In This Issue

Sen. Deb Fischer
Giving a Talk on Campus

Center Researcher
Served as Judge for Drought Tournament

Acting Director
Discusses Poverty in Lincoln

PPC Partners with Stakeholders to Prepare for Rural Disasters

Postdoctoral Fellow
Speaking at ABA Conference

Guide to Writing Literature Reviews

U.S. Foreign Policy: A View from the Senate, featuring Sen. Deb Fischer

Senator Deb Fischer will be speaking about U.S. foreign policy at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, on Wednesday, April 8, 2015, from 4:30 to 5:30 PM. The event will be at the city campus student union ballroom, and is free and open to the public and University of Nebraska-Lincoln community. Senator Fischer is a member of the Committee on Armed Services, and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities. This event is part of the Thomas C. Sorensen Public Policy Seminar Series of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, and supported by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Arts & Sciences through the Thomas C. Sorensen Endowment. For more information, please contact Tarik Abdel-Monem at tarik@unl.edu, or (402) 472-3147, or visit ppc.unl.edu.

Download the official event poster here. Please feel free to share this with your colleagues, students, and other interested organizations

Center Researcher Served as Judge for Drought Tournament

PPC Research Specialist Tarik Abdel-Monem served as one of two judges for the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD) Drought Tournament held in Lincoln, NE on February 12, 2015. The drought tournament was a tabletop exercise involving stakeholders across the LPSNRD, including farmers, water suppliers, village and city officials, Nebraska Game and Parks, the USDA and Farm Service Agency, county and state emergency management, and other entities. The purpose of the tournament was to identify gaps in planning and response to drought conditions in the area.
The information gathered from the exercise will be incorporated into the LPSNRD’s Drought Emergency Response Plan and was a collaborative effort between the LPSNRD, National Drought Mitigation Center, JEO Consulting Group, Inc., and HDR, Inc.

**Acting Director Discusses Poverty in Lincoln**

The [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNL](http://www.unl.edu) will be holding a six session course on the current state of poverty in Nebraska. PPC Acting Director, [Nancy Shank](http://www.unl.edu), has been invited to lead the class on **Friday, April 10th from 9:00 - 10:30 AM on East Campus**. Dr. Shank will discuss the results of the Lincoln Vital Signs 2014 report that showed an increase in the number of persons living in poverty.

**PPC Partners with Stakeholders to Prepare for Disasters in Rural Communities**

Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) can be very effective following a large-scale disaster or emergency. They are often tasked with coordinating emergency human services in times of crisis and are an essential part of making sure communities are resilient following a disaster. However, rural communities often face a problem with establishing or maintaining COADs due to limited resources.

The [University of Nebraska Public Policy Center](http://www.unl.edu), University of Nebraska Extension, and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency are partnering with local emergency management officials to create solutions to this problem. [Ryan Lowry](http://www.unl.edu), research specialist with the Public Policy Center, will be working with various stakeholders to develop a COAD in Hall County, NE. Funding for this project comes from the Extension Disaster Education Network. The goal is to effectively engage community partners to establish a sustainable COAD, as well as create documents and capture best practices that other communities can use as a model.

**Center Postdoctoral Fellow Speaking at Conference**

[Dr. Tess Neal](http://www.unl.edu), Public Policy Center Postdoctoral Fellow, has been invited to present at another upcoming American Bar Association (ABA) event. She will be speaking as part of a panel at the annual conference of the Litigation Section of the ABA, April 16-18 in New Orleans. The session is called "The Science of Persuasion," and the panel will expose ABA
members to recent academic research on issues related to the use of expert witnesses in litigation.

Guide to Writing Literature Reviews

When facing a vexing policy problem or multiple policy choices, policy makers often find that literature reviews are helpful tools for making informed decisions. Literature reviews rigorously synthesize the results of past research. Policy makers are equipped, then, to join scientific evidence with their understanding of local context and values to shape policy dialogues and decisions.

The first step in a literature review is to identify the problem(s) or question(s) that will be addressed. This is typically done in consultation with policy makers to ensure that the problem/question is clearly defined and properly scoped. Questions may include: What do we know about X?, What works to reduce/increase Y for whom and when?, What are the issues around Z?

Secondly, the scope of information sources is determined. The best literature reviews don't limit their inquiry to a few databases: In addition to including evidence from peer-reviewed articles, it is also helpful to search for "gray" literature, such as dissertations, government and other organization reports, and conference abstracts.

Thirdly, decision rules for inclusion/exclusion are determined so that there is a consistent rationale for what will be a part of the review. Rules may include timing, methodologies, scales, geography, cost, and so on. Studies included in a literature review are often assessed by examining issues including the data collection approach and methods, population, setting, analyses, and interpretation of the results.

Finally, the literature is synthesized and the findings interpreted. There are many ways to organize the results of a literature review. Individual studies can be arranged chronologically based on publication year, thematically by grouping the most relevant topics and issues, or methodologically based on the methods utilized by the researchers. The review should also discuss the results to put them in context and note any likely weaknesses. Ultimately, a literature review should clearly present the relevant and timely results in a way that is understandable to the policy makers who will be using it.

The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center links policy with research, process, and practice.

ph: 402-472-5678 | ppc@nebraska.edu | http://ppc.nebraska.edu

Sign up for PolicyTalk and view past issues!