-depth methodological review or for individual tutoring. Students are encouraged to discuss the advice provided with their committee members.

- **During the Qualitative Methodology Advice Office Hours**, common topics of discussion include qualitative research, qualitative research designs, participant selection, interview questions and other data collection methods, data analysis methods, and writing up qualitative results.

- **During the Quantitative Methodology Advice Office Hours**, common questions are about sample size and power analysis, research questions/hypotheses, quantitative research designs, data collection methods/instrumentation, data analysis methods, and statistics reporting.

The Methodology Advice Office Hours are hosted by CRQ methodology advisors Matt Jones (Quantitative), Sunny Liu (Quantitative), and Marydee Spillett (Qualitative). Dates and times vary and are posted monthly on the Center for Research Quality website under Research Resources.
Occasionally we are asked about the appropriateness of single-subject research design for doctoral research, and usually there’s a misunderstanding of the technique. Like any methodology, the choice of design needs to be defended as appropriate to the research questions and executed properly. Therefore, I want to provide some background for researchers who are considering this approach.

The single-subject research design is one of the quantitative experimental designs. It is also called $N$ of 1 research, single-case research, behavioral analysis, or within-subjects (intra-individual) research. The other common experimental designs besides the single-subject design are true and quasi-experimental designs. Although all the experimental designs involve the use of experiment or intervention (treatment) by the researchers, the single-subject design is unique in several ways. The major differences between it and other experimental designs are:

- **Individual subjects**: In single-subject design, the researcher seeks to learn about the behavior of individuals instead of groups. In other words, the effect of an intervention on single individuals is examined instead of comparing the mean group scores between the control and experimental groups. The trajectory of individual behavioral changes is observed as a result.

- **Small sample size**: The researcher only studies a small number of single individuals (e.g., $n = 5$) in single-subject design, instead of large groups of people (e.g., $n = 1000$). Although single-subject design focuses on each subject individually, the researchers usually choose a small group of subjects instead of only one.

- **Unique designs**: In a single-subject design, the researcher usually establishes a baseline of behaviors (e.g., the behaviors are stable prior to the intervention) and then manipulates the conditions experienced by the individual subjects (e.g., add the intervention). ABAB and multiple baseline are the common designs.

1. **ABAB**: A stands for the period of measurements made without the intervention and B stands for the measurements made during the intervention. Therefore, the design can be understood as the measurements made prior to intervention, during intervention, intervention withdrawn, and during intervention again process.

2. **Multiple baseline**: each individual receives the intervention at a different time (e.g., subject A at week 1, subject B at week 2, subject C at week 3, etc.). This way, the subjects can serve as each other’s control because one individual’s behavior change may only be due to the
intervention as others’ behaviors stay stable prior to the implementation of the intervention.

3. **Alternatives:** the researchers may combine the ABAB and multiple baseline design components into one design. Also, several interventions could be tested as well.

- **No statistical analysis:** Although it’s common to use statistical tests such as \( t \)-test and ANOVA in true or quasi-experimental designs, no statistical tests are needed in single-subject design. The researchers usually plot the individual’s behavior over many points of time on a graph and visually inspect the data for changes. For example, is the change pattern ascending, descending, stable, or zig-zagging? As a result, the researchers may draw conclusions on the effect of the intervention on the behavioral changes.

- **Specific fields of application:** the single-subject design is commonly used in some fields, such as special education and applied psychology. For example, Cihak, Kessler, and Alberto (2008) tested whether students with mental disabilities can transition between tasks when using a handheld prompting system using a single-subject design.

Although single-subject design only involves a small number of individuals, it’s a rather rigorous quantitative experimental design as it controls for many threats to internal validity, such as threats to group selection and treatments as they are not relevant to this design. However, it can be very time-consuming to conduct such studies because the researchers usually observe the individuals over several points of time and may add/withdraw the interventions several times to see the change pattern. For more detailed discussions of the design, please check the references listed below.

**References**


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**Our Mission**

The overarching mission of the Center for Research Quality is to align, maintain, integrate, and enrich those activities that contribute to the quality and productivity of Walden University research. Accordingly, its offices formulate, coordinate, and oversee the processes that support student research capstones as well as external research conducted under the auspices of the University.
Really? More about the $p$-value?

