

A photograph of a young child with dark skin and curly hair, sitting on a grassy lawn. The child is wearing a light blue t-shirt with a blue elephant graphic and white shorts. They are surrounded by colorful plastic blocks (red, yellow, green, blue, pink) and are looking towards the camera with a joyful expression. The background is a soft-focus view of green foliage and trees, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Anita Zucker Center *for* Excellence  
*in* Early Childhood Studies

# 2017 PROGRESS REPORT

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# GOING GREATER

The Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies is UF’s central hub for our university-wide work to build a healthier future for children, families and communities.

This year, we’ve made greater progress thanks to a transdisciplinary team of scholars, partners and advocates. In 2017 alone, we convened the Early Childhood National Summit to tackle the grand challenges in early childhood; we welcomed new faces and traveled to new places to expand the Center’s breadth and depth; and we’ve created, implemented and shared solutions that are spurring transformative change for all young children and their families.

Thanks to your continued support, our unique constellation of scholars, partners and advocates are keeping children healthy and safe through our collaborative quests in research, policy and practice. Philanthropy and partnership expand our impact, unleashing promise — and possibilities.

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On the following pages, read about some of the Anita Zucker Center’s people and projects that have made a difference this year.

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# EARLY CHILDHOOD NATIONAL SUMMIT

In February 2017, the nation's renowned researchers, educators, scholars, policy makers and leaders converged in Orlando to collaboratively address the grand challenges facing young children who are most vulnerable and their families.

## NATIONAL SUMMIT WORK GROUPS FOCUSED ON THREE KEY AREAS:

### DISCOVERING THE KEYS TO OPENING YOUNG MINDS

Identifying how knowledge from neuroscience, epigenetics, and the learning sciences may be used to inform strategies that strengthen children's resilience to biological, environmental, and established risks.

### INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCERS TO UNLOCK CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL

Identifying effective strategies to integrate and advance social policies focused on young children who are vulnerable and their families.

### INSPIRING NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Identifying approaches that have shown promise for supporting caregivers' and practitioners' implementation of evidence-based practices and improving children's health, developmental, and learning outcomes.



Jacqueline Jones, President and CEO of the Foundation for Child Development and keynote speaker



Top: Darrin Goss Sr., Coastal Community Foundation

Middle: Scott Rivkees, UF College of Medicine; Patricia Snyder, Center director; David Lawrence Jr., Chair of The Children's Movement of Florida; W. Kent Fuchs, UF President; Maureen Conroy, Center co-director; and Anita Zucker, UF trustee

Bottom: Ann Kaiser, Vanderbilt University; Judith J. Carta, University of Kansas; Bernard Dreyer, New York University School of Medicine, Pamela J. Winton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



# NEXT STEPS

Our commitment to action is reflected in recommendations that came out of the Summit discussions. These actions will frame the Anita Zucker Center’s agenda in the coming years:

**1 SUPPORT FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS TO NURTURE CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**

Ensure all children have safe, stable, and nurturing relationships (SSNRs) with parents and caregivers, as well as optimal early learning experiences.

**2 IDENTIFY AND SCALE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

Build an inventory of evidence-based practices and identify effective strategies to implement them at scale.

**3 COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITY**

Work with community partners to transform services and supports for young children and families.

**4 ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATED BUDGETING AND POLICIES**

Implement strategies that break down traditional budgeting and policy silos in health, early education and family support programs.

**5 PROFESSIONALIZE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE**

Support ongoing local, state and national efforts to professionalize the early childhood workforce through the dissemination of evidence-based professional development approaches.

**6 APPROACH EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES FROM TRANSDISCIPLINARY AND SYSTEMS-FOCUSED PERSPECTIVES**

Build capacity among relevant disciplines that directly and indirectly impact early childhood.

**7 CENTRALIZE COMMUNICATIONS**

Unify messages around early childhood and establish common language and goals that result in more effective translation of our work to the general public.







MELISSA BRIGHT, PH.D.



