BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE GRADUATE SCHOLARS
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska is launching a new fellowship program for advanced doctoral students conducting research concerning the education, development, and well-being of young children. The program provides financial support and mentoring for doctoral students admitted to candidacy within the University of Nebraska system. The overriding goal of the program is to increase the diversity and skills of scholars conducting research about children birth through age 8 and their families, with particular attention to children placed at risk as a consequence of poverty and social and environmental circumstances. The scholars and their mentors will be active contributors to the mission of the Institute, which is to provide all young children the opportunity to develop, learn, and succeed in life.

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute Graduate Scholars program grew out of the Buffett Institute's four-campus mission focused on applied research, training/professional development, outreach, and policy concerning young children placed at risk. Just as the Institute is cross-disciplinary and cross-campus, the fellowship program is intended to reach across traditional higher education boundaries to include all those who may have an impact on the lives of young children. The Buffett Institute wants to support the best research and practice from such diverse fields as health, education, social work, music, art, and other disciplines. Multidisciplinary research and practice—particularly from areas not typically associated with the field of early childhood—and new methodologies are encouraged. These projects will further the mission of the Institute while supporting the best scholarship and research across campuses.

Eligibility Criteria
- Applicants must be full-time, doctoral-level graduate students who have been admitted to candidacy within a department on one of the NU campuses.
- Faculty mentors are expected to be actively involved with the student's research and related Buffett Institute activities. They must be employed full time at one of the NU campuses.

Project Requirements
- An original research project consistent with the mission and goals of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.
- During each year of the award, the student and faculty mentor must commit to attend two meetings sponsored by the Buffett Institute on one of the NU campuses. These meetings will include NU faculty and national guests and will be designed to advance and expand the research and practice of all those involved.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE BUFFETT INSTITUTE GRADUATE SCHOLARS RFP

This RFP contains information necessary to complete an application for the Buffett Institute Graduate Scholars program. A webinar will be held on Feb. 22, 2016, to answer general questions about this program and the RFP. Additional questions should be sent to Machaela Cavanaugh at mcavanaugh@nebraska.edu. Information about the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and its signature programs can be found at www.buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu.

Timeline
- Webinar will be held on **Feb. 22, 2016,** at 1 p.m. Registration for the webinar is available at http://conta.cc/1K9k6wH.
- Applicants must submit a letter of intent by **March 15, 2016,** at mailto:upload.BECI___.pcoeorkxlk@u.box.com.
- Full applications are due by **April 15, 2016,** at mailto:upload.BECI_Gr.zkh3qgfd8q@u.box.com
- Announcements of awards will be made by June 30, 2016. Funding can begin immediately.

Funding Levels
Up to $25,000/year is available per student; no more than four awards will be made each year. Applicants may request one or two years of funding. The Institute anticipates making two 1-year awards and two 2-year awards. Details about allowable expenses are included in the budget section below.

Letter of Intent
A letter of intent is required and should be uploaded at mailto:upload.BECI___.pcoeorkxlk@u.box.com by March 15, 2016. The document should follow the naming convention of: lastname.firstname.LOI.pdf. The letter of intent should be saved and uploaded as a pdf file. This letter should provide applicants' home campus, department, mentor, years of funding requested, general area of research and how it relates to the field of early childhood development and education. This letter should be no more than one page.

REQUIRED APPLICATION COMPONENTS

1. **Cover Page**
   The cover page should be formatted using the attached template. It may be single-spaced. All information on the attached template must be included.

2. **Table of Contents**
   The table of contents should list the contents of the application including corresponding page numbers. Appendices should be included as part of the table of contents. The table of contents must be single-spaced.

3. **Applicant Biosketch**
   In this section, applicants should describe how this project relates to their doctoral career and provide a brief rationale for the support being requested. Applicants should describe their career

goals and the skills and assets they bring to this project. The experiences and skills that will help applicants complete this project successfully and contribute to the Buffett Institute mission should be clearly identified. Applicants who are from fields not traditionally represented in early childhood should demonstrate clear ties to the field. <u>This section is limited to two pages, double-spaced.</u>

4. **Project Summary/Abstract**

    Provide a <u>one-page summary</u> of the project. The summary must include a brief description of the proposed project, including the research aim(s), population group(s), and design. The potential implications of the project should be addressed. At the top of the abstract, applicants should include the project title and applicant name.

