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Welcome to the Achievement and Assessment Institute

The Achievement and Assessment Institute (AAI) at the University of Kansas exists to improve the performance of students, adults, and public agencies throughout local, state, and national communities.

Our Mission

The Achievement and Assessment Institute (AAI) exists to enhance the achievement of a variety of individuals and organizations throughout local, state, and national communities. It includes Agile Technology Solutions, the Center for Educational Opportunity Programs, the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation and the Center for Public Partnerships and Research.

The Achievement and Assessment Institute has a four-part mission:

- Partner with local, state, national, and global communities to apply scholarship to implement programs with direct public impact and to serve the greater good.
- Develop and publish generalizable knowledge that allows leveraging of the solutions developed so that the success of the first part of our mission is magnified.
- Provide faculty with the support and encouragement they need to generate resources for research and development in support of enhanced achievement of individuals and organizations.
- Provide students with experiences vital to their professional development.

The Institute includes four centers, which represent a diversity of services, programs and projects: Agile Technology Solutions, Center for Educational Opportunity Programs, Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation and the Center for Public Partnerships and Research.

AAI and its centers partner with numerous agencies whose goals are to improve the lives of children and adults through academics, employment, career advancement, or building healthy environments, as well as to enhance the capacity of organizations that help children, adults, and communities succeed.

The AAI was established in 2012 through the merger of the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation, established in 1983, and the Institute for Educational Research and Public Services, established in 1997. Both organizations have long track records of successfully building partnerships and programs that support the achievement of young children, school-aged children, adults, and publicly funded agencies.

Effective July 1st, 2013, AAI was recognized by KU’s Office of Research and Graduate Studies as one of just 12 designated research centers at the University of Kansas.

As part of its mission, the AAI also provides KU faculty support and encouragement related to research in improving the performance and enhancing the achievements of students, adults, and public-sector agencies. The Institute and its four centers also provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to obtain valuable research and on-the-job employment experience while at KU.
Our Centers

Agile Technology Solutions helps public agencies develop high volume, highly scalable and cross platform web applications to meet public needs. Its major project currently is the development of KITE™, a testing platform that is used by multiple state departments of education. Incorporating the latest software technology solutions, KITE™ can deliver a variety of test items, including technology-enhanced item types, in a variety of ways so students with a wide range of skills and abilities can access the assessments and their related content. KITE™ has cross-platform/multi-device support and it is supported on desktops, laptops and tablets. It is a secure system that is based on ongoing research in universal design, usability, and fairness. For more information visit http://ats.ku.edu/

The Center for Educational Opportunity Programs supports a wide spectrum of learners and provides educational information, counseling, academic instruction, tutoring, assistance in applying for financial aid, and supportive encouragement to both students and their families. While student financial aid programs help students overcome financial barriers to higher education, the Center for Educational Opportunity Programs help students overcome academic, economic, social, and cultural barriers to higher education. CEOP programs serve students at the University of Kansas, and youth and adults in the Lawrence, Topeka, and Kansas City areas. CEOP partners with more than 70 community agencies and schools in the region, including school districts in Lawrence, Topeka, and Kansas City, Kansas, as well as the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority, the Kansas City Career Center, the KU Center for Research on Learning, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center in Leavenworth. For more information visit http://ceop.ku.edu/

The Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation (CETE) is a nationally recognized research center specializing in large-scale assessment and online test delivery systems. For more than 30 years, CETE has developed cutting-edge testing programs and technology tools including the Kansas Assessment Program, Dynamic Learning Maps™, Kansas Writing Instruction and Education Tool®, Career Pathways Assessment System™, Adaptive Reading Motivation Measures, and the Accessibility for Technology Enhanced Assessments project. Many of these projects involve working with multiple states, including 17 states participating in the Dynamic Learning Maps™ consortium. CETE has worked with the State of Kansas for three decades to provide Kansas schools with a variety of assessment services. Through its partnership with the Kansas State Department of Education, CETE offers computerized assessments to all 286 Kansas school districts using computer testing software CETE created. For more information visit http://cete.ku.edu/; dynamiclearningmaps.org/; or careerpathways.us/

The Center for Public Partnerships and Research assists partners to address complex social issues by providing services in five main areas: research and evaluation, systems development, professional development, technical assistance, and performance management systems. CPPR currently has more than 50 grants in the areas of early childhood, child welfare, child abuse/prevention, K-12 education, and at-risk families. It has extensive experience with state, federal, and community-based organizations to drive research and innovation and to build capacity. As part of the Achievement and Assessment Institute, CPPR can provide the technology to develop large-scale data collection portals. CPPR's multidisciplinary team includes 8 principal investigators and more than 40 additional staff. For more information visit http://cppr.ku.edu/
AAI Graduate Research Assistants

Several weeks before the semester begins, AAI sends out an announcement of available positions for the upcoming semester. The number of positions varies based on the current projects and workload. Students must submit their resume and indicate the position(s) for which they are applying.

