Capability Statement

Innovative Learning Center Division of Research and Evaluation is a leader in evaluation, research, and capacity-building services, specializing in learner-centered approaches for organizations, teams, and projects of all sizes. We empower our clients and team members through intentional, scaffolded processes that foster growth, transparency, and sustainable success. We support our higher education leaders and non-profit executives in using data-driven insights and human-centered evaluation to measure impact, improve outcomes and secure future funding..

Core Competencies:

1. Comprehensive program evaluation and research design
2. Advanced data analysis, including Bayesian statistics, bootstrapping, and knowledge graph modeling
3. Development and automation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for consistent, high-quality service delivery
4. Creation of data visualizations and knowledge graphs to support understanding and decision-making
5. Capacity-building for clients through training, professional development, and transparent knowledge transfer

Our Approach:

1. Learner-Centered Philosophy: We apply a scaffolded, learner-centered approach to onboarding employees, consultants, and clients, ensuring that all stakeholders are supported and empowered throughout our engagement.
2. Multi-Modal Communication: We utilize visual, written, and interactive methods to meet diverse learning needs and ensure clarity at every stage.

3. Replicability and Transparency: Our processes are designed for transparency and replicability, enabling clients to sustain and scale improvements beyond our engagement.
4. Professionalism and Partnership: We set clear boundaries and expectations, ensuring that our expertise is valued and that clients receive the highest level of professional service.

Differentiators:

1. Hybrid expertise in both business operations and evaluation, allowing us to bridge gaps and deliver holistic solutions
2. Proven track record with high-level clients and complex, multi-stakeholder projects
3. Commitment to continuous improvement and professional development for both our team and our clients
4. Automation and refinement of internal processes for efficiency and quality assurance

Past Performance:

1. Successfully supported clients in education, research, and nonprofit sectors with program evaluation, data analysis, and capacity-building initiatives
2. Recognized for our ability to translate complex data into actionable insights and to foster sustainable organizational growth

ANGELICQUE TUCKER BLACKMON, PH.D.

Dr. Angelicque Tucker Blackmon, CEO and Principal Evaluator of ILC

Dr. Angelicque Tucker Blackmon is the CEO and Principal Evaluator at Innovative Learning Center LLC, leading a team of Ph.D.-level research associates. With 25 years of experience, Dr. Blackmon is a highly respected figure in STEM education program evaluation. She is recognized for establishing the core competencies of ILC, specializing in comprehensive program evaluation, advanced data analysis, and the creation of impactful data visualizations. A hallmark of her leadership is designing, documenting, and implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that streamline both internal and client-facing processes, ensuring consistent, high-quality service delivery. Dr. Blackmon leverages technology like HubSpot and Asana to automate SOPs and coordinate tasks, fostering efficiency and a learner-centered environment.

Her extensive expertise as a STEM education researcher, data scientist, and ethnographer enables her to design and implement human-driven STEM evaluation programs with measurable impact. She has directly supported the development of proposals totaling $24 million, providing strategic feedback and customized evaluation plans that enhance program effectiveness and secure funding. Dr. Blackmon served as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation (2005–2007) and has been an external reviewer for NSF for 20 years (2005–2025).

Dr. Blackmon holds a B.S. in Chemistry and an M.S. in Analytical Chemistry from The Georgia Institute of Technology, a Ph.D. in Educational Studies with a focus on Science Education from Emory University, and is currently completing a Master's degree in Data Science from Harvard Extension School. Her academic and research background, including a postdoctoral fellowship in Cultural Anthropology, informs her work in understanding the sociocultural influences on science teaching and learning. She has served as lead evaluator on a $12.5 million Annenberg Foundation grant and as an external evaluator for over 30 funded STEM programs, producing more than 50 evaluation reports, 10 research publications, and two book chapters. Her evaluations focus on increasing students' knowledge, interests, and skills in STEM, with a special emphasis on building on the cognitive and creative assets of all students.

