



Ayse Okur O'Donnell

Evaluation and Research Specialist

(608) 733 9974

1206 2nd Street, New Glarus, WI

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin - Madison

Ph.D., Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Ph.D. Minor, Quantitative Research Methods, Department of Educational Psychology (2024)

M.S., Global Higher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (2020)

TOOLS AND METHODS

Text mining and natural language processing, Social Network Analysis

Quasi-experimental methods

Random, Fixed, and Mixed Effects, Hierarchical / Multilevel Modeling

Secondary Data Analysis

Multidimensional Scaling & Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Interrupted Time Series Analysis, Event History / Survival Analysis

STATISTICAL SOFTWARE AND PROGRAMING LANGUAGES

R (advanced statistical modeling and visualization)

Python (data analysis and computational methods)

SQL (database querying and data management)

SPSS (statistical analysis and data preparation)

EXPERIENCE

Evaluation and Research Specialist

(2019 - Present)

Division of Extension

University of Wisconsin - Madison

Responsible for designing and implementing mixed-methods evaluations, developing assessment tools, and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to inform program improvement and strategic decision-making.

Researcher

(2020 - Present)

Wisconsin Center for Education Research

Contributed to NSF-funded longitudinal mixed-methods studies examining institutional change, faculty development, and student success in advanced technological education.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **Research Associate (2026 - present): Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Madison**
 - Contribute to collaborative research design, data analysis, and interpretation
 - Support communication and dissemination of college research initiatives
 - Co-author peer-reviewed journal articles and research publications
 - Conduct literature reviews and synthesized research findings
 - Collaborate with interdisciplinary research teams and participated in project meetings
 - Assist with conference presentations, reports, and knowledge translation activities
- **Project Assistant (2023-2024): Unit of Academic Analysis, Planning, and Assessment, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin - Madison**
 - Ran correlational data queries using SQL
 - Cleaned and analyzed large institutional data using RStudio
 - Conducted thematic analyses of open-ended survey questions
 - Disseminated research findings through conference presentations, peer-reviewed publications, and research and policy briefs
 - Presented research findings to internal and external campus partners
- **Graduate Researcher (2021 - 2024): Crisis as Catalyst for Change and Innovation**
 - Targeted Research on Institutional Response and Enduring Impacts on Advanced Technological Education (Longitudinal Mixed Methods Study funded by the National Science Foundation, Grant No. DUE - 2100029, PI: Dr. Xueli Wang).
 - Cleaned and prepared institutional artifacts for analyses
 - Transcribed focus group and individual interviews
 - Analyzed qualitative and quantitative data using text-mining techniques
 - Participated in dissemination efforts through peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and research briefs
- **Graduate Researcher (2020-2022): Contextualize to Learn: Preparing Faculty Toward Math Contextualization for Student Success in Advanced Technological Education**
 - (Longitudinal Mixed Methods Study funded by the National Science Foundation, Grant No. DUE-1700625, PI: Dr. Xueli Wang).
 - Cleaned and stored longitudinal research data
 - Participated in professional development opportunities (i.e., cross-institutional meetings) to engage with community college partners and practitioners,
 - Participated in dissemination efforts through peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations
- **Graduate Evaluator and Project Assistant (2019 - 2022): Natural Resources Institute, Division of Extension, University of Wisconsin - Madison.**
 - Analyzed quantitative and qualitative evaluation data, including interviews, focus groups, hearing sessions, longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys, and learner journals
 - Developed evaluation instruments for needs assessments, learning assessments, and impact evaluations
 - Managed panel and longitudinal data using survey and assessment platforms (e.g., Qualtrics, Questionmark)
 - Designed learning assessments and course evaluations for USDA AgLearn Conservation Planning courses
 - Co-led partner meetings, brown bags, and data jam sessions with stakeholders to support collaborative data use and decision-making
 - Disseminated findings through peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations, and evaluation reports
 - Mentored and onboarded new student employees, supporting research and evaluation capacity building

OUTREACH, PROGRAM DESIGN AND EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

