

The Woodcock Institute and Opportunities for Students, Practitioners, and Graduate Educators

BY DANIEL C. MILLER & DENISE E. MARICLE

Texas Woman's University offers a unique combination of programs and opportunities, not only to its students and faculty, but to researchers and practitioners across the country. To a significant extent, these programs owe their existence to the professional and financial support of Dr. Richard W. Woodcock and the Woodcock Institute for the Advancement of Neurocognitive Research and Applied Practice. We hope that this article will raise awareness among our colleagues of the opportunities available to students, practitioners, and graduate educators for dissertation support, training, professional development, and research funding.

THE WOODCOCK INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF NEUROCOGNITIVE RESEARCH AND APPLIED PRACTICE

In the past, Dr. Woodcock graciously donated a portion of his test royalties to the Woodcock-Munoz Foundation (WMF), a nonprofit organization founded to support training and research in psychoeducational assessment by awarding research grants and providing training materials at no cost to practitioner-based programs in school and clinical psychology. In 2015, the WMF board of directors agreed to wind down the WMF operations and transfer their assets to Texas Woman's University (TWU) in Denton, Texas, with the establishment of an endowment in Dr. Woodcock's name. The initial \$10 million gift was the largest donation to TWU in its history. Since the establishment of the Richard W. Woodcock Endowment Fund, the monetary value of the endowment has grown to nearly \$25 million due to additional test royalties and continued generous gifts from Dr. Woodcock.

As part of the initial gift to the university, the Woodcock Institute for the Advancement of Neurocognitive Research and Applied Practice (aka Woodcock Institute) was established, and Dr. Dan Miller (former president of the National Association of School Psychologists; NASP) was named as the inaugural executive director. Dr. Woodcock believed that endowing and housing an institute at TWU would support and contribute to his mission and legacy. The mission of the Woodcock Institute is to promote interdisciplinary research into the cognitive profiles of individuals with diagnosed exceptionalities (learning disabilities, neuropsychological conditions, behavioral and psychiatric disorders, and giftedness), the advancement of effective clinical assessment practices, and the dissemination of research findings through direct professional development opportunities and publications, and applied evidence-based assessment.

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY AND THE WOODCOCK INSTITUTE

Although coed, TWU is the nation's largest university primarily for women. Enrollment at TWU across three campuses (Denton, Dallas, and Houston) is about 16,000 students. TWU is a very diverse university and is typically ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as being one of the top 10 most diverse universities. The Woodcock Institute is housed on the Denton campus in Woodcock Hall.

A factor contributing to Dr. Woodcock's selection of TWU for endowment and the establishment of an institute bearing his name and legacy was its programs in school psychology. TWU has both a specialist program and a doctoral program in school psychology. The specialist program is conditionally approved by NASP, and the doctoral program is accredited by the American Psychological Association. TWU's doctoral program in school psychology has a unique niche in school psychol-

ogy training, as students are able to obtain specialized training in school/pediatric neuropsychology. Faculty within the school psychology programs have worked with Dr. Woodcock on research projects and dissemination of research in assessment through publications and presentations.

In 2020, the Woodcock Autism Assessment Clinic (WAAC) was established in partnership with the University of North Texas's Kristin Farmer Autism Center in Denton, Texas. WAAC has provided unique interdisciplinary training opportunities and experiences for graduate students from TWU's school psychology, speech and communication, and occupational therapy graduate programs. "There is a real need in the local community for autism assessments. Private practice psychologists often have a waitlist at least 6 months out, and many families can't afford to wait that long for a diagnosis," said Wendi Leigh Bauman Johnson, PhD, associate professor of school psychology and director of WAAC. The clinic has provided graduate students with invaluable real-world experiences in working with an interdisciplinary team evaluating children suspected of being on the autism spectrum.

FUNDING ACTIVITIES OF THE WOODCOCK INSTITUTE

The Woodcock Institute has several funding opportunities for trainers of school psychologists, doctoral students, and practitioners. These funding opportunities include research grants (awarded semiannually), the Richard W. Woodcock Dissertation Award (awarded semiannually), and a National Solution-Oriented Conference (awarded occasionally). The majority of the research grants are awarded to university faculty members who are conducting research consistent with the mission of the Woodcock Institute. The grant recipients are not limited to TWU and come from multiple disciplines across many U. S. universities including, but not limited to school psychology. For example, in the last two funding cycles (2019–2020, 2020–2021), researchers from the University of North Texas, Temple University, Kent State, University of South Carolina, University of Kansas, Northern Arizona University, Indiana University-Bloomington, the University of Florida, Utah State University, and Texas Woman's University have been grant recipients. Research topics vary widely, but a few recently funded projects include "Validation of the WJ IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities and the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metrics in a Tele-Neuropsychology Setting," "Neurocognitive Impairments and the Role of MeCP2 in Autism Spectrum Disorder," and "Validating Biofeedback Interventions and Objective Biomarkers in Post-Concussion Syndrome."

School psychology practitioners do not typically have time to conduct original research due to their normal job duties. However, school districts are often a repository of massive amounts of assessment data which could be aggregated and analyzed to answer important questions about school psychology service delivery and the effectiveness of educational interventions. It is important for practitioners to know that grant funds may be used to pay for release time for school psychology practitioners to work on a research project in addition to other research expenses.

Each research grant is approximately \$15,000 and awarded semiannually. Deadlines for application are March 1 and October 1 of each year. Information and application procedures are located and explained on the institute's website.

Graduate students in school psychology, clinical psychology, education, and other affiliated professional fields may be interested in the Richard W. Woodcock Dissertation Award. This grant awards up to \$5,000 to support expenses related to dissertation completion (such as paying for statistical consultation, materials needed to collect data, etc.). Three awards are available each year, with one award reserved for a TWU doctoral student, and the other two available to students from any relevant program. Information and application procedures are found on the Institute's website. The deadline for application is September 15.

To support continuing education initiatives and a mission focus on advanced neurocognitive research and applied practice, the Woodcock Institute sponsors continuing education initiatives. Currently these initiatives are restricted to TWU, but outside entities with interesting proposals should contact the institute's executive director regarding the possibility of cosponsorship. Two National Solution-Oriented Conferences have been held to date: "Diversity in Deaf Education: A National Perspective" and "A Working Conference to Advance Occupational Therapy in Research and Practice for Cognition and Dementia." The institute awards up to \$25,000 to sponsor a National Solution-Oriented Conference. Additionally, the Woodcock Institute offers a distinguished lecture series grant of up to \$5,000 to bring a nationally recognized speaker to campus.

As with all organizations, the Woodcock Institute has felt the impact of the pandemic and its associated disruptions. With the pandemic receding, more opportunity to expand the institute's activities and reach is in sight. For more information about the Woodcock Institute visit: <https://twu.edu/woodcock-institute>. ■

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