

(SENIOR) RESEARCH SCIENTIST

Job Overview

The (senior) research scientist will lead existing and future research and evaluation efforts, and in this role will (1) design, implement, and lead research and evaluation projects and may serve as principal investigator and/or project director; (2) collect and analyze data for multiple projects and purposes; (3) draw and communicate practice and policy inferences from analyses; (4) prepare written and oral presentations for diverse audiences; (5) write manuscripts for publication, research, and policy briefs; and (6) write and submit grants to procure funding.

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Profile

Envisioned as a new model for how public higher education is engaged in the first years of life, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute (<https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/>) is a four-campus, university-wide, multidisciplinary research, education, outreach, and policy institute of the University of Nebraska committed to helping transform early childhood development and education in Nebraska and across the nation. The long-term goal of the Institute is to be a leading center where scholars, practitioners, community members, and policymakers collaborate to advance a unified approach that can improve the lives of young children and families and the systems that support them.

Applicants should note that the goals of the Institute are university-, state-, and nation-wide, but the location of the Institute administration office is in Omaha. The position will work primarily out of the Omaha office. Regular hours at the Institute and for this position are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with some evening and weekend assistance when events occur outside of normal work hours. This position may also require some travel.

Primary Job Responsibilities

- Design and lead implementation of evaluation and research studies. Lead and work with internal and external partners to identify meaningful approaches to addressing complex issues through rigorous research. Establish and apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative techniques to collect and analyze data.
- Develop independent line of research, aligned with Institute mission.
- Lead and contribute to written publications, including peer-reviewed manuscripts, research briefs, and data-driven annual reports. Prepare technical reports and journal articles and present findings to partners and the public. Prepare digestible reports with actionable findings and policy/practice recommendations as appropriate.
- Collaborate with Institute staff and stakeholders to define project scope, identify resources, and monitor project deliverables and outcomes.
- Develop grant and contract proposals for federal, state, and philanthropic partners.

- Develop and maintain productive partner relationships, serving as a primary Institute relationship for projects. Clearly communicate with state, university, and Institute partners to advance goals and objectives, orally and in writing. Collaborate with university and state partners.
- Mentor and supervise graduate assistants, sharing approaches to solving concrete problems and providing feedback on the work of others.
- Oversee day-to-day research and evaluation activities including budgeting, planning, analysis, and staff development.
- With minimal supervision, multitask and perform assigned tasks with attention to quality and accuracy.

The classification of this position is dependent on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the applicant. Applicants who meet the criteria for senior research scientist will be appointed at that level.

Research Scientist

Required Qualifications

- Doctorate degree (Ph.D. or Ed.D.)
- One (1) year experience working in social science research-related field (entry-level Ph.D., includes doctoral preparation)
- Demonstrated ability to design, implement, and manage research and evaluation projects
- Proficient in the use of statistical software packages for quantitative (e.g., SAS, SPSS, MPlus) and/or qualitative data analysis (e.g., NVivo)
- Demonstrated excellent written and verbal communication skills, evidenced by written products and/or publication record
- Demonstrated attention to detail
- Familiarity with evidence-based practices and/or policies in early childhood areas

Preferred Qualifications

- Advanced coursework in child development, early education, psychology, or a related field
- Research experience directly related to early childhood programs and policies
- Knowledge of rapid-cycle approaches for using data to inform improvement efforts
- Experience working with secondary data sets
- Experience working with mixed-methods approaches
- Experience conducting advanced statistical analyses (e.g., HLM, SEM, LCA)

Senior Research Scientist

Required Qualifications

- Doctorate degree
- Five (5) years of experience working in social science research-related field (includes doctoral preparation)
- Demonstrated ability to design, implement, and manage research and evaluation projects
- Proficient in the use of statistical software packages for quantitative (e.g., SAS, SPSS, MPlus) and/or qualitative data analysis (e.g., NVivo)
- Demonstrated excellent written and verbal communication skills, evidenced by written products and/or publication record
- Demonstrated attention to detail
- Familiarity with evidence-based practices and/or policies in early childhood areas