Matt Jones, PhD
Methodologist, Core Faculty

In last summer's newsletter, I wrote about the American Statistical Association's (ASA) 2016 statement about the definition and use of the $p$-value. Since there was so much conversation about this topic in the popular scientific press, I thought I would revisit the issue, one year later.

An initial question one might ask is this: What has changed in practice? As far as I can tell, at least anecdotally, really nothing has changed. $P$-values still widely appear in the literature, they are still defined contrary to the ASA's statement in recent social science textbooks, and interpretations are contrary to the ASA's statement in results sections of articles. Perhaps some of this situation has to do with the time it takes to reach publication after acceptance of manuscripts, and the ASA statement was not available at the time of submission, but this is just a guess.

There does, however, continue to be a great deal of intellectual conversation on this topic and I think that is great. Last summer I went to a very entertaining lecture on using a $d$-value (an effect size on a probability scale), versus a $p$-value. The presentation came from the author's recent article, The $p$-value you can't buy (Demidenko, 2016). You can take a look for yourself, but it reiterates part of the crux of the $p$-value argument that if you want to find statistical significance, just increase sample size. This presentation and article also specifically deal with a question that many people have asked: If the ASA says I should not use $p$-values (and they never explicitly say this), then what should I use? Demidenko argues for the $d$-value; check it out if you have a chance.

A recent letter to the editor in the American Statistician declares the ASA statement infers the preference for the use of other approaches, which will probably make it harder for authors to defend their use of the popular deductive, frequentist approach (Iondes, Giessing, Ritov, & Page, 2017). While the longer ASA statement (Wallerstein & Lazar, 2016) does mention some alternatives (most notably Bayesian), Iondes et al. are keen to note this recommendation might be because many members of the $p$-value panel identified with the Bayesian approach!

The conversation continues with a not-yet-in-print-article (also in the American Statistician) asking why $p$-values are controversial in the first place (Kuffner & Walker, 2017). While the ASA statement defined the $p$-value as probability—at least informally—Kuffner and Walker argued that it is not a probability and there should be no more controversy with the use of the statistic than with any other test statistic. Specifically, I like their following statement, “The $p$-value is innocent; the problem arises from its misuse and misinterpretation.” (p.1). They
go on to clarify through example what many believe: that the problem isn’t with the value itself, but how different testers use and interpret it. Specifically, “the p-value is not a valid decision rule, as it is not a type I error probability.” (p. 6).

So, after one year, I think we are in the same place, still having delightful intellectual conversations about the proper use of the p-value. For me, the positive news is that it does not appear there will be the all-out ban on the use of the p-value that some people predicted (especially after the journal Basic and Applied Psychology implemented this policy). Additionally, I think the best aspect of this conversation is that we are talking about cogent interpretations of p-values, which I hope will proliferate through the literature (which still has many nonsensical explanations and definitions). Alongside that discussion, we are actively talking about testing procedures. As part of the p-value conversation, I am reminded of Sir David Cox’s statement that there are no questionable statistics, only questionable statistical practices. It becomes clearer that the p-value is really not problematic, just its implementation and interpretation by researchers (this is my personal opinion).

References


IRB Office Hours

Jenny Sherer, MEd, CIP
Associate Director, Office of Research Ethics and Compliance

Students are often drawn to Walden because of our social change mission and the potential to conduct research that can immediately benefit their community. As such, it is not uncommon for them to partner with organizations impacted by their topic under study. Conducting research that supports the goals of an organization or identifies improvements that can be made offers tangible ways of effecting positive change. Upon completion of their research,
students have the opportunity to be change agents through sharing their results and potential solutions and giving back to the organizations that assisted with their studies.

However, understanding what documentation may be needed for these partnerships can be difficult and is dependent on various factors, such as what assistance the site would be providing or what processes they require to provide approval. It can be overwhelming for students to determine whether site documentation is required, and if so, what specifically would be needed. When such questions arise, encourage your students to attend IRB office hours. IRB office hours offer a great opportunity for students to describe their proposed research and obtain clarification on what site documentation may be necessary. Potential red flags can also be identified, along with alternative options that may be more amenable to the student’s situation.