NEW ZEALAND



PORTLAND, OREGON



# NEW FACES & PLACES

**MELISSA BRIGHT, PH.D.**  
**ASSISTANT RESEARCH SCIENTIST**

In August, the Anita Zucker Center welcomed Dr. Melissa Bright to the team. Her transdisciplinary research focus is on child maltreatment and related social determinants of health and development. She is particularly interested in maltreatment prevention and intervention strategies in primary care and education settings. “I take a very transdisciplinary approach — working with colleagues in the College of Medicine, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Psychology — to take a holistic perspective on the inputs and outcomes of child maltreatment and adversity.”

**NEW ZEALAND**  
**WORLD FORUM ON EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION**

Dr. Patricia Snyder, director of the Anita Zucker Center, attended the World Forum on Early Care and Education conference, which included more than 800 early childhood practitioners from over 80 nations. She also joined colleagues Tara McLaughlin from Massey University, Mary Louise Hemmeter from Vanderbilt University, and Janene Swalwell from Monash University in Australia, to present on practice-based coaching to a standing-room only session.

**PORTLAND, OREGON**  
**DIVISION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD’S 33RD ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Twenty Anita Zucker Center students and faculty joined national experts to present, share and inspire at the Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood’s 33rd Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Center students, faculty and post-doctoral associates presented 11 posters on topics in early intervention and early childhood special education. Drs. Patricia Snyder, Mary McLean and Brian Reichow also led the J. David Sexton Memorial Reception & Workshop titled “Synthesizing Evidence in Support of the DEC Recommended Practices (2014).” The DEC recommended practices are national guidelines that inform decisions about practices implemented by professionals and families for children with special needs.

# GENERATING KNOWLEDGE

The center is continuing to advance research in policy development and analysis, promotion, prevention and intervention practices, as well as learning and neuroscience.



## BEST IN CLASS WEB

Following up on a four-year efficacy study of the BEST in CLASS intervention, the Institute of Education Sciences awarded a grant to Dr. Maureen Conroy to translate it into a widely accessible Web-based platform. BEST in CLASS Web provides access to the Center’s practice-based coaching model to train and support early childhood teachers to use effective practices in their classrooms that improve teacher-child relationships and decrease problem behaviors. Dr. Conroy is collaborating with Dr. Kevin Sutherland at Virginia Commonwealth University and Dr. Ed Feil at Oregon Research Institute.

“We are excited to receive funding to expand BEST in CLASS into a Web-based training and coaching platform,” said Dr. Conroy. “With this extension, we believe we will be able to reach more teachers and children across the nation.”

## FLORIDA EARLY STEPS

The Florida Early Steps program awarded a contract to Drs. Patricia Snyder, Brian Reichow and Cinda Clark, along with colleagues Drs. Juliann Woods and Mollie Romano from Florida State University’s Communication and Early Childhood Research and Practice Center. Their work supports professional development focused on caregiver coaching on social-emotional practices at three model demonstration sites located at Northeastern Early Steps, North Central Early Steps, and North Dade Early Steps.

## EMBEDDED INSTRUCTION CALIFORNIA

Building off both past and current research funding from the Institute of Education Sciences, Embedded Instruction California (EI CA) is a pilot project spearheaded by the Anita Zucker Center entering its third year of implementation with school districts or country offices of education in Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Napa, Etiwanda, Pleasanton and Sonoma.

# PREPARING LEADERS

Faculty leaders are shaping tomorrow’s experts who will inform and transform the future of early childhood studies.

## PROJECT PREPARE SCHOLARS

Project Prepare is in the third year of grant assistantship for up to 13 master’s students seeking specialized training opportunities in early childhood studies. The scholarship offers each student up to \$13,750 each year for tuition during fall and spring semesters. Funded for five years by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the program is designed to train and prepare students to become the next generation of leaders by working with young children with disabilities in high-need communities.

## NEW DOCTORAL STUDENTS



**QUNSHAN “TWINKLE” ZHENG**  
**HOMETOWN: HUBEI PROVINCE, CHINA**

“In China, early childhood support — especially for children who need a special education — is difficult to find. I am excited to gain the knowledge and skills so that when I return, I can teach more teachers and parents to implement high quality early childhood services and supports.”