Consistent with the University of Kansas policy, AAI is committed to providing an equal opportunity for all qualified individuals to be considered for employment, benefits and conditions of employment, educational programs and activities, regardless of race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, gender identity, or gender expression.

Research assistants will normally work 20 hours a week in exchange for tuition, fees, and expenses to attend one national conference each academic year. Assistantships are renewable based on performance and satisfactory progress toward their degree.

AAI also supports a few GRAs with expertise and experience in software development. These students are often from programs in educational technology, computer science, computer engineering, or information technology but may be from any program if they have appropriate skills. Preference will be given to doctoral students. Assistantships are renewable based on their performance at CETE and satisfactory progress toward their degree.

GRA Training and Expectations

Graduate students will work under the direction of a member of the research team on all projects. However, more experienced graduate students will often take the lead on various projects which involve guiding and organizing less experienced students in project-related activities and goals.

Specific activities and tasks designated to students will depend on the students’ individual background, experience, and interests. Students can expect to be involved in various research-based projects, which help students develop the skills necessary to become independent researchers. Research projects may be based on faculty members’ ongoing research agendas; however, students are encouraged to develop and propose their own research ideas for potential projects. As students’ progress in their coursework toward their degree, their level of involvement and expectations for a given project may change to coincide with the developing skills and abilities of the student.

Examples of student activities and tasks:

• Collecting and maintaining annual state assessment psychometric data
• Assisting with standard setting activities, technical advisory meetings, conference support and educational workshops
• Performing research activities related to the efficacy, features, or utility of different types of assessments, test development, accommodations, as well as quality and measurement issues
• Administering surveys and assessments and participating in data collection
• Coding and interpreting research materials
• Writing literature reviews and contributing to publications
• Developing presentation materials
• Contributing to proposal preparation

AAI Policies

Working in an environment without clear rules can be difficult, inefficient, and anxiety provoking. To avoid such problems, AAI strives for clear policies. In cases where a lack of clarity is identified, we will modify this manual to address such issues.

AAI prides itself on being a great place to work. It is important to us that all staff and students have a positive work experience. Below are some key pieces of information of which you need to be aware.

➢ The Workstation. When space allows, GRAs will have their own workstations. Ronda Consolver will assign you a spot in consultation with your supervisor. GRAs will be able to login to their workstation using KU Online ID and password. If you have questions about where you should sit, please visit with your supervisor.

You will be given a key to your wing/office space. In general we do not distribute building keys, but if there is a time when you need to work on the weekend be it for school or work, just let your supervisor know and they will see to getting you a key to the building.

Given our cramped workspace, please be considerate of those working around you and keep long conversations and cell phone usage to a minimum. Cell phone conversations should take place outside the building, not in areas just outside offices. If a conference room is needed for project meetings or private conversations, we can schedule that for you.

➢ Kitchen Facilities. A coffee pot, microwave, full size refrigerator and water cooler are available for GRA use. Each employee is responsible for cleaning the kitchen area after use, which includes wiping up spills in the microwave, disposing of old items in the refrigerator, and emptying trash into a common trash receptacle. Also, please make sure you leave your work area clean at the end of each day.

➢ Copying: A copier and printer are available for GRA use. This is to be used for work-related purposes. Students may print materials for class but not in excess (e.g., documents over 75 pages, jobs that require a lot of color ink, notes for classmates, etc.). Printers are not to be used for personal use outside of work or class. Please take care when using the equipment. Beverages should not be placed on the copier and be careful when using paper clips or staples as they can fall into the machine.
Supplies: AAI provides paper, pens and various office supplies available for office work projects. If you need something specific for a project, let your supervisor know and they will work with the finance team to get it ordered.

“The Library” (or better known as the shelves in the hall). AAI has several research materials and resources available for student use. If you are interested in checking out such journals as Applied Measurement in Education, Applied Psychological Measurement, Journal of Educational Measurement, and Psychometrika or various textbooks on educational and psychological measurement and research, statistics, and data analysis topics please email rcon@ku.edu and she will give you access to these journals. Additional journal articles can be found on the S Drive in the End Note Project folder. AAI works continuously on scanning hard-to-find articles that may be of use to students in their class work and/or research.