5. **Approach**

    The approach should outline a plan of action that describes how the proposed project will be accomplished. Applicants must describe all activities identified in the application. Explain any design or technological innovations, collaborative arrangements, or extraordinary social and/or community involvement in the project. Provide a list of organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals that will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution. This section should cite potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing project goals and explain strategies that will be used to address these challenges. <u>The approach is limited to two pages double-spaced.</u>

6. **Project Description and Narrative Approach**

a. **Background, Significance, and Aims**

    The application must demonstrate knowledge of the relevant literature on critical issues and existing knowledge, describe objectives, and demonstrate understanding of the overall significance of the proposal. Applications must address how the proposal will address key issues relevant to the Buffett Institute's mission and its signature programs. Applications must incorporate the following information:

    - *A brief literature review justifying the proposed study and the outcomes of interest.* The application must briefly discuss previous studies that have been conducted related to the proposed study, as well as identify gaps in the literature.
    - *The study's theoretical framework*
    - *Significance and implications of the research*
    - *Research aims*
    - *References* (may be single-spaced)

    <u>The background, significance, and aims is limited to five pages, double-spaced.</u>

b. **Research Design and Methodology**

    Method and research design. The application must clearly define the study population, expected sample size, and how the data will be collected. The design must also include sufficient protection of human subjects and adequate consent procedures. IRB approval is required before any data collection. The design must clearly address the goals of the project. The project must clearly be designed by the graduate student. If the proposed project is part of a larger study designed by others, this section must clearly delineate the component that will be carried out by the student and how it is distinguished from the larger research project.

Measures. The specific measures that will be utilized in the study, as well as a brief account of the technical properties of each measure, must be included.

Data analysis plan. The plan for data analysis must be described as well as a brief justification for how the data analytic plan is appropriate for the research aims/hypotheses. It is recommended that the anticipated number of participants available and power analyses be completed for each research question that will be tested, as appropriate. Citations supporting hypothesized effect sizes should be appropriate.

The research design and methodology section is limited to five pages, double-spaced.

c. **Dissemination and Management Plan**

The application must outline and describe plans related to how the findings will be disseminated to a larger audience and how the student and faculty mentor will work together to execute the proposed project.

Dissemination plan. The application must articulate how the project's findings will be disseminated using both research and policy-oriented products and dissemination channels. In addition to traditional research output and dissemination channels (e.g., conference presentations, journal publications), plans should include development of presentations and research briefs tailored for policymakers and/or practitioners. The Buffett Institute will provide support in translating research for appropriate audiences.

Management plan. The application must outline a strong management plan that describes a sound, workable plan of action for how the proposed project will be carried out. This section must describe how the faculty mentor will participate and maintain quality control over the implementation and ongoing operations of the study. This plan must also outline how the faculty mentor will oversee and mentor the student, including frequency of mentoring meetings and details of productivity goals.

The dissemination and management plan is limited to two pages, double-spaced.

d. **Project Timeline and Milestones**
- An annotated timeline must be included, outlining milestones for completion of the various project tasks. The timeline must include when the expected completion of the research project will occur, as well as when the findings will be disseminated to a wider audience.
- The timeline must also include any dates needed for completion of the doctoral program (e.g., review by committee) and any additional activities/courses required for the student to complete the doctoral program.
- The timeline must include Year 1 Project Reports and Final Report dates to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

The project timeline and milestones is limited to two pages, double-spaced.

7. **Project Budget and Budget Justification**

Applications must include a project budget and budget justification. Project budget calculations must include estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail. Provide a budget justification, which includes a budget narrative and a line-item detail, for each year of the proposed project. If costs will differ over the project period, this should be noted within the budget.

The following must be included in the budget and budget justification:

- Expenses directly related to the student's dissertation research, which may include personnel costs/salary, travel, and other directly related expenses.

The following items are NOT allowed within the budget:

- Indirect costs, capital costs, computer purchases (unless specifically needed for the project and justified sufficiently). Questions about allowable budget expenses should be directed to the Buffett Institute.

The budget is limited to one page, single-spaced (a spreadsheet may be used).

The budget justification is limited to two additional pages, single-spaced.

Funds will not be released until IRB approval has been received.

