



**Director of the Iowa Reading Research Center  
University of Iowa, College of Education  
Iowa City, IA**

## **THE SEARCH**

The University of Iowa and the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC), praised for its reputation for providing highly trusted, vetted, research-based literacy resources seek a strategic and collaborative leader whose training is informed by the latest, evidence-based scientific research to serve as its next director. Reporting to the dean of the College of Education, the director of the IRRC will bring a fresh perspective on literacy education, working to evolve the role of the center in the state of Iowa as well as its reach.

The purpose of the Iowa Reading Research Center is to improve the literacy proficiency of pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. To that end, the work of the IRRC is done in five main categories: conducting research in practical settings to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy practices and the usefulness of assessments for guiding literacy instruction; developing and disseminating research-based instructional strategies and interventions; facilitating professional learning for educators on literacy instructional strategies and related topics; and collaborating with the Iowa Department of Education, Area Education Agencies and local education agencies to provide technical assistance involving planning and implementation to address a specific literacy issue.

The director will serve a key role in overseeing the day-to-day operations of the IRRC and serving as a statewide expert and advocate for evidence-based literacy instructional strategies. They will work collaboratively with leaders from Iowa's educational systems, state government, local agencies, and community groups to help coordinate all components of Iowa's comprehensive literacy initiative and integrate research into the design of best practice strategies to promote literacy development statewide.

In particular, the University of Iowa seeks a leader who will evolve the role and expand the reach of the center, ensure the growth of the IRRC through effective strategic leadership, expand preservice teacher training in structured literacy instruction, increase the number of professional development and educational materials made available to schools, and work with the staff to continue the development and coordination of programming available to staff, parents, and students.

The director will serve as a full-time member of the College of Education faculty in the Department of Teaching and Learning on a 12-month appointment with opportunities for teaching, advising, and research being made available to them. The position is an open-rank tenure-track faculty position.

The University of Iowa has retained Isaacson, Miller - a national executive search firm - to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

The University of Iowa was founded in 1847 and is the oldest university in the state. It is home to 12 colleges and is an R1 designated research university, a member of the Association of American Universities, and a member of the Big Ten Conference. With over 30,000 students across over 200 majors and 100 graduate programs, the University of Iowa is recognized as one of the top public universities in the country. Excellence is observed throughout the University, with the top fiction, poetry, and nonfiction writing programs in the nation. Of its graduate programs, 21 are recognized among the top 25 in the nation, including ten in the top ten in their categories.

## **THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

Established in 1872 as the first permanent college-level department of education in the United States, the University of Iowa [College of Education](#) has been at the forefront of educational innovation for nearly 150 years. Through the development and subsequent success of the Iowa Testing Programs in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the college has led the way in testing and measurement, with the creation of the ACT standing as a signal achievement. In the ensuing decades, the college achieved additional notoriety in gifted education, through the establishment of the Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, and in the field of program evaluation and assessment with the opening of the Center for Evaluation and Assessment.

The College provides an affordable, first-class education for undergraduate and graduate students alike. As a Big Ten research institution, the college is home to master's, specialist, and doctoral programs that consistently rank in the nation's top 20 and offers over 40 degree programs to more than 1,000 students. Moreover, with a 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio, students enjoy small class sizes and unfettered access to a host of world-renowned scholars. The college is comprised of four departments: Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, Psychological and Quantitative Foundations, Counselor Education, and Teaching and Learning. The college also houses several Centers that support work in critical areas of education, including UI REACH, the Iowa Reading Research Center, the Scanlan Center for School Mental Health, and the Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.

The college was ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> among schools granting doctoral degrees and as the 32<sup>nd</sup>-best College of Education among public universities in the 2017 U.S. News & World Report list of "Best Education

Schools.” The college has attained particular distinction for its respective programs in rehabilitation counseling, higher education administration, and student counseling and personnel services. It has also been recognized for outstanding online offerings with four of the college’s online master’s degree programs ranked #1 in Iowa and 18<sup>th</sup>-best in the nation in the most recent U.S. News & World Report list of “Best Online Programs.” With close to 28,000 alumni, the college has spirited ambassadors in 78 countries, all 50 states, and every county in Iowa. Since July 2016, the college has been under the leadership of Dean Daniel Clay.