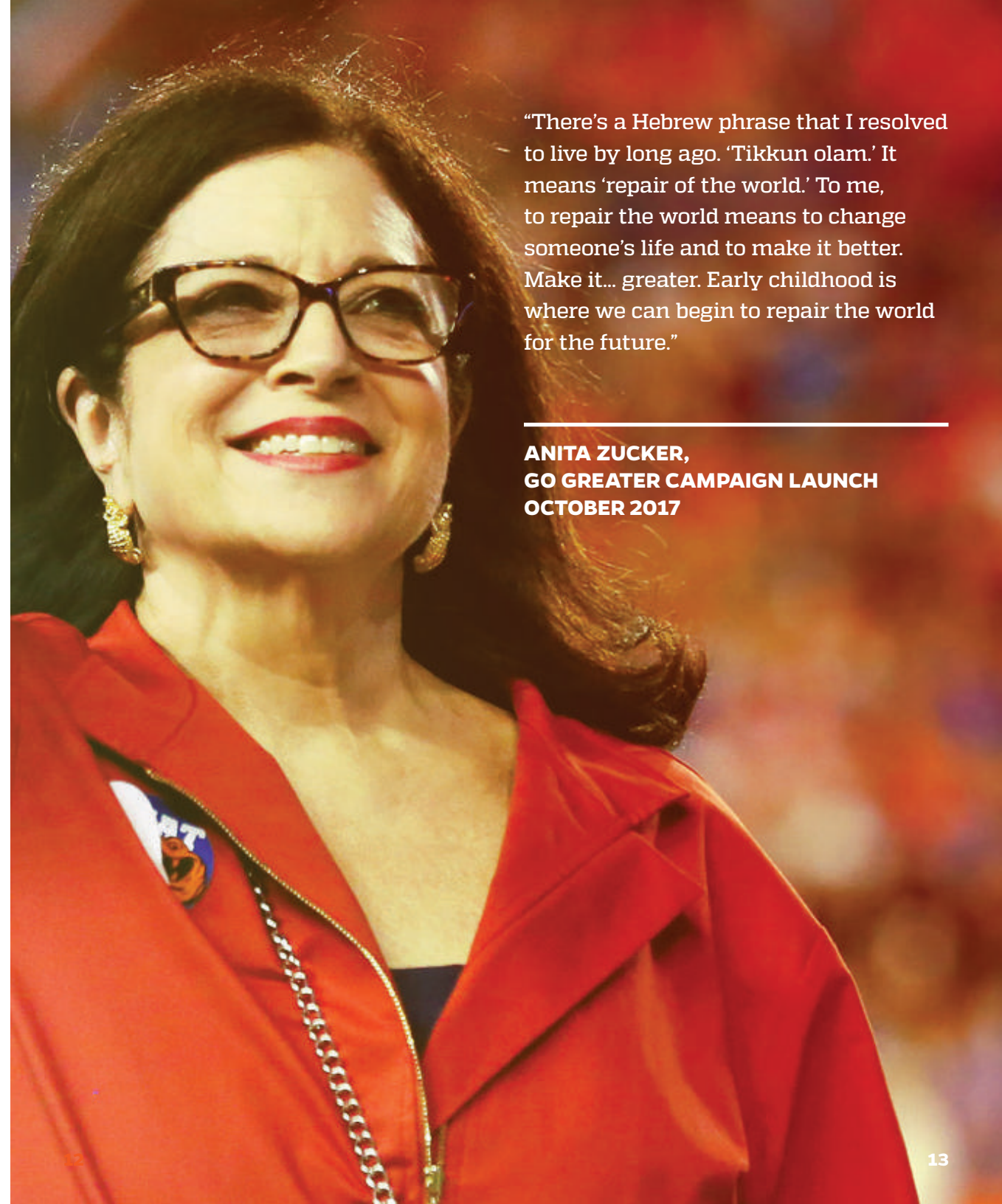
**SARA GERMANSKY**  
**HOMETOWN: MANHATTAN, NEW YORK**

“My goal is to promote the idea that if you can get children services early, that hopefully we can positively affect their current and future development and learning. As a former early interventionist, I’ve learned that providing services to young children can lessen the need for services when they’re older.”





