This report highlights activities of the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS) for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 (FY15), with information on services provided, graduate student development, conference presentations, and staff expertise.

The **vision** of CREEHS is to be a value-added partner to our clients in the planning, strengthening and sustaining of the services they provide for the health, education and well-being of individuals and their communities.

The **mission** of CREEHS is to empower and enable professionals to plan and evaluate programs that best serve the broader community and improve people’s lives. CREEHS fulfills this mission by conducting high quality program evaluations, applying innovative and collaborative techniques to bridge the gap between research and practice. This includes building capacity and providing hands-on learning to individuals who serve or will serve the community.

This past year, CREEHS activity increased to an all-time high with growth in staff and expertise, project activity, proposal development, graduate student development, conference presentations, and revenue collected. **During FY15, CREEHS achieved several record accomplishments:**

- More than $642,000 in earned and collected revenue
- 18 revenue-generating projects commissioned [10 funded external contracts and grants (non-MSU clients), 8 funded internal projects (MSU clients)]
- 14 grant applications supported (3 funded, 6 pending notification of award)
- 1 new graduate certificate program launched, with 4 new graduate courses designed
- 5 papers presented at national conferences, 2 presentations at statewide meetings
- 1 international Fulbright Faculty Scholar hosted by the Center, January 2015 to June 2015
- 6 full-time staff, 6 graduate students, 2 part-time project staff working as part of the CREEHS team
- CREEHS staff service to MSU, including membership on University and College boards, commissions, and committees:
  - * Institutional Review Board (IRB)
  - * President’s Commission on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, and Diversity
  - * Middle States Accreditation Self-Study Working Group
  - * CEHS Advisory Group on English Language Learners
  - * CEHS Staff Advisory Committee

Please read about some of the highlights of our FY15 successes on the following pages. On behalf of the CREEHS team, we look forward to continuing to grow the Center’s reputation for high quality community-engaged work, a supportive environment that develops evaluators and applied researchers, ongoing contribution to the University community, and continued success in revenue generation.

Sincerely,

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In FY15, CREEHS provided a range of services to clients on 18 revenue-generating projects. Select examples of these FY15 services are highlighted below.

In collaboration with partners from Eat. Play. Live...Better, a healthy eating and active living initiative, CREEHS staff developed a user-friendly guide for a shared measurement system, including 15 indicators for the initiative. The project team and coalition partners are using this guide (available here on the initiative’s website) to shape program planning, implementation and monitoring efforts.

For the New Jersey Department of Education’s (NJDOE) USDOE-funded School Improvement Grant (SIG), CREEHS compared student achievement in 18 SIG-funded schools with achievement in 22 comparison schools. A number of statistical tests were used to assess differences between SIG and comparison schools (e.g., multilevel models) and to determine the impact of SIG (e.g., multiple regression). The final report can be accessed here on the NJDOE’s website.

CREEHS is conducting a program evaluation of the USDOE-funded Newark-Montclair Urban Teacher Residency (NMUTR), which includes collecting data from multiple groups through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. CREEHS also assists the program with monitoring data, which are gathered from a variety of sources.

CREEHS assisted the New Jersey Community Development Corporation (NJCCDC) with a needs assessment for the Great Falls area of Paterson, NJ, including developing instruments, supporting data collection, analyzing data and, documenting key findings in a written and graphic report. NJCCDC will use these findings to guide ongoing community services and support funding efforts.

CREEHS worked collaboratively with Lifelong Montclair, an Aging in Place initiative, to build an evaluation framework including a logic model, evidence-based indicators to measure key outcomes, and survey and interview instruments to collect data. The efforts culminated in a comprehensive and tailored evaluation plan.

CREEHS supported 14 submitted grant proposals. For example, CREEHS provided proposal development services to the New Jersey State Police, who were invited by the U.S. Department of Justice to submit an application for a grant to fund a drug monitoring initiative. CREEHS crafted measurable goals and objectives, provided feedback on the project narrative, and prepared text on the Center’s potential research contribution to the project.

CREEHS was commissioned by MSU’s College of Education and Human Services (CEHS) to design and conduct an exploratory evaluation study of MSU’s teacher preparation programs. The goal of this study is to learn more about where MSU teacher education graduates are employed, their preparedness for those positions, and their effectiveness as teachers in the communities they serve.

In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJ DCF), CREEHS designed a questionnaire to collect information about infant and early childhood mental health service providers statewide. In addition to designing the instrument, CREEHS analyzed and summarized responses, and prepared and presented written, graphic, and oral summaries of findings to inform a diverse audience of policymakers.
Training and Technical Assistance Services

Throughout FY15, several agencies contracted CREEHS to provide training and technical assistance services, sharing staff expertise in applied research and program evaluation.