The Work Day. Graduate Research Assistants are legally considered Exempt employees. This means you are not paid by the hour, but are instead expected to work a reasonable number of hours to accomplish necessary tasks in a timely fashion. Nonetheless, GRA appointments are for a percentage of time that the student is expected to work on projects each week. Typically, 50% appointments (20 hours per week) are designated; however, appointments can be adjusted to fit students’ particular needs and availability. Some weeks extra hours may be required to meet a deadline. This should neither occur regularly nor be allowed to interfere with your academic obligations. Work concerns should be discussed with your direct supervisor. If you are not comfortable discussing the issue with your supervisor, feel free to Ronda Consolver as the HR contact or your center director.

While it is not necessary for students to have a regimented work schedule, please provide an approximate schedule of days and times you will be working to your supervisor. This information will be helpful for faculty, project coordinators, and GRAs who may be collaborating on research projects, as well as for the assignment of regular work tasks.

If for any reason you are unable to fulfill your GRA contract due to unforeseen circumstances, please work with your supervisor and Ronda (HR) to discuss contract termination.

AAI will be closed the following national holidays: January 1st, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving and December 25th. AAI is NOT closed during University breaks (i.e., fall, winter, and spring breaks). As such, students are expected to work their regular hours during these breaks, take an unpaid leave of absence, or make prior arrangements with their supervisor. Please note: If you work 20 hours a week, you are still responsible
for working those 20 hours even if one of the days is a holiday, or if you are sick.

HR Pay – the KU Payroll system. As a GRA, you do not enter hours worked into the KU system. The only time you would need to report hours would be if you are planning on being gone for more than one week and will not be able to work the hours you are scheduled, i.e. winter break, vacation, etc. The banking of hours is not allowed, but should you need to work a few additional hours one week in a pay period, that extra time can be taken off in the next week, but any adjusting of hours must both be approved by your supervisor AND occur within the same pay period.

If you wish to request a Leave of Absence, please follow the steps below:

1. Login to the HR Pay system with your KU Online ID – hr.ku.edu
2. Go to SELF SERVICE-TIME REPORTING-REPORT TIME-ABSENCE REQUEST
3. Use the pull down menus choices to select the dates you will be gone.
4. Choose Leave Without Pay as the reason.
5. Once your request is submitted, your supervisor will receive an email alerting them that you have requested the time away and they will either approve or deny the request.

If you have any issues you can contact Ronda at rcon@ku.edu/864-9690 or you can call HR directly at 864-0600.

➢ The Workplace. The atmosphere at AAI is low-key but professional. Occasionally we will have visitors from state agencies and funders, so please keep that in mind. We also try and recognize birthdays of staff and students by providing treats. However, staff members are not allowed to accept significant gifts from students, so if you wish to bring back a souvenir from a trip etc., please make it something small for the whole office to share, rather than a significant gift for a staff member.

If at any point during your employment you have concerns regarding your position, job duties, treatment by fellow employees, please do not hesitate to discuss those with your supervisor. If you have issues with your supervisor, bring those concerns to center director.

The Financial Benefits

Tuition sponsorship coincides with the GRAs designated appointment. Below is a table of possible GRA appointments and the corresponding work hours and percentage of tuition sponsorship. In addition to covering actual coursework, all required campus fees, international student fees, and differential tuition fees are covered. In order to be considered a GRA, you must
enroll in a minimum of six hours each semester (fall and spring) and one hour for the summer semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Sponsored Tuition**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40% or more</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% but less than 40%</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% but less than 30%</td>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% but less than 20%</td>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Percent sponsored tuition coverage applies for a maximum of 12 credits per semester. If you wish to request coverage for additional credit hours, please ask your supervisor to submit a letter of justification to Ronda, rcon@ku.edu, as to why AAI will benefit from covering additional hours. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and will be based on the pertinence of the course work to AAI interests as well consideration of the excellence of the student’s AAI work.

**Compensation.** Effective August 18, 2013 AAI instituted a new pay matrix (see below). Our hourly rates increased for each level in the matrix. AAI GRAs receive one of three different levels of pay depending on their time at AAI. Your increase in pay occurs after two complete semesters at AAI (excluding summers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hourly Rate</th>
<th>Bi-Weekly Pay (20 hr/wk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRA I</td>
<td>$18</td>
<td>$720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRA II</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRA III</td>
<td>$22</td>
<td>$880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payday is every other Friday. When you first begin at AAI, it will be approximately 3.5 weeks before you receive a paycheck. The pay cycle runs from Sunday-Saturday over a two-week period. The University will deposit your paycheck directly into your bank account.