## **THE DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The [Department of Teaching and Learning](#) at the University of Iowa includes over 35 faculty members and 900 students with over 450 students majoring in elementary education. The Department houses nine teacher elementary and secondary licensure programs, multiple MA/MS/MAT programs, and 25+ endorsements in teacher education. The Teacher Education Program implements core principles that focus on equity in education. The department also has four PhD programs (Special Education; Literacy, Culture, and Language Education; Mathematics Education; Science Education).

## **THE IOWA READING RESEARCH CENTER (IRRC)**

The purpose of the [Iowa Reading Research Center](#) is to improve the literacy proficiency of pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. The center is consistently praised for its reputation for providing highly trusted, vetted, research-based literacy resources which includes such things as the IRRC eLearning modules, the Early Literacy Blueprint Project, blogs, assistive technology consultations, and the state’s first dyslexia endorsement program. The center has an operating budget of \$1.5 million dollars, and it currently has ten full-time staff members, three part-time staff members, two graduate assistants, and eight undergraduate employees. Additionally, the IRRC generates revenue from the sales of its eLearning modules to out-of-state users, service agreement work with Iowa school districts, and registration fees associated with their Science of Reading summit.

The work of the IRRC is done in five main categories:

- Conducting research in practical settings to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy practices and the usefulness of assessments for guiding literacy instruction. As of 2023, 37,565 students have participated in IRRC research. Activities address the needs and concerns of the major stakeholders in the state such as local education agencies (LEAs), nonpublic schools, Iowa Area Education Agencies (AEAs), Iowa’s institutes of higher education (IHEs), community organizations, the Iowa Department of Education, professional organizations, educators and families.
- Developing and disseminating research-based instructional strategies and interventions that are replicable and sustainable by Iowa schools and AEAs to improve student reading, comprehension, and writing.

- Facilitating professional learning for educators on literacy instructional strategies and related topics, both online (through eLearning) and in person (at workshops and conferences). To date, 10,406 educators have successfully completed an IRRC eLearning module, and 5,265 teacher preparation students have received dyslexia training certification from the IRRC.
- Collaborating with the Iowa Department of Education, AEAs, and local education agencies to provide technical assistance involving planning and implementation to address a specific literacy issue.
- Offering family resources to help family members and caregivers take an active role in their children's literacy skill development; assisting families affected by a reading disability through assistive technology consultation and eLearning.

All efforts of the Iowa Reading Research Center are conducted in collaboration with educators, parents, community representatives, the Iowa Department of Education, the University of Iowa, and policymakers. Results have a direct application to literacy policy and education in Iowa.

## **THE ROLE**

Reporting to the dean of the College of Education, the director will work directly with the Iowa Department of Education, the University of Iowa, and the IRRC Advisory Council to meet the purpose and mission of the Center as outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code. The director will manage and oversee all aspects of the IRRC to achieve its mission and purpose which includes the following responsibilities:

### **Key Responsibilities**

- Implement all provisions of Iowa Administrative Code 281.61; 279.72; 272.23; 256.32a, and any other State of Iowa governance requirements.
- Direct all day-to-day operations of the Iowa Reading Research Center.
- Serve as a statewide expert and advocate for evidence-based literacy instructional strategies which may include participation and/or appearances at conferences, meetings, or other events across the state.
- Effectively supervise and mentor the staff and student employees that work in the IRRC.
- Teach courses (including summer sessions) in face-to-face, online, and/or hybrid formats for the Department of Teaching and Learning and Dyslexia Specialist endorsement program.
- Serve as chair and member of dissertation and comprehensive exam committees for graduate students.
- Work collaboratively with leaders from Iowa's educational systems (higher education and pre-kindergarten through Grade 12), state government (executive and legislative branches), local education agencies, and community groups to help coordinate all components of Iowa's comprehensive literacy initiative.