Some examples include:

• The Bloomfield Department of Health and Human Services contracted CREEHS to train health department staff in SPSS, a statistical software package. The training focused on creating datasets and variable lists, variable coding, and analyzing data.

• At the request of the New Jersey Department of State (NJDOS) New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, CREEHS staff reviewed and provided feedback on evaluation plans included in proposals for federal AmeriCorps grants. Applicants were then able to integrate this feedback into their plans prior to submission of their applications.

• In consultation with the project team, CREEHS used findings from a mixed methods evaluation of the ShapingNJ Healthy Community Grants Initiative to develop key recommendations for future iterations of the project. CREEHS also worked with the project team to implement nearly all of these recommendations for the next phase of the project.

Conference Presentations

• CREEHS staff presented 5 papers at the 28th annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), the premier national professional conference for evaluators, with total attendance of about 4,000. The presentations were an opportunity to share lessons learned and best practices, promote CREEHS and MSU, and learn from other presenters and attendees.
  o Program Evaluation in the Real World: Responding to Program Changes and Complexities
  o Using Fidelity Scoring to Assess the Implementation of a School Reform Model
  o Serving Multiple Masters: Program Evaluation for School, District, State, and Federal Audiences
  o Strengths and Challenges of Assessing Community Readiness in an Evaluation of a Community Obesity Prevention Initiative
  o When Clients Take your Recommendations: A Case Study of How Community Health Initiatives Used Evaluation Recommendations to Shape and Improve Their Programs

• CREEHS staff conducted a workshop at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the New Jersey Society of Public Health Educators (NJSPHE). The workshop, Evaluation: Real World and Research, provided participants skills and information on designing evaluations and collecting data for public health related initiatives.

• CREEHS staff presented at the 5th Leaders’ Academy for Healthy Community Development, co-sponsored by the New Jersey Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the New Jersey Department of Health. The presentation highlighted evaluation findings from the 2014 ShapingNJ Healthy Community Grants Initiative.

“I thought the report was great. The content was delivered in understandable language, the format of the report was great, and the conclusions were right on target. ... I really enjoyed working with you and your team. I learned a lot. I must commend the team for the knowledge, professionalism and flexibility they brought to the process.”
- Frank Basso, NJ Department of Education

“Thank you! We would have not gotten this far without your collective efforts. Your insight, guidance and instructions were the key, and I have learned a lot through this process because of your expertise. We put together a great proposal and I look forward to having it approved to proceed. This is good government.”
- Lt. Juan Colon #5039, NJ State Police
Graduate Student Development

• CREEHS houses Montclair State University’s Graduate Certificate in Program Evaluation. Guided by the Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee and taught by MSU faculty and CREEHS senior staff, the 4-course, 12-month certificate program is grounded in the interdisciplinary and applied evaluation work of CREEHS. The program prepares individuals to meet the growing demand for professionals with evaluation and applied research skills, equipping students to plan programs, measure success, and identify and use data to meet accountability and program improvement needs. In FY15, the certificate was launched with 12 graduate students. Two of the students who completed the program summed up their experience as follows:

“The program, which focused on the practical application of theory and skills, was informative and useful to my career. I was able to immediately apply the skills, techniques and knowledge I learned in the certificate program to my day-to-day work. The enthusiasm and passion of the instructors for their own areas of interest contributed greatly to the learning experience. The hybrid structure allowed me the flexibility I needed to work full time and continue my education.”

“The program had many strengths including: excellent, experienced instructors for each of the courses; use of fellow students as peers to give feedback on discussion questions and assignments and practical examples to explain the material which I found really helpful for understanding how to apply the concepts in practice. I felt each course challenged me and taught me new concepts and skills that I can take away and use immediately in my work.”

• CREEHS hosted 6 Graduate Assistants in the Center during FY15, providing training and professional development as they contribute to commissioned research and evaluation projects. In Spring 2015, a faculty member on the CREEHS Advisory Committee conducted exit interviews with graduated and graduating GAs. The following are a selection of responses from these interviews:

“I would say it connected greatly [to my work as a student] enhanced the things I was learning in the classroom... Being able to do it at CREEHS, I got a more concrete understanding of what I was doing in the class.”

“I think it was an amazing experience. My first “professional” experience in a professional setting. They did a great job making me feel a part of the team... It was a great opportunity to learn and grow and go outside of your comfort zone.”

“I learned that I had the resources and ability to take a challenge and try it. Ability to take unfamiliar tasks and use the skills and just figure out a way to do it. I think I just got to do a lot of things that I wouldn’t I have had the chance to do. Infographics, evaluation plan, evaluation proposal-Gained so much EXPERIENCE.”

