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September 22, 2014

Dear Colleague:

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute, established in 2011 with a founding gift from Omaha philanthropist Susie Buffett, is dedicated to promoting the development and learning of children from birth to age 8, focused especially on those who are vulnerable because of poverty, abuse, or developmental, learning, or behavioural challenges. Drawing on the resources of the four University of Nebraska campuses, the Institute devotes itself to three goals: (1) applied research in support of the learning and development of children at risk, birth – age 8; (2) education and professional development to enhance the quality and quantity of highly qualified early childhood educators and providers; and (3) outreach to inform and impact state and national policy related to children and families.

Two signature programs illuminate the goals of the Institute: the **Achievement Gap Challenge** works to help narrow the gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged children in Nebraska. The **Workforce Development Program** focuses on increasing the quality and quantity of early childhood educators. I am writing today to invite your active participation in the second of these signature programs, the Workforce Development effort.

Our initial goal in this work is to gain a better understanding of the variety and scope of early childhood personnel preparation programs in Nebraska. We are inviting deans, directors, chairs, and lead faculty in early childhood from post-secondary institutions of higher education throughout the state (public and private institutions, general and special education, birth – Grade 3) to join us on **Monday, November 10 at the University of Nebraska-Omaha** for a meeting from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. One of the features of this gathering will be a description of the Nebraska Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory that we will be administering with the cooperation of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California-Berkeley. Our director of workforce development, Dr. Susan Sarver, will describe the purpose of the inventory and she and I will share with you our goals in asking you to participate in this. We will also have time to hear your goals and ideas about the early childhood workforce.

I hope you will be able to join us in November for this important kick-off event devoted to strengthening and supporting early childhood personnel development in Nebraska. Please “save the date” for this important meeting. Our office will be in touch with further details in the next few weeks, including information about assistance with travel costs. If you would like additional information, please feel free to be in touch with Dr. Sarver at ssarver@nebraska.edu or (402) 554-3762. Thank you, and I look forward to seeing you on November 10.

Sincerely,

Samuel J. Meisels
Founding Executive Director

Start early. Start well.