**Student Insurance.** The Kansas Board of Regents, in cooperation with the state universities, offers health insurance to students. This voluntary insurance is available through United Health Care Student Resources. More information can be found at Human Resources page on the KU website or contact Mary Karten at mkarten@ku.edu.

**Conference Attendance.** If the project you are working on allows, you may have the opportunity to attend one national conference each academic year while working at AAI. There is a possibility of attending more than one if you are presenting papers at both conferences. Prior approval from the director of the center in which you work is required.

For CPPR and CEOP, check with your supervisor about availability of funding to attend conferences.

The National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME) and the American
Educational Research Association (AERA) hold their conferences together every spring in a designated location. This is the largest and usually most pertinent conference for CETE measurement and curriculum GRAs. Dates and locations of future meetings follow.

- 2014: Thursday, April 3 – Monday, April 7, 2014, Philadelphia, PA
- 2015: Thursday, April 16 – Monday, April 20, Chicago, IL

CETE recommends that GRAs interested in educational measurement or other areas of educational research attend this joint conference every year and we will cover the cost of conference fee, reasonable transportation, shared hotel room (two students or more per room), and meals up to $1,000 per conference. If you are appointed less than 50%, we will adjust your reimbursement to coincide with that percentage, i.e. 50% appointment gets 100% of the trip reimbursed, while a 25% appointment gets 50% of their trip reimbursed. If there is another relevant conference you would like to attend, let us know.

Students are encouraged to present papers at other national conferences focused on large-scale assessment and, on a case-by-case basis, will consider covering the cost of those conferences. Following are the names and websites of organizations that sponsor possibly pertinent conferences.

American Educational Research Association  http://www.aera.net/
American Psychological Association  http://www.apa.org/
Association for Psychological Science  www.psychologicalscience.org/
Council of Chief State School Officers  www.ccsso.org/
Psychometric Society  www.psychometrika.org/

Research Policies

- Data Ownership. All state assessment, project data, and all AAI materials are the property of AAI, and the directors, staff, and graduate students have no independent right to these data. Furthermore, any data collected as part of any research activity within AAI are also considered to be property of the Center.

Data may be requested for research purposes outside of AAI, but a description of the purpose and planned use of the data should be provided, and permission must be granted by the director of AAI prior to obtaining such data. Such permission will usually be granted as long as it does not require confidential information (such as student or school identification). Using AAI data for non-AAI purposes without explicit permission is grounds for dismissal.

- Authorship of Research Projects. Opportunities for authorship are very important for both staff and graduate assistants. Determining authorship for studies involving a team of researchers can be complex. In general, identification of which persons made significant contributions related to the following criteria will be weighed to determine first and subsequent authorship.
Defined the research question
Created the research design
Made decisions in carrying out the research design
Made decisions in the carrying out of data analyses (as opposed to carrying out data analyses strictly according to someone else’s plan)
Wrote sections of the final paper (with the discussion section getting somewhat more weight than other sections)
Intellectual contribution by way of guidance, advice, and direction should be recognized through authorship when such a contribution was significant to the success of the project

Various factors in and of themselves do not count toward authorship. Such non-contributory factors include the following:

- Position as director or senior staff in the Centers
- Collector or recorder of data
- Carrying out data analysis under explicit direction
- Editing or formatting

These are guidelines. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to determine authorship. Issues of authorship should be discussed at the initial stages of a project so as to avoid miscommunication or conflict in the final stages. An appeal of an authorship decision should be made to the director of AAI who will serve as arbitrator. Should the director be the principal investigator whose decision is being appealed, then a mutually acceptable senior faculty member outside of AAI will be identified to serve as arbitrator. Questioning authorship decisions should not be viewed as out of the ordinary and will be handled in a non-confrontational manner. It is expected that any student completing a dissertation will provide the bulk of the intellectual contribution for that piece of research (even if the research is part of a larger project) and thus will be first author of any articles arising from the dissertation.

- **Patents.** Any inventions created as part of staff or student work at AAI will be the property of the KU Center for Research (KUCR). It would be unusual (though not impossible) for a research assistant to provide the necessary contribution to be listed as a co-inventor.

- **Confidentiality.** All assessment materials and project related data are confidential. Student and participant names and information associated with any of the data are not to be disclosed and should not be used in any context outside of AAI. Similarly, assessment materials are not to be, under any circumstance, dispersed or shared with anyone outside of AAI and materials are to remain within the secured premises of AAI at all times. All staff and research assistants will be required to sign a confidentiality statement in which they promise to protect the confidentiality of student test results and testing materials.
Specific to CETE, all staff and research assistants who work on the Kansas assessments must understand that the security of test materials must be maintained at all times. Test materials may not be removed from the secure AAI area; no copies may be made of tests or test items either on paper or electronic media; tests or test items should not be sent via email; and the content of specific tests or items may not be shared with outside parties. All AAI staff should maintain the same level of security for all project-related data. Please use the shredding bins located in the various centers to dispose of test items. AAI is in the process of developing a test security handbook for staff.

