

## Background

Amy Hawn Nelson is the Director of Social Research at the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and Director of the Institute for Social Capital, Inc. The Institute for Social Capital is an integrated data system charged with using data to advance university research and data-informed decision-making in the community. At its core is a comprehensive community database of administrative records from governmental and nonprofit agencies. While maintaining the confidentiality of individual records, the ISC database connects dispersed administrative records, providing a foundation for researchers to better understand our community, particularly outcomes for our community's most vulnerable populations.

The Institute for Social Capital is a core component of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is a nonpartisan, applied research and community outreach center. Founded in 1969, it provides services including project management, technical assistance and training in operations and data management; surveys; and research and analysis around economic, environmental, and social issues affecting the Charlotte region.

Dr. Hawn Nelson holds BAs in Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies from NC State, a Masters in the Art of Teaching from Johns Hopkins University, a Masters in School Administration and PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, Urban Education at UNC Charlotte. Prior to joining the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute in 2012, Hawn Nelson served as a teacher and school leader for 11 years. Dr. Hawn Nelson was identified as a Charlottean of the Year in 2015 for her research around educational equity in Mecklenburg County.

## Research Topics

Dr. Hawn Nelson's research interests include long-term schooling outcomes, community-based school improvement efforts, school choice, data-informed decision making, and research utilizing integrated data systems. Her numerous articles have examined diversity in schools, educational outcomes, and topics relevant to regional communities and school districts. She is also the co-editor of *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: School Desegregation and Resegregation in Charlotte* (Harvard Education Press, 2015). Dr. Hawn Nelson comments that, "My work uses applied research for social good, and our Institutes are interdisciplinary and utilize a team-based approach where we strive to serve as a bridge between the community and academia."

## Relevance

Hawn Nelson's work aligns closely with the Women + Girls Research Alliance, acting as a catalyst for change and improving the lives of girls and women at all socio-economic levels using research, providing education and enabling community engagement. "Our work at the Institute for Social Capital Community Database has the ability to link across data silos to better describe and understand members of our community, to better serve them, notes Hawn Nelson, "In our analyses we describe experiences and disparities across all demographic boundaries, including gender." This aligns with the work of the Women + Girls Research Alliance.