8. **Appendices**

The following items must be included with the application:

- Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor. The graduate student's faculty mentor must submit a letter of support stating that he/she approves the application and describing how he/she will regularly monitor the student's work. In addition, the letter must verify: (a) the student's status in the doctoral program, (b) that the funds will be used for the student's dissertation research, (c) that the student is likely to be within two years or less of completing his/her dissertation, and (d) the role of the dissertation committee in development and approval of the project. This letter should detail the commitment of the faculty member to the student's project and how he/she will actively participate in mentoring the student.
- Curriculum Vitae for Student
- Curriculum Vitae for Faculty Mentor
- Unofficial transcript for student reflecting completion of graduate courses and status in the doctoral program
- Copy of Admission to Candidacy Form with appropriate signatures
- If applicable, provide statements from community, public, and other leaders that support the proposed project. If data collection will occur in specific settings (i.e., Head Start, local school district, community agencies) a letter of support must be included from that setting(s).

No more than three letters of support should be included.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Reviewers will not access, or review, any materials that are not part of the application documents. This includes information accessible on websites via hyperlinks that are referenced, or embedded, in the application. All sections of the Required Application Components (1-8) will be used in the review process.

Bonus Points

Applications from fields not typically associated with early childhood education, yet provide a clear and reasonable argument for their applicability may receive bonus points. Bonus points may also be assigned to applications that utilize innovative methodology and that demonstrate a multidisciplinary approach.

Review and Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by a panel consisting of senior Buffett Institute staff and

three faculty members from the NU system according to the criteria noted above. Outside consultants may be used. Feedback will be provided to applicants after final awards are announced.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION
Accepted Font Style, Application Format, and Writing Style
Applications must be in Times New Roman (TNR), 12-point font, except for footnotes, which may be TNR 10-point font. All application materials must be formatted so that they are 8½ x 11 white paper with 1-inch margins all around. Applicants should include page numbers for each page within the application. The final application should be one file in pdf format. This file should be uploaded at mailto:upload.BECI_Gr.zkh3qgfd8q@u.box.com. Applicants should use the naming convention: lastname.firstname.Final Proposal.pdf

The proposal should be consistent with the format and style guidelines for the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The research should comply with the "Ethical Standards" detailed in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association*.

Page Limitations
- Applicants must not exceed the page limitations listed within each section of the application.
- All applications must be double-spaced, except where noted otherwise.
- Applicants must limit their entire application (not including the appendices) to 24 pages.

Application Elements Exempted from Double-Spacing Requirements
The following elements of the application submission are exempt from the double-spacing requirements and may be single-spaced: cover page, table of contents, one-page project summary/abstract, vitae, logic models, third-party agreements, letters of support, footnotes, tables, references, budget, and budget justification.

ORGANIZATION OF APPLICATION
Applicants are strongly advised to use headings and subheadings that correspond to the required information. The final application must be submitted as one file in pdf format. The final pdf file should be uploaded to upload.BECI_Gr.zkh3qgfd8q@u.box.com using the naming convention: lastname.firstname.Final Proposal.pdf

1. Cover Page (see attached template, single-spaced)
2. Table of Contents (single-spaced, includes all pieces of the application being submitted, including each Appendix)
3. Applicant Biosketch (two pages, double-spaced)
4. Project Summary/Abstract (must be single-spaced, one page maximum)
5. Approach (two pages, double-spaced)
6. Project Description/Narrative Statement: The Project Description/Narrative Statement should correspond to the goals and mission of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and attend to the criteria that will be used to evaluate the applications. It is strongly encouraged that the Project Description/Narrative Statement be organized according to the sections (and subsections) presented below. Additional headings and subheadings may also be used to organize the content of

each section.

    a. Background, Significance, and Aims (five pages, double-spaced)

    b. Research Design and Methodology (five pages, double-spaced)

    c. Dissemination and Management Plan (two pages, double-spaced)

    d. Project Timeline and Milestones (two pages, double-spaced)

7. Budget and Budget Justification (one page, single-spaced)

8. Appendices, including:

- Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor (no more than three, single-spaced)
- Curriculum Vitae for Student (single-spaced)
- Curriculum Vitae for Faculty Mentor (single-spaced)
- Unofficial Transcript for Student Reflecting Completed Graduate Courses and Status in the Doctoral Program
- Documentation of Admission to Candidacy
- Letter(s) of Support (if applicable) (single-spaced)

Cover Page (Template)
Application for Buffett Early Childhood Institute Graduate Scholars

Date:

Project Title:

Student name:

Department name:

Campus: UNL   UNO   UNMC

Mentor name:

Requested years of funding: _____1 year   _____2 years

Requested amount of funding: _____