- **Human Subjects.** Any research conducted at AAI must adhere to the APA Guidelines for the Ethical Treatment of Human Participants in Research and must have prior approval from the KU Institutional Review Board and the Human Subjects Committee-Lawrence Campus (HSC-L), prior to the conduct of any data collection or contact with prospective participants. To this end, incoming graduate students must complete the University of Kansas Human Subjects Protection tutorial prior to beginning work at AAI.

- **Compliance.** Failure to comply with the Confidentiality and Human Subjects clauses put the laboratory, the department, and the institution at severe risk. Individuals who fail to comply are subject to immediate dismissal from AAI, possible litigation, charges of academic misconduct, and possibly disbarment from conducting future research. GRAs are required to complete the tutorial every three years. Please go to the link below and follow the instructions.

  https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training

  Once you have completed the training, please provide Ronda a copy of the certificate indicating the training has been completed.

**International Students.** In conjunction with the university’s educational environment, international students are encouraged to refine their English language skills by speaking English while at the Center. Below are a couple of resources that students may find helpful in working on these skills.

**English Club ESL:** [www.ku.edu/students/orgs/English_9442.html](http://www.ku.edu/students/orgs/English_9442.html)
  - **Purpose:** Facilitate English fluency for speakers of English as a second language, with a focus on KU students and families, through classes and activities.
  - **Contact:** Lanny Maddux (lannym@ku.edu) can help find conversation partners.

**Students Tutoring for Literacy:** [http://www.ku.edu/students/orgs/Students_11282.html](http://www.ku.edu/students/orgs/Students_11282.html)
  - **Purpose:** Help native or non-native English-speaking youth and adults obtain their GED, learn English as a second language, read their first book, or fill out a job application.
  - **Contact:** cco@ku.edu
Tips for Success

Shared Interests. When your academic and/or research interests match the work activities that take place at AAI, you and the faculty you work with will both profit. You will develop job-related skills and grow as an independent researcher. Your advisor will take satisfaction in your success and will continue making progress in the field.

Personal Interests. Similarly, when graduate students develop a sense of ownership over their experience at AAI, it can afford many benefits. For instance, you are encouraged to develop your own research interests, ideas, and goals while working at AAI. Student research ideas often lead to a project or paper that can be presented at conferences, published as a research article, or both.

Work Ethic. Graduate students who display a strong work ethic will benefit from a greater potential to develop and learn through experience and advancement toward a leadership role on research projects, as well as future research positions. Therefore, making the most of your experience at AAI will involve demonstrating a strong work ethic.

Involvement. Furthermore, you will want to stay involved in AAI activities and strive to learn as much as you can throughout your work experience. This will involve attending GRA meetings, sharing with others the work that you have been doing as well as finding out what others are doing, volunteering to assist and lead research projects, and taking on projects and tasks that are difficult and/or arduous. You will also want to get to know your office mates and co-workers. Each semester AAI tries to have a social gathering, picnic-type event.

Collaboration. Finally, collaborate with your fellow students both professionally and academically. Fellow students can be a great resource for questions and concerns about work-related issues as well as student-related issues.

New to Lawrence? Helpful Links

KU Website Links:

Graduate Studies: Student Resources
www.graduate.ku.edu/04-00_abt_stu_resources.shtml
- Includes links to academic information, campus resources such as the KU Writing Center, graduate student organizations and international student and scholar services (ISSS), housing and dependent care services, and many community resources

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM): dynamiclearningmaps.org

Career Pathways Collaborative: careerpathways.us

Educational Psychology and Research Program
soe.ku.edu/epr/
Center for Educational Opportunity Programs
http://ceop.ku.edu/

Center for Public Partnerships and Research
http://cppr.ku.edu/

Community Website Links:

Lawrence Public Transit (The T)
www.lawrencetransit.org

Lawrence Newspaper
www2.ljworld.com/

News and Local Forums
www.larryville.com

Community Events
www.visitlawrence.com/

Lawrence Public Schools
http://www.usd497.org/

Parks and Recreation
www.lawrenceks.org/lprd/index.php

Lied Center at KU
www.lied.ku.edu/

Facebook Page
www.facebook.com/pages/Lawrence-KS/
Lawrence-KS/57192293338

Wikipedia Entry
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence,_Kansas