Dr. Zhina Shen
Director of Research and Evaluation

As the Director of Research and Evaluation at ILC, Dr. Zhina Shen has significantly refined the firm's processes, particularly in the generation of knowledge graphs and conceptual structural equation modeling. She specializes in advanced statistical modeling and the creation of clear, impactful data visualizations. Dr. Shen excels at deconstructing complex statistical linear models and presenting them in accessible ways, enabling clients to easily understand and interpret data and insights. This learner-centered approach ensures transparency and empowers clients to make informed, data-driven decisions by understanding the statistical modeling underlying their program theories and assumptions for student impact.

Dr. Shen brings a unique combination of expertise in behavioral research, special education, and advanced data analysis. She earned her Ph.D. in Learning Disabilities and Behavior Disorders from the Department of Special Education at The University of Texas at Austin, where she also completed a Master's degree in the same field. Dr. Shen holds a special education teaching certification. In addition, she holds an M.S. in Statistics from the Department of Natural Sciences.

Dr. Shen has extensive experience working with school-based programs serving students with autism and other behavioral challenges. In a previous role, she led the evaluation of a program supporting students with autism, analyzing behavioral outcomes and generating individualized progress reports for families. Her work emphasized data-driven decision-making and parent communication to support student growth in both academic and behavioral domains.

She has deep methodological expertise in randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, meta-analyses, and secondary data analysis, as well as qualitative methods such as structured interviews and focus groups. Dr. Shen previously served as Principal Investigator of a state-funded project examining manipulative-based interventions for K–12 students with math learning difficulties, where she led a meta-analysis to assess intervention impact.

Dr. Terrence Calistro
Statistician and Data Scientist

Terrence Calistro, Ph.D., is a Statistical Consultant, Evaluation Data Scientist at ILC, and an adjunct professor for Mercy University. Terrence received his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center in 2024. Terrence received his M.S. degree in General Psychology from the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Mercy University. Dr. Calistro has extensive knowledge and work experience with numerous statistical domains such as hypothesis testing, data visualization, linear and generalized linear modeling, structural equation modeling, linear mixed modeling, generalized linear mixed modeling, factor analysis, psychometrics (classical test theory (CTT) and item response theory (IRT), Bayesian statistics, non-parametric statistics, survival analysis, robust statistics, time series analysis, and machine learning (supervised, unsupervised, and reinforcement machine learning models).

Dr. Calistro has quantitative research expertise in randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental design, meta-analysis, correlational research, survey research, and secondary data analysis. Terrence has experience working as a statistician for multiple federally funded grants, including Institutional Resilience and Expanded Postsecondary Opportunity (IREPO), National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), and Helping Evidence-Based Advocates with Responsive Training (HEART) grants. In addition, Dr. Calistro has completed over 100 statistical consultation projects.

Sydney Okland
PhD Candidate, Program Evaluation Analyst

Sydney Okland is a skilled mixed methods researcher and Ph.D. candidate in Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, expected to graduate in May 2026. With a strong foundation in both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methodologies, she brings a robust skill set to her role as an evaluator. Sydney has applied her expertise in research design, statistical analysis, and data visualization to assess program outcomes and support data-driven decision-making for various initiatives in psychological and educational fields. In addition, Sydney has expertise in business development and project management, gained through work in platforms such as Asana and HubSpot.

Sydney's academic background and professional experience make her particularly adept at integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness. She has designed and executed evaluations for large-scale studies involving diverse populations, such as her research on the emotional and linguistic dimensions of social rejection and an evaluation of the impact of tele-behavioral mental health services on children from diverse backgrounds. These projects, which included a total of over 1,000 participants, required meticulous data management, statistical analysis, and the supervision of research assistants. Sydney also has expertise in survey development and management in REDCap, Qualtrics, and SurveyMonkey, as well as expertise working with large amounts of sensitive data, reflecting her leadership in coordinating and conducting high-impact evaluations.