



▶ CAROL CONNOR

Faculty Recruiting Initiative Brings the Best and Brightest to UC Irvine

UCI's School of Education is collaborating with the Departments of Cognitive Sciences and Sociology to build an all-star team of faculty to work on creating opportunity for children living in poverty.

Four years ago, former UCI Provost Howard Gillman launched the High Impact Hiring Plan, an ambitious faculty recruiting initiative designed to bring together interdisciplinary clusters of faculty to work on issues of critical concern to the campus and nation. Since then, a handful of clusters dealing with subjects ranging from air quality to critical theory have been established. One of the more recent ones to be formed, "Creating Opportunity for Children Living in Poverty through Effective Educational Interventions," joins scholars from the School of Education, the Department of Sociology, and the Department of Cognitive Sciences.

From the outset, the Creating Opportunity cluster has been envisioned as a multi-faceted research consortium focused on creating innovative, research-based approaches for transforming the classroom learning experiences of low-income children.

The first step in building out the cluster was to find a distinguished scholar to serve as its leader. To this end, the School of Education recruited Professor Carol Connor from the Learning Sciences Institute at Arizona State University. Connor is recognized as one of the foremost reading researchers in the nation, having been awarded millions of dollars of NSF funding to study the types and amounts of reading

instruction that are most effective for students with differing levels of knowledge and skills.

In Connor, the Creating Opportunity cluster has found an enthusiastic leader who is eager to make a difference. "The High Impact Hiring Program is an exciting opportunity to bring expertise to critical issues facing our nation by fostering collaboration among scholars from different disciplines," she explained.

Using her expertise in developmental psychology, cognitive science, and educational technology, Connor has put together a vibrant group of faculty who share her passion for creating innovative, research-based approaches for transforming the classroom learning experiences of low-income children. Following Connor, the second recruit for the cluster was Professor Young-Suk Kim from the Florida State University's Florida Center for Reading Research. Kim, an expert in language, cognition, and literacy acquisition, is a strong believer in the cluster approach: "Tackling a complex problem such as education and consequently having an impact on children's lives requires a team effort from multiple disciplines. I am thrilled to participate in this exciting, transformative initiative."

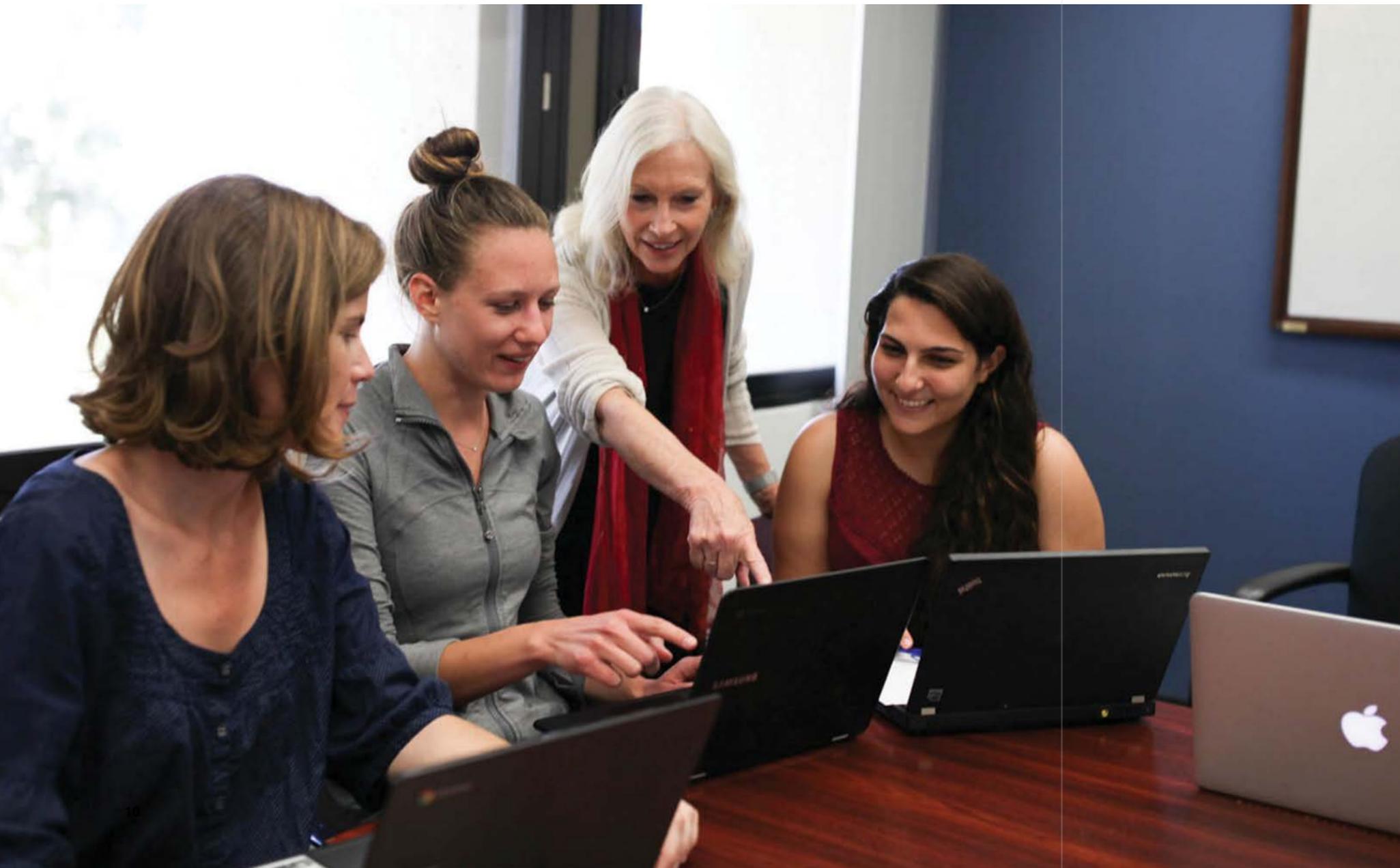
Three additional faculty joined the cluster in July. Assistant Professor of Sociology Paul Hanselman, hired from a postdoctoral position with Irvine Network on Interventions in Development; Assistant Professor of Sociology Julia Lerch, who received her Ph.D. in Education from Stanford University in 2017; and Assistant Professor of Cognitive Sciences Nadia Chernyak, hired from a postdoctoral position at Boston University. An additional School of

Education researcher is slated to be hired during the fall quarter of 2017.

The full complement of Connor's team will focus on the use of technology and other learning strategies to support gains in foundational literacy and mathematical skills in preschool and early elementary grades – the time when children's achievement gains are the largest.



Recent SoE hire
Professor Young-Suk Kim



The High Impact Hiring Program is an exciting opportunity to bring expertise to critical issues facing our nation by fostering collaboration among scholars from different disciplines.