


NOMINATION SIGNATURE PAGE

2025 Virginia Outstanding Faculty Awards

Nominations must include this as the cover page of the nomination package PDF submission

Name of Applicant:	James G. Soland
Institution:	University of Virginia
Category (choose only one): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baccalaureate Institution• Masters/Comprehensive Institution• Research/Doctoral Institution• Two-Year Institution• Rising Star	Rising Star
Signature of President or Chief Academic Officer:	
Printed Name of President or Chief Academic Officer:	Ian B. Baucom
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Telephone number of President or Chief Academic Officer:	434-924-3728

Mission Statement

The University of Virginia is a public institution of higher learning guided by a founding vision of discovery, innovation, and development of the full potential of talented students from all walks of life. It serves the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world by developing responsible citizen leaders and professionals; advancing, preserving, and disseminating knowledge; and providing world-class patient care.

We are defined by:

- Our enduring commitment to a vibrant and unique residential learning environment marked by the free and collegial exchange of ideas;
- Our unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect;
- Our universal dedication to excellence and affordable access.

Source: www.virginia.edu/statementofpurpose

Summary of Accomplishments

As an internationally recognized assessment expert and quantitative psychologist, Dr. James Soland's research focuses on ensuring that educators, psychologists, and doctors have the information they need to help children lead healthy, fulfilling lives. His methodological innovations are changing best practices for understanding how kids develop as learners and people, when conditions like autism or learning disabilities like dyslexia impede that development, and which interventions help get kids back on track. Much of his motivation for this work stems from experiences growing up with a disability, and learning firsthand the importance of good data in managing a chronic disease. Dr. Soland uses his research as an opportunity to teach, devoting considerable effort to increasing the range of voices involved in education, public service, and quantitative analysis. By making his highly technical work accessible, his research has impacted educational practice, policy, and public perception of issues affecting kids. For example, his research on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted student learning and the types of interventions that could mitigate those impacts was highlighted twice on the front page of the *New York Times*, multiple times by Good Morning America, and across local news outlets in Virginia. He has used the over \$10 million in grants and state contracts he has been awarded to improve the lives of students, including to create an early literacy screener now used statewide in Virginia to identify students who need reading interventions and provide funding to support those children.

Teaching & Mentoring

Throughout Dr. Soland's work, a common theme emerges: he is passionate about expanding (a) the number of researchers who understand how to produce good assessment data and (b) the range of voices heard in decisions involving data. A key strategy in those efforts is to make students feel they belong. Oftentimes, students walk into class proclaiming they "aren't good at math." Unfortunately, that sentiment is often stronger among students from underrepresented communities. In response, Dr. Soland always emphasizes a growth mindset approach to instruction. Students—especially those who feel they do not belong in quantitative disciplines—can benefit from challenges by seeing their brain as a muscle that grows with the difficulty of the activity. Letting students know that learning methods is a gradual and difficult process (like learning a foreign language), can be freeing, reduce anxiety, and increase belonging.

Students can also come to see themselves as quantitative practitioners through active participation and authentic learning. Dr. Soland used the challenge of teaching during the pandemic to improve his instruction by better inculcating a growth mindset, fostering participation, and creating more hands-on learning. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, he delivered lectures in person. When teaching over Zoom during the pandemic, he began recording his lectures, then using class time for more authentic learning like directly engaging in research and using data. Today, he starts classes by having students get into small groups and work together to formulate questions about the material. In so doing, students often realize that they have similar questions, and no longer worry they are asking something obvious or "dumb." These strategies result in much more active student participation. In short, using a "flipped" classroom has increased the range of people who participate in class and the quality of the learning that occurs. The effectiveness of these strategies in fostering belonging is evidenced by student reactions to the classes, captured via blind student evaluations:

- "This may be the most effective stats course I have ever taken. Stats is not something that comes naturally to me. It usually takes me a bit longer to process and conceptually understand what is going on. The ability to be able to watch a lecture ahead of time and think about the topic of the week - and therefore also have the time to use other resources before going to class and getting questions answered has been really helpful for my learning style. Also, Jim being so approachable, patient, and open to questions has been very

helpful. His ability to explain things in ways that make sense and also the consistent positivity makes learning stats enjoyable! (I think that is the first time I ever said that)! I only wish we could have had Jim in earlier stats classes on more foundational concepts."