“The best part was the mentorship aspect, that they are not only supervisors, but also mentor. Anytime you get stuck, they were readily available. I’ve never experienced that in my life- they’ll stop whatever they are doing to answer your question, no matter how busy they are. You are not alone. And you if make mistakes, you have people who will guide you. Constructive feedback and mentorship.”

“I really appreciate working there. I’ve gotten a lot of skills and the environment has prepared me for a lot of different types of workplaces and I’ll use the skills I’ve learned there a lot. The team leaders are excellent ‘teachers’ and getting to work with people who are so good at what they do is invaluable.”

“Best working environment I’ve ever been in- everyone there is about the work and is committed to doing a good job and that comes across in the quality of work that they do and how they work together. Acknowledging that someone may have expertise to apply, tapping into people’s strengths.”

“Initiative- CREEHS really fosters that- you’re given certain tasks, but its on you to figure out the best way or to take it one step further and be innovative.”
**Full-Time CREEHS Staff**

**Dr. Eden N. Kyse (Director)** has been a member of the CREEHS team since the start of its operation in 2011 and has served as the Center’s Director since 2013. Dr. Kyse has managed dozens of large- and small-scale evaluation and applied research projects, including those focused on teacher education; teacher professional development; P-12 education; and community needs assessment. This work has been funded by public agencies at the federal and state levels, local educational agencies, community organizations and foundations. Dr. Kyse also serves as the Graduate Program Coordinator for the Center’s graduate certificate in Program Evaluation and teaches courses in educational psychology, research design, and program evaluation. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from The Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY), specializing in Quantitative Methods in Educational and Psychological Research.

**Rebecca Swann-Jackson (Senior Research Associate)** leads the Center’s education and human services team. She has over ten years of experience as an evaluator of educational programs and community-based initiatives serving urban children and families. She has managed evaluations for school districts, state departments of education, community organizations, foundations, and child welfare agencies. An experienced methodologist, she has applied evaluation principles to projects focused on school-based programs for at-risk youth, school reform, family homelessness, community revitalization, systems integration and systems change, child welfare, substance use, and school violence. Ms. Swann-Jackson holds a Master of Education from Rutgers University, with a concentration in Statistics, Measurement, and Evaluation. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in Family Studies from MSU with an emphasis on fathers and parent identity formation.

**Erin M. Bunger (Senior Research Associate)** leads the Center’s public health team. She has experience using collaborative and participatory approaches to evaluate, research and plan public health initiatives. She has managed several evaluations and research projects related to policy and environmental changes to prevent chronic disease and promote wellness. These have included state and local level obesity and tobacco prevention initiatives in a variety of settings such as community-based organizations, schools, early care and education centers and local governments. She also has expertise in planning and evaluating partnerships, clinical interventions and health-related legislation. Ms. Bunger holds a Master of Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education from the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Lina M. Acosta (Research Associate)** is on the Center’s public health team. She has experience in conducting clinical research, administering clinical assessments, and collecting, managing and analyzing data. She has coordinated research studies focusing on Multicultural Psychotherapeutic Interventions for Child Sexual Abuse funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services Federal Appropriations Grant. In addition, Ms. Acosta has worked collaboratively with law enforcement, prosecution, child protection, mental health and medical professionals to advocate and provide support to child victims of abuse and their families. Ms. Acosta holds a Master of Public Health in Quantitative Methods from Rutgers School of Public Health - Newark.

**Dr. Jennifer Prichard (Research Associate)** is on the Center’s education and human services team. She is a community psychologist with a background in evaluation and applied research. Prior to CREEHS, she led various projects in Baltimore, MD, for governmental agencies and non-profits, including a study of the transition to evidence-based nurse home visiting programs for at-risk pregnant women. From this work, she created a roadmap of best practices for other jurisdictions across the county. Her work in Baltimore also included evaluation of a program providing out of school time activities, health services, and family resources to middle schools. She is experienced in qualitative research as well as advanced statistical methods. She holds a Ph.D. in Community Psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) where she specialized in juvenile crime research with an emphasis on the interplay between race and crime.

**Tina Seaboch (Program Assistant)** has been the Program Assistant for CREEHS since its inception, supporting all aspects of the Center’s operation. She has worked in the College of Education and Human Services since 2006. Prior to coming to Montclair State University, Tina worked in private sector administrative roles in San Francisco, California and Copenhagen, Denmark.

**CREEHS Faculty Advisory Committee**

- Amanda S. Birnbaum, Ph.D., Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences
- Brian V. Carolan, Ph.D., The Graduate School
- Elizabeth J. Erwin, Ed.D., Department of Early Childhood, Elementary and Literacy Education
- Leslie Kooyman, Ph.D., Department of Counseling and Educational Leadership
- Lisa D. Lieberman, Ph.D., Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences
- Jennifer Brown Urban, Ph.D., Department of Family and Child Studies