



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith named president of the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL)

LOUISVILLE, KY (September 20, 2021) – After a nationwide search, Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith will start as NCFL’s new president on September 27, 2021. A lifelong educator and national thought leader for teaching and learning, Dr. Smith brings decades of valuable experience to advance NCFL’s mission of working to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families.

Dr. Smith will become the second leader over NCFL’s 32-year history, succeeding its founder, Sharon Darling. NCFL’s board of directors selected Dr. Smith through a rigorous national search, citing her noteworthy accomplishments working alongside students on family literacy and engagement initiatives across local, state, and national levels in both the public and private sectors. She joins NCFL after departing from her role as the senior director, U.S. Regions at the National Geographic Society, where she oversaw the development and implementation of National Geographic’s education strategy for scaling, innovation, and delivery of game-changing tools, resources, and learning experiences.

“Felicia is committed to supporting our nation’s families in local communities while also promoting innovation across the field,” said NCFL’s board chair Richard Barr, former vice president of Airline Operations at UPS. “She is an outstanding leader who will enhance NCFL’s history of exceptional work while also making sure we are ready to meet the educational demands of the future.”

Dr. Smith has held pivotal roles influencing the future of education both nationally and globally. At the National Geographic Society, she led a team to steward 31 regional partnerships from incubation and strategy development to execution. As a senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, she helped to shape and reimagine the Foundation’s K-12 education investment portfolio focused on place-based strategies for education leadership and advancing college and career ready efforts, P-20.

Dr. Smith has also had a tremendous impact catalyzing positive change in Kentucky’s education system, serving as the associate commissioner for the Kentucky Department of Education and



then as the assistant superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, where she successfully executed the strategic plan that supports over 100,000 students and their families annually. Her work spearheading family literacy and parent engagement professional development initiatives has dramatically shifted the culture of literacy and learning outcomes in Kentucky's schools, especially for students in Title 1 schools.

Dr. Smith's successes and dedication to improving education systems to best serve families has contributed to her reputation as a national leader, influencer, and advocate in education nationwide. In 2020, Dr. Smith was appointed by Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear to the Southern Regional Education Board. Recently, she was elected to serve as vice chair of this board. At the forefront of centering equity in education through inclusive programming, in 2021 she was selected to participate in The Equity Lab's prestigious year-long Nexus Fellowship. Dr. Smith embraces her opportunity to give back in service to support various other local and national education organizations addressing key challenges facing the field. She collaborates with non-profit, philanthropic, corporate, and civic organizations to address race, diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in their communities.

Throughout her career Dr. Smith has been a longtime advocate of NCFL and a recent board member. "Engaging students, families, and community stakeholders has been a priority for the equity-driven work I have led throughout my career," she said. "I am honored to follow Sharon Darling as the next president and will be a good steward of the brand and legacy that has already transformed millions of lives across the country."

NCFL's founder and president Sharon Darling will be an active member of NCFL's board of directors. She said, "There is no individual who is more prepared than Felicia to lead NCFL during a pivotal time for both society and for the education landscape. I have known Felicia for many years and have tremendous respect for her accomplishments and deep commitment to ensuring every child and every family has equitable opportunity to quality education. Dr. Smith is the right person at the right time to lead NCFL into the future."

As a national leader in embracing and moving families forward through education, NCFL aspires to lead the field in transformative virtual education solutions, develop and scale equitable and inclusive learning programs that are created in partnership with families, and promote policies, systems, and practices that best support the family education needs of the future.



About the National Center for Families Learning

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit that works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and policymakers, NCFL develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources for families. Through these efforts, we invite parents and caregivers to recognize their voice and power to make change in their lives, the lives of children, and their communities. For more information on NCFL, visit familieslearning.org.

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