- **Lead Evaluation & Research Specialist (2024 – present):** Needs Assessment for Instructional Design, a collaborative mixed-methods evaluation between UW-Madison’s Division of Extension and USDA’s Natural Resources and Conservation Service. Responsibilities: survey and interview design, data collection and analysis, reporting, presenting findings to stakeholders, supporting course refinement.
- **Lead Evaluation Specialist (2024-2026):** Evaluation of Pilot Course Implementation: Conservation Planning Part II, partnership between UW-Madison’s Division of Extension and USDA–NRCS to assess outcomes of the new curriculum. Responsibilities: developing evaluation frameworks, facilitating feedback collection during pilot trainings, conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis, and producing actionable recommendations for curriculum refinement.
- **Lead Evaluation Specialist (2019 - current):** Evaluation and Assessment Services for Instructional Design in the Conservation Professional Training Program at UW-Madison’s Division of Extension. Responsibilities: include designing assessment tools, reviewing instructional content for effectiveness, and preparing reports to guide instructional
- **Lead Evaluation Specialist (2024 - 2025):** Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA) Economic Impact Survey. Multi-state grant impact evaluation (11 Midwest states, 176 projects) assessing economic and social impact of dairy industry innovation grants. Responsibilities: developing survey tools, analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, and producing technical and informative reports for public general, policymakers and funders.
- **Lead Evaluation Specialist (2024):** Student Experience at Biochar Research Hub & Agricultural Runoff Treatment Research & Education Center. Mixed-methods evaluations of student learning and research impacts. Responsibilities: collecting interview and survey data, coding themes, and documenting outcomes related to career development, professional aspirations, and community engagement.
- **Other Evaluation Services (2019 - present):** Supporting evaluation services at the Division of Extension at UW-Madison. Responsibilities: designing logic models, ROI/SROI frameworks, and evaluation matrices; leading stakeholder interviews and focus groups; conducting descriptive and advanced statistical analysis; integrating results into policy and program development.

GRANT PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

- **Research Director and Lead Proposal Developer (2025, under review):** Mapping Wisconsin’s Rural Innovation and Development Landscape in Agriculture and Conservation (PI: Dr. Samuel Pratsch), U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA), Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities Program (AERC) — Evaluation study to map and assess agricultural and conservation innovation initiatives in Wisconsin | Program Code A1661: Rural Economic Development | Total Budget Requested: \$650,000 | Status: Under Review.
- **Economic Analyst and Co-lead for Proposal Development (2025, not funded - finalist):** ICASA Program Evaluation, Foundation for Food and Agriculture Review (selected as finalist, Budget: \$249,838).
- **Lead Evaluation Specialist and Proposal Developer (2025, Not funded):** The New England Dairy Business Economic Impact Study (Budget: \$94,500).

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

● Published Peer-Reviewed Works

Asprooth, L., Stedden, C., Hammond, E., **Okur, A.**, & Silva, E. (2025). Assessing knowledge levels and learning preferences among organic grain farmers and professionals; The experience of the University of Wisconsin OGRAIN program. Accepted for publication, *Journal of Extension*.

Okur, A., Contreras-Garcia, N., Widmer, M., & Wang, X. (2024). Together and toward equity: Experiences and insights of faculty in a transfer partnership. In R. L. Wagoner & S. T. Kater (Eds.), *Community college faculty: The institution's heart and soul. New Directions for Community Colleges* (206, pp. 55-62). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Wickersham K., **Okur, A.**, Zheng, P., & Wang, X. (2023). Resilience in technological education beyond COVID-19: A case of instructional change and innovation at a Midwestern technical college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2024.2387308>

Wang, X., **Okur, A.**, Zu, X., & Lee, Y. (2023). Stated value, renewed commitment? Technical education's response to racial (in)equities during COVID-19. *Journal of Higher Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2023.2251865>

Wang, X., Lee, Y., Zhu, X., & **Okur, A.** (2022). Exploring the relationship between community college students' exposure to math contextualization and educational outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 63(2), 309-336. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-021-09644-w>

● Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles Under Review

O'Donnell, A. (2025). A Longitudinal QuantCrit Study of Disaggregated Community College Enrollment: How Economic and Institutional Contexts Shaped Open Access from 2017–2021 [Revise & resubmit requested].

O'Donnell, A. & Pratsch, S. (2025). A Comprehensive Grantee-Centered Evaluation Approach to Innovation Funds: A Case Study of the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance [Revise & resubmit requested].

● Published Research and Evaluation Reports

Okur A. (2025). Survey Shows DBIA Grants Spur Economic Growth, Business Resilience. Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (Evaluation Report & Data Brief).
<https://dbia.wisc.edu/state-by-state-impact/economic-impact-report/>

Crisis as Catalyst for Change and Innovation Research Team (**Contributing Author**; 2022). "Navigating that changing and uneven landscape"—How technical college educators grapple with pandemic-impacted teaching, learning, and student support (Research Brief). Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

Crisis as Catalyst for Change and Innovation Research Team (**Contributing Author**; 2021). Built for the moment: A descriptive account of how Wisconsin's technical colleges respond and adapt during COVID-19 (Research Brief). Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

The Future of Wisconsin's Forest Products Economy (**Contributing Author**, 2022). Wisconsin Council on Forestry.
<https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Documents/REDS%20FINAL%20REPORT%202.8.22.pdf>