- Contribute service in the University of Iowa College of Education, such as the Administrative Council, and in the Department of Teaching and Learning.
- Engage in at least four hours a semester of collaboration with teachers in contributing to instruction in K-12 classrooms (required of all teacher education faculty).
- Integrate research into the design of best practice strategies to promote literacy development statewide.
- Advocate for effective literacy education for pre-service teachers.
- Oversee the process for determining evidence-based intensive summer literacy programs.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

To successfully lead the Iowa Reading Research Center, the new director will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

- Bring in a fresh perspective on literacy education, working to evolve the role of the Center in the state of Iowa. The director will spearhead efforts to expand the reach of services of the IRRC to reach all children PK-12th grade with a priority toward applied research focused on the sustained implementation of high-quality literacy instruction and interventions.
- Provide strategic leadership to ensure the growth of the IRRC. This will involve the creation of a logic model that details how the IRRC contributes to the College of Education's mission and PK-12 grade literacy in Iowa, conducting a needs assessment to inform strategic priorities and an annual action plan that includes measures of success that are meaningful to the range of IRRC's stakeholders. They will engage in regular and ongoing review and evaluation of implementation efforts including seeking feedback toward improvement and communication of progress with stakeholders will be essential to the ongoing success of the IRRC. This will also include working to develop a plan to increase the amount of revenue streams into the IRRC to allow for the expanding of its footprint on services and reputation for the center.
- In collaboration with the IRRC staff, the director will work to expand the science of reading/structured literacy education in formal undergraduate and graduate education for preservice teachers. The IRRC will work with the Iowa Department of Education and the University of Iowa to offer undergraduate workshops focused on the science of reading in addition to offering versions of the IRRC's Dyslexia Specialist endorsement coursework to graduate students in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Iowa.
- Provide vision and leadership in increasing the amount of professional development and informational content about literacy instruction in the state. Through a partnership with the Iowa Department of Education, the IRRC will offer new eLearning modules to help teachers design

literacy lessons to best meet students' needs. It will also develop eLearning modules for parents and families to better assist their children in learning to read.

- Pending legislative support and funding, the IRRC will seek to continue coordinating the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement programs in the state, which will include collaborations with the Board of Educational Examiners and the Department of Education on the approval of Dyslexia Specialist endorsement programs at other institutes of higher education. The director will work with the IRRC staff to develop the process for approving out-of-state coursework and identifying avenues for applicants who do not meet all of the requirements to complete the requirements and earn endorsement.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

The successful candidate will embody many of the following qualifications and attributes:

### **Required Qualifications**

- A terminal degree in education or related field, with specific expertise in reading.
- Established record of research relevant to education, with specific areas of expertise in systematic and explicit instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Demonstration of knowledge, skills, and experience to lead explicit, systematic, and sequential early literacy instruction for preschool-3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading.
- Demonstration of knowledge, skills, and experience to support the full spectrum of literacy instruction and ELA from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12.
- Evidence of excellent teaching skills in teacher education in higher education.
- Experience teaching, advising, and mentoring graduate students in research and practice.
- Experience obtaining and managing externally funded research projects.
- Able to demonstrate collaboration with stakeholders and colleagues who have a variety of professional responsibilities (e.g., educators, community organizations, caregivers, local education agencies, legislators, state Department of Education colleagues, and university colleagues).
- Knowledge and experience promoting evidence-based literacy instructional practices for diverse learners (English learners, students with disabilities, gifted students, etc.).
- Demonstrated commitment to recognizing literacy learning as a basic human right and engaging in equitable literacy education.
- Demonstrated ability to create and foster an academic environment inclusive of culturally, linguistically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse populations.

### **Desired Qualifications**

- Established record of expertise in reading disabilities, and/or dyslexia.

- Experience leading professional and classified staff.
- Experience working with large budgets.
- Experience collaborating with state and national experts to achieve Center objectives.
- Experience working with families and communities to promote literacy through school and community partnerships.
- Familiarity with state-level literacy development efforts.
- Experience leading professional learning for educators.

#### TO APPLY

The University of Iowa has engaged Isaacson, Miller to assist with identifying and reviewing candidates for this position. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications to:

**Phillip Petree, Partner**  
**David Grimes, Senior Associate**  
**Ryan Smillie, Senior Search Coordinator**

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-iowa-college-education/director-iowa-reading-research-center>

*The University of Iowa is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment free from discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences.*

*Successful candidates will be required to self-disclose any misconduct history or pending research misconduct investigation including but not limited to sexual misconduct in prior employment and provide a related release and will be subject to a criminal background and credential check.*