Information about when IRB office hours are offered and how to attend is available on the Research Ethics section of the Center for Research Quality website.

**ORCiDs and You**

Daniel Salter, PhD  
Director, Strategic Research Initiatives  
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A quick search on LinkedIn shows over two dozen people who share my name – a handful of whom also have a doctoral degree. While arguably one Daniel Salter is more than enough, a question arises about how the rest of you keep us all straight, especially when it comes to our creative efforts and academic output. That’s where ORCiDs come in.

An ORCiD or Open Researcher and Contributor ID is a 16-digit number that uniquely identifies individuals across time, borders (real or virtual), and academic disciplines, as they engage in research, scholarship, and creative activities. This open identification service is maintained by a non-proprietary not-for-profit organization, so it is a little rough around the edges. And, judging by an email I recently received from the Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, a growing number of publishers are requiring one and soon ORCiDs will be fully integrated with CrossRef and other indexing services. We are currently exploring ways to incorporate them into our processes.

So, how do you get an ORCiD and join the 3.5 million others who have one? Surf on over to their website, orcid.org, and register. You can populate your linkable profile manually or by connecting to existing databases, but only if you want to (the other Daniel Salter with an ORCiD has no public information, while I’m still working on getting mine entered). I’ve had an ORCiD for a few
years and appreciate their lack of the “aggressive” tactics used by some scholar sites with a stronger social media presence.

If you want more information on establishing your online presence (and have not yet had enough of me mentioning my name), you might want to check out the *Your Digital Identity as a Scholar-Practitioner* that I contributed to the *Career Services Doctoral Webinar Series* last year.

**Plan Your Grant Proposals Now**

**Molly Lauck, PhD**  
Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Summer is a great time to start thinking about research proposals that could be submitted to Walden’s internal research grant programs that have Fall submission deadlines. Following are a few of the research grant programs that you might want to consider:

- **Don E. Ackerman Research Fellowship in Educational Leadership**
  
  This fellowship supports research that advances leadership in education through better understanding of practice.
  
  - **Open to:** Walden faculty and doctoral students  
  - **Grant Ceiling:** $10,000  
  - **Application Deadline:** 10/30 annually  
  - **Link:** [https://www.waldenu.edu/financial-aid/types/fellowships/ackerman-research](https://www.waldenu.edu/financial-aid/types/fellowships/ackerman-research)

- **Research Fellowship in Distance Education**
  
  This fellowship provides funding to support research endeavors that contribute both theoretical and applied knowledge to the growing field of distance education. This program is designed to encourage research conducted in the name of the university and to support continuous improvement in the distance education programs at Walden through research.
  
  - **Open to:** Walden faculty and master’s & doctoral students  
  - **Grant Ceiling:** $10,000  
  - **Application Deadline:** 10/30 annually  
  - **Link:** [https://www.waldenu.edu/financial-aid/types/fellowships/distance-ed-research](https://www.waldenu.edu/financial-aid/types/fellowships/distance-ed-research)
• Research and Applications for Social Change Grant

This grant program was established to enable members of the Walden community to make a significant and meaningful change in academic and social communities, both locally and globally. Grants will be awarded to applicants who submit outstanding proposals that reflect the university’s mission to foster social change through research and the education of scholar-practitioners, as well as Walden's determination to effect positive social change worldwide.

– **Open to:** Walden University faculty, students, staff, and alumni as well as external candidates
– **Grant Ceiling:** Varies
– **Application Deadline:** November 1, 2017
– **Link:** [Request for Proposal (RFP)](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orsp/dissemination)

Additionally, two programs that support the dissemination of research through publications and presentations are also available to all faculty (core and contributing) and staff:

• **Walden Research Dissemination Support (RDS) Program**
  – Next application deadline: August 1, 2017

• **Laureate Research Publication Award (RPA) Program**
  – Next application deadline: September 1, 2017

Information about both programs is available on the ORSP page of the CRQ website at: [http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orsp/dissemination](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orsp/dissemination)

Questions about the Walden RDS and Laureate RPA programs, as well as questions about Walden’s internal research grant programs, should be directed to [grants@mail.waldenu.edu](mailto:grants@mail.waldenu.edu).