- "This was my favorite course this semester, which is really saying something for such a high-level stats class! Jim was an excellent professor. I can tell he loves this topic, and he helped me love [the topic] and all its possibilities too. I also appreciated when Jim acknowledged the stress/burnout we were all feeling at the end of the year. Prof. Soland went out of his way to offer individualized support for his students. He allowed us to choose our own projects and made it clear from the first day of class that all questions were welcome. I highly recommend Jim's class!"
- "I absolutely loved this course. Jim's simple approach to teaching complex topics really helped me grow and understand the material throughout the semester. Jim uses real world examples, and the assignments are meant to be relevant to my progress throughout my PhD program and I GREATLY appreciate that. The hands-on activities at the end of class also really helped me understand what was discussed in lecture rather than struggling. Overall, this was a wonderful course thanks to a great professor."
- "I am grateful for Jim's passion and his expertise in this topic. It made it easier to want to learn about the topic, because I could see the importance of it, as well as the nuance in such a difficult topic. This course was so important to my knowledge of how to conduct more advanced analyses. Jim really cared about students understanding the conceptual details of the topic and created a welcoming environment. Jim is the best!"

Advising a diverse set of burgeoning scholars and educational practitioners is also core to Dr. Soland's vision for his career. Dr. Soland always uses his courses as a chance for students to produce new research themselves, with many going on to publish papers generated during his classes. As a result, he is regularly asked to serve on their dissertation committees, oftentimes supporting dozens of students at a time across disciplines and schools. His own advisees are already making their voices heard in the field, including a current doctoral student who won a prestigious scholarship from the Center for Measurement Justice.

Discovery

Some of the most pressing educational, psychological, and medical challenges faced by children can only be addressed with precise data. For example, young children not on course to read effectively by the end of elementary school—including those with learning disabilities like dyslexia—cannot be identified without a precise estimate of their literacy skills. Similarly, children affected by neurodevelopmental disorders like autism can best be identified with accurate data on their speech and social interactions. Psychologically, conditions like depression cannot be understood without reliable scores on a depression scale. For all these scenarios, the information also needs to be sensitive to changes over time such that we can understand what typical development looks like and intervene when that growth is not occurring. Dr. Soland's research is dedicated to assessing outcomes related to education, psychology, and clinical diagnosis such that educators, doctors, and psychologists have the data they need to do their jobs. At the same time, part of Dr. Soland's work is about pausing to ask: when does using data, especially in education, serve the public good? Numbers represent people, and a single number rarely does justice to the whole person—in fact, numbers can be used to create labels for kids like being "below basic" academically, which are often stigmatizing.

The strides made in these areas have garnered national and international attention for Dr. Soland. For example, Dr. Soland received an Early Career Award from the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE), an Institute of Education Sciences Training Fellowship, a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Fellowship, and a University of Virginia Outstanding Researcher

award. He regularly participates on expert panels at the National Academy of Education, serves on the editorial boards of multiple prominent journals, and is on technical committees advising assessment programs. His work has also been recognized by funders, raising over \$10 million in state contracts to support early literacy development in Virginia schools. Internationally, he has been asked to review grants for the national science foundations of Switzerland and India, and is currently an international finalist for a fellowship through the Jacobs Family Foundation.

With those goals in mind, there are three strands to Dr. Soland's research. The first examines how measurement decisions affect inferences about students' psychological, socio-emotional, and academic growth, with particular emphasis on understanding differential patterns in growth on the basis of demographic and socioeconomic factors. For instance, his research shows that the approach researchers often take to score surveys can lead to growth being understated by nearly 50% of the true growth occurring, with profound implications for understanding developmental patterns for children in outcomes like depression and academic self-belief.

The second strand focuses on how measurement decisions impact our understanding of which educational and psychological programs and interventions are effective for students. Knowing which programs improve academic and socio-emotional outcomes is vital to improving education in this country, including knowing which programs best support the development of underserved children. His work establishes best practices for designing and scoring measures used to quantify the impact of these programs, in part by showing that existing measurement practices can lead to program effects being misunderstood. For example, the effectiveness of programs and interventions can be radically understated when scored inappropriately, leading researchers to wrongly conclude that their intervention is not helping kids.

The third strand emphasizes measurement for diagnostic and clinical purposes, including how new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) can be harnessed to improve the process of designing measures for diagnosis. Most survey instruments used to diagnose psychological conditions like depression and anxiety, or neurodevelopmental disorders like autism, are incredibly crude. For example, we often give children a very short survey consisting of the same questions, no matter the child's age. Dr. Soland's work uses adaptive measurement to personalize these assessments so that the question given is not only appropriate to the child's age, but personalized to that individual.

Knowledge Integration

Through the creation of open resources that combine his scholarship and teaching, Dr. Soland has ensured that his influence as a teacher-scholar extends beyond his immediate community. For example, he has written multiple articles on topics like how to create and score measures to understand growth that serve as tutorials for researchers on how to quantify human development. These tutorials include data, code, and instructions that mean students and researchers alike can learn best practices to ensure their analyses reflect true human development and employ those practices in their work. A goal of sharing these tools is to make these resources available to everyone, regardless of their resources.