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- **Instructor (2026):** ELPA 888: Assessment in Higher Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin - Madison.
- **Teaching Assistant (2021 -2022):** ELPA 878: The American Community College (supervised by Dr. Xueli Wang), Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin - Madison.
- **Turkish Language Tutor (2019):** Arabic Persian Turkish Language Institute, University of Wisconsin.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- **Data Labeling Fellow (2025 - present):** Handshake AI
- **Reviewer (2026 - Present):** New Directions for Community Colleges.
- **Coordinator (2024 - present):** Brownbag Learning Sessions, Natural Resources Institute, Division of Extension, University of Wisconsin - Madison
- **Contributor/speaker (2024):** Methodological Approaches to Studying Community Colleges: Elevating Voices in Unpacking Access and Success (Webinar), Council for the Study of Community Colleges
- **Mentor (2023 - 2024):** Graduate Peer Mentor Program, LEADS, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin - Madison
- **Reviewer (2023):** 65th Annual Council for the Study of Community Colleges Conference
- **Invited Panelist (2023):** Teaching Academy, Fall and Winter Retreat, Center for Teaching, Learning and Mentoring, University of Wisconsin - Madison
- **Ad Hoc Committee Member (2022):** Research Committee on Community College Leadership and Administration Programs, Council for the Study of Community Colleges

HONORS AND AWARDS

- **Professional Development Award (\$2,000),** Academic Staff Professional Development Grant Program, 2024
- **Student Research Grant Competition Conference Travel Award (\$1,200),** Graduate School, 2023
- **Graduate Student Conference Travel Award (\$250),** Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, 2023
- **Network Fellowship (\$1,000),** Wisconsin Collaborative Education Research Network, 2019
Other Awards
- **Nominee for the Dissertation of the Year Award,** Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2025

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

O'Donnell, A., Pratsch, S., Mase, A., & Landis, G. (2025, November). Developing and Sustaining Partnerships in Evaluation Practice: Perspectives from a University-Based Center. AEA Evaluation 2025. Kansas City, MO

Okur, A., & Sigmund, N. (2024, May). Toward inclusive graduate programs: Leveraging qualitative exit survey data. AIR Forum, Denver, CO.

Okur, A. 2024. (2024, April). A longitudinal analysis of racialized and gendered community college access: The role of institutional contexts and labor market conditions in first-time enrolment. Annual CSCC Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.

Wickersham, K., **Okur, A.,** Zheng, P., & Wang, X. (2023, April). Resilience in technical education beyond COVID-19: A case of instructional change and innovation at a Midwestern technical college. 64th Annual Council for the Study of Community Colleges Conference, Chicago, IL.

Hatch-Tocaimaza, D., Bowlin, W., Liu, J., Monges, S., **Okur, A.,** & Smith, D. (2023, April). Understanding change in university-based community college leadership programs. 64th Annual Council for the Study of Community Colleges Conference, Chicago, IL.

Okur, A. (2023, April). Examining racialized associations between institutional characteristics and community college enrollment trends after the COVID-19 breakout. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Okur, A., Wang, X., Contreras-Garcia, N., & Widmer, M. (2022, November). Partnership for equity: An instrumental case study of a cross-institutional faculty-led transfer initiative. 47th Annual ASHE Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

Okur, A. (2022, November). A multilevel analysis of the institutional racial composition, COVID-19 disruptions, and community college enrollment. 47th Annual ASHE Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

Wang, X., **Okur A.,** Zu, X., & Lee, Y. (2022, April). Stated value, renewed commitment? Technical education's response to racial (in)equities during COVID-19. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

Wang, X., Lee, Y., Zu, X., & **Okur, A.** (2021, April). Exploring the relationship between community college students' exposure to math contextualization and educational outcomes. 62nd Annual Council for the Study of Community Colleges Conference.

Okur, A. (2020, May). The portrayal of international students in globalizing campuses: A multimodal semiotic analysis of webpages. Global Research Poster Fair, Madison, WI.

Hammond, E., Campbell, T., & **Okur, A.** (2020, November). Wisconsin boaters' and anglers' perceptions of aquatic invasive species prevention. Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference (on Zoom).

Hammond, E., Campbell, T., & **Okur A.** (2019, October). Aquatic Invasive Species Survey 2018. Aquatic Invasive Species Conference, Ashland, WI.

Okur, A. (2019, April). Turkey as a regional hub for international recruitment. Wisconsin Association of International Educators Annual Conference, Madison, WI.

Santiago, K. & **Okur, A.** (2019, April). Creating an assessment program to support international education initiatives in the Department of Ag & Applied Economics. CALS Go-Global Symposium, Madison, WI.