Preferred Qualifications

- Advanced coursework in child development, early education, psychology, or a related field
- Experience working with early care and education systems as a practitioner and/or researcher
- Experience in a research/evaluation and/or faculty role to include leading projects and mentoring research staff
- Research experience with early childhood programs and policies
- Knowledge of rapid-cycle approaches for using data to inform improvement efforts
- Experience working with secondary data sets
- Experience working with mixed-methods approaches
- Experience conducting advanced statistical analyses (e.g., HLM, SEM, LCA)

An equivalent combination of education and experience from which comparable knowledge and abilities can be acquired may be considered.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate (1) familiarity with approaches designed to highlight and disrupt disparities in how early childhood systems support children, families, and early childhood professionals; (2) knowledge and passion for transforming the lives of young children; (3) proficient collaboration with university, public education, human service, and community partners in service of research and evaluation efforts; (4) ability to enact an independent line of research aligned with the Institute vision and mission; (5) skills in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches, though they may be more experienced with one or the other; (6) attention to detail; (7) ability to work independently and collaboratively; (8) initiative and creativity in developing relationships and approaches to addressing complex issues; and (9) be an optimistic, positive, resilient, insightful, and performance-driven decision-maker, problem-solver, and consensus-builder.

How to Apply

Applications are processed through the online job posting at <https://careers.nebraska.edu>. Follow instructions to complete the Standard Application. Along with your application, attach a cover letter, curriculum vitae, and contact information for three professional references. Direct questions about the position to: humanresources@nebraska.edu. Direct questions about the online application process to: (402) 472-3701.

The University of Nebraska does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its programs, activities, or employment. The University of Nebraska is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status.

ADDENDUM FOR RESEARCH SCIENTIST

Competencies

- Nature/Complexity of Work
Strong research, organizational, and project coordination skills, and the ability to prioritize and manage multiple tasks. Self-initiative, good follow-through and ability to work without supervision. Ability to work collaboratively. Ability to integrate, synthesize, and report information. Excellent communication skills, including spoken and written communications for presentation (multiple audiences) and publication (report and peer-review).

- Problem-Solving/Decision-Making
Problem-solving and decision-making will be required as an element of this position. This position requires independent judgment and self-direction to complete tasks assigned, determine the tools and approach to be used in developing analyses, and to use judgment in determining the degree to which detail and information is needed to adequately respond to a request. Collaborative decision-making is also required, with the individual leading decision-making processes.
- Strategic Input
This individual must be proficient and conscientious when representing the office of the Buffett Institute. Any errors reflect unfavorably on the individual, the Institute, and potentially the university. The individual is accountable for taking appropriate steps to correct any errors.
- Know-How
This position demands the ability to take initiative, work as a member of a team, yet operate independently when necessary, and thrive in an entrepreneurial environment. The incumbent must demonstrate proficiency with database management and analysis software (qualitative and quantitative); be detail-oriented and accurate; able to prioritize effectively, multi-task, and quickly respond to shifting priorities; have strong research skills including the ability to collect, compile, and analyze facts, draw conclusions, and recommend solutions; and have a willingness to learn and use new technologies and train others, when needed.
- Technical Skills
Adept with computer technology and software, and related program or applications. These include software to support literature reviews, data management and analyses, data reporting and visualization, and writing for publication. Ability to learn new technical skills and programs quickly.
- Interactions
Employee will work extensively with all staff at the Buffett Institute, the University of Nebraska Office of the President, campus representatives, NU faculty, and other community partners.
- Supervision
A researcher appointed at the research scientist level will supervise graduate research assistants. The senior research scientist will supervise research specialists and graduate research assistants. This position will report to the associate director of research and evaluation.

Physical Requirements and Work Conditions

The physical requirements and work conditions described here are representative of what an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Attendance at the workplace is critical. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is routinely required to have vision for up close and far away, talk, hear, sit, and use hands to touch, feel, handle, and operate routine office equipment. The employee is occasionally required to stand, walk, climb stairs, bend, reach, twist, and lift, carry, or move up to 15 pounds. The employee is required to occasionally travel to and participate in meetings and conferences that may require the ability to drive a motor vehicle or stay overnight.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate, and there are frequent interruptions as the Institute staff conduct business in cubicles, walled office space, and conference rooms.