As Dr. Soland details in his personal statement, he is also developing a new undergraduate course in the ethics of data use specifically designed to ensure more voices are heard in conversations about data, and to broaden the range of individuals who go on to pursue quantitative professions. While the university has many courses on how to use different quantitative analysis techniques, practically none step back to ask: when does quantifying humans and human behavior serve the public good? The hope is that students will start to

further interrogate how data use practices do—and do not—reflect their own complex identities and, as a result, move beyond preconceptions of individuals, groups, and policies.

Another critical aspect of Dr. Soland's work is his focus on combining knowledge across fields; he has a deep commitment to involving students in multidisciplinary research with implications for practice in education, psychology, and medicine. For instance, Dr. Soland has created a team of students, postdoctoral researchers, and early career research scientists tasked with designing a new early literacy screener. Now, that screener is given to all students in the Commonwealth of Virginia in grades pre-kindergarten through 3rd. Research shows that students not on track to read effectively by 3rd grade suffer a host of academic and life setbacks in later grades. Yet, right now, most of the early literacy screeners being used do not match the current science of reading. They also have technical limitations that undermine their usefulness. For example, unlike other screeners, Virginia's revised assessment is designed to monitor growth over time. In the future, it will adapt such that it provides reliable measurement even when a student is above or below grade level, and support diagnosis of granular reading problems. The measure is already used to allocate millions of dollars in Virginia state funding for early reading interventions to help ensure all students read effectively by 3rd grade.

Similarly, Dr. Soland led a team of multi-generational researchers spanning industry and academia to help quantify how the COVID-19 pandemic affected student academic development. His 2020 study, published in *Educational Researcher*, has been cited thousands of times and was one of the first to show just how much school disruptions were likely to impede student learning, and help teachers understand the magnitude of the challenge facing them. Subsequent work considers gaps in student learning by race, as well as what educational interventions might be best suited to returning achievement in math and reading to pre-pandemic levels. Dr. Soland's COVID-related research has been covered extensively by print and television journalists, through social media, and among outlets devoted to teachers.

Most recently, Dr. Soland brought his knowledge to support the diagnosis of autism in sub-Saharan Africa, a region often given little support. He is co-PI on a grant consisting of researchers in the US and Kenya to provide Kenyan clinicians with the measurement tools they need to properly diagnose and treat autism. In addition to creating surveys for local parents and educators to understand their knowledge related to autism, the team will also investigate whether they can generate short but culturally appropriate diagnostic instruments appropriate to the Kenyan context. Through this project, Dr. Soland continues his international efforts to share best measurement practices and include new voices in how data shape our lives.

Service

Like his research and teaching, Dr. Soland's service activities focus on recruiting new voices into the work. At UVA, he is on two committees serving a university-wide effort at the direction of UVA President Ryan to develop public service pathways for students, including specific to education. These pathways are core to ensuring the university meets its strategic goal to be "great and good" by recruiting more students into public service. Second and related, he has worked to help design a quantitative concentration in School of Education and Human Development's undergraduate program, given its potential to attract engaged and, in many cases, underrepresented students into quantitative social science work. Beyond the university, he helps lead two committees with the National Council for Measurement in Education, one devoted to revising the standards for educational and psychological testing that lay out best practices for the entire field, the other on how to ensure educational testing policy is informed by science. He also worked on two National Academy of Education panels, including one on how to handle assessment and testing policy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Personal Statement

It was a big moment for me. Finally, I was finished with college and at an age where I could pursue the career I'd always wanted. My dad had often hoped I might follow in his footsteps, and that dream was about to be realized. The focus I had been craving in my professional life could finally materialize. All that stood between me and this vision of the future—my best future—was performing well on a graduate admissions test.

On that day, I felt confident. After months of preparation, I knew I was ready. Then, early during the test, I felt it. My hands started to tingle and sweat formed on the back of my neck. Vertigo started to kick in and my heartbeat accelerated. As a Type 1 diabetic since the age of two, this feeling proved all too familiar. Low blood sugar can occur at any time despite my best laid plans, and often hits me hardest in moments of stress. As I moved through the next test questions with my brain in a hypoglycemic mist, I knew my score would not represent what I could do. And, by pursuing a field with strict cutoffs on scores to get into top institutions, I knew the game was up.