*Clockwise:* Jose Martinez and Darbianne Shannon at UF's doctoral commencement in May; Mary McLean welcomes a new cohort of Project Prepare scholars; the Anita Zucker Center welcomes our fall 2017 cohort of undergraduates, master's and doctoral students.



"There's a Hebrew phrase that I resolved to live by long ago. 'Tikkun olam.' It means 'repair of the world.' To me, to repair the world means to change someone's life and to make it better. Make it... greater. Early childhood is where we can begin to repair the world for the future."

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**ANITA ZUCKER,  
GO GREATER CAMPAIGN LAUNCH  
OCTOBER 2017**



# ENGAGING WITH PARTNERS

In addition to national and international work, our collaborations in 2017 focused on local partners.

19

STATES

partner with the Anita Zucker Center on ongoing research.





## EARLY HEAD START/EPISCOPAL CHILDREN’S SERVICES

The Early Head Start program began building a collaboration with the Anita Zucker Center to benefit young children and families. UF and the City of Gainesville awarded a research grant to the Center to address real-world problems experienced by young children and families in East Gainesville. We are working together to implement evidence-based, job embedded professional development to enhance the quality of interaction and instructional practice used by their teachers and program staff.

## SOUTHWEST ADVOCACY GROUP (SWAG)

The Anita Zucker Center expanded its partnership with SWAG to early care and education providers and researchers. The collaboration will help the Center provide services and supports that are responsive to the needs of the community.

“This partnership is an opportunity for students and faculty to be more directly involved in supporting the Gainesville community and will benefit children and families in this neighborhood by providing desperately needed services that support child development and learning, family self-sufficiency and positive life outcomes,” said Dr. Herman Knopf, research scientist.

## DEEPENING UF PARTNERSHIPS

Planning for the Early Childhood National Summit created an opportunity for the Anita Zucker Center to collaborate with transdisciplinary UF partners. The planning committee included representatives from the College of Medicine, the College of Public Health and Health Professions, the Institute for Child Health Policy, and the Frederic G. Levin College of Law.

# MAKING AN IMPACT

Our outcomes bridge the gaps between research, practice — and experience — to improve lives.



## CHILD CENTER IN GAINESVILLE

Center members joined families, advocates and area officials in a southwest community of Gainesville to break ground on a new CHILD (Children’s Health, Imagination, Learning and Discovery) Center, a collaboration between the Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG), O2B Kids and the Anita Zucker Center. The CHILD Center will provide low- or no-cost quality early care and education services to children from low-income families ages 0-5 and their families and will serve as a model demonstration site providing professional development opportunities for child care providers in Alachua County and throughout Florida.

## ACCESSIBILITY INDEX IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Dr. Herman Knopf, research scientist, in collaboration with Dr. Vasanthi Rao and Phillip Sherlock at the University of South Carolina, began developing the “Child Care Access Index (CCAI),” a support for state child care systems’ compliance with the Child Care Development Block Grant reauthorization of 2014. Dr. Knopf and his research team are helping states document the extent to which quality child care is accessible to families of young children receiving a child care subsidy. The Center’s partnerships in South Carolina also extend to the Trident United Way School Readiness Network and Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative. In 2018, we will welcome peers from the University of South Carolina to the Center through the collaborative SEC Visiting Scholars Program.

## PARENT SKILLS TRAINING IN ZAMBIA

Center members Dr. Brian Reichow, associate professor of special education and early childhood studies, and Dr. Marylou Behnke, emeritus professor of medicine, traveled to Kalomo, Zambia, and its surrounding villages to finalize cultural adaptations for a parenting skills training program. The trainings were adopted from the World Health Organization’s Parent Skills Training Programme for Caregivers of Children with Developmental Disorders, an ongoing initiative that Reichow has been working on since its inception in 2013. “Our goal is to create a sustainable program in areas that don’t have access to specialist trainers,” said Reichow. “This work is at the core of the Anita Zucker Center’s mission: to help young children and their families, especially those with vulnerabilities — no matter where they live.”



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*in Early Childhood Studies*

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