I left the testing center that day upset about what had happened, and just how often having a chronic condition wrenched control of my life from me. This scenario wasn't just about a test, after all—stress could induce low or high blood sugar, both reducing my ability to think clearly. I'd experienced one or the other during job interviews, soccer games—even speaking up in college classes occasionally made me uneasy. I've had mild social anxiety for as long as I can remember, in large part because I never could quite predict when my brain might give out on me (to be technical about it). I still need to overcome those fears today when I am in front of a crowd, not least of which when I teach the incredibly motivated students that attend our school.

Yet, despite all the negatives of diabetes for me, something else troubled me more that day. What bothered me, but that I could not then articulate, was that our lives revolve around data. Data seem so objective, after all. But even for me, a person with reasonable privilege, forces beyond my control made the data misleading. What I could not escape was a fundamental question: if my data could be biased, and have consequences for my life, what might that mean for children living amidst chronic poverty, hunger, violence, or stress? Ultimately, data represent people. And, in a society awash in data, we seem to lose sight of that fact all the time, and in ways with real consequences for individuals. Data seem objective because numbers have a scientific veneer, yet they exclude the parts of a person that cannot be easily quantified. So often, the elements of a person that defy quantification *are what make us human*.

This fundamental question precipitated my interest in psychometrics, a field devoted to measuring human outcomes we cannot see, whether they be anxiety, or achievement, or self-efficacy. It took me a long time after that admissions test to understand that such a career existed. After the test, I decided to take a break and reassess my path. During that time, I worked in education policy for a State Senator in Massachusetts amidst huge school reform efforts. A question often on the table was which schools were bad enough to deserve being closed, yet I could not shake the sense that data we had like test scores were woefully insufficient to quantify what a school means to its community. After that job, I served as a budget analyst for the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) in Sacramento, the precursor to the federal Congressional Budget Office. Only during conversations with testing experts in my time at the LAO did I realize that a career like psychometrics exists—that certain researchers devote themselves to making sure the data we lean on to understand not only students, but the teachers and schools serving them, tell us what we actually want to know. There are many ways to define the field of psychometrics, but I see it as being the voice of reason any time human performance gets quantified. We sound the alarm and provide solutions when people want to assign numbers to people in ways that do not serve the common good, that individual, or both.

Given this definition of the field, I view my work entirely through a public service lens, shaping my **discovery** agenda and the projects I tackle. For example, one of my most important current projects involves building a new early literacy screener that will be given to all public-school students in the Commonwealth of Virginia in Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade (with a 4th-8th grade test under development). That test will be used to allocate millions of dollars in state funding to support interventions for students not reading successfully at the end of Kindergarten. Using my expertise, we created a test that allows us to track improvement over time while also providing fine-grained data useful to diagnosing specific reading difficulties, both of which are crucial to educators and policymakers. Yet, some of the best work I have done on that project involves pointing out what the test *cannot* do. Only by pairing the data we provide with the expertise of a teacher and the individual needs of a student will we help ensure students leave our elementary schools as effective readers.

I also employ my skills to **serve** students in places that often do not have the resources we do in Virginia. For example, I am part of a grant to support diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder in Kenya. While diagnosis in the US can take weeks or even months, Kenyan clinicians and educators do not have the luxury of that time. And, the extensive timeline often results because the measurement process—the quantification of symptoms and behaviors—takes so long. Making improvements will not just require my expertise; it will require **integration of knowledge** across multiple disciplines in health, education, and statistics. A main objective of the work is to train Kenyan researchers in these disciplines so they can lead the work as soon as possible. Improving the lives of kids across the globe is ultimately a team sport.

This view of data, and of my profession, also suffuses my **teaching and mentorship**. As a case in point, I created a new course in the UVA School of Education called “Numbers are People” that will allow undergraduates to explore when assigning numbers to K-12 students benefits those kids versus creates a label that might stigmatize. For example, we explore how students are diagnosed with a learning disability and what that means for their future. I am hugely excited for the class not so much because of what I have to share with students, but because of what they can share with me. I want younger generations with fresh perspective to weigh in on these issues, help find solutions, and support us all in moving beyond knee-jerk, polarized reactions to policy debates. Beyond this course, I try to make every class an opportunity for students to see their own untapped potential, and bring their own humanity to the pursuit of quantitative social science. By directly engaging in research while learning, my students gain solid grounding in statistical techniques while also seeing beyond the number to tell a comprehensive story.

Personally, engaging in my career has not only proved fulfilling; it has also redefined how I see my disability, and the frustration that it brings. True, Type 1 diabetes generates considerable challenges on a day-to-day basis that can undermine how my performance gets quantified. Yet, I’ve come to also recognize that data also help save my life. When I was diagnosed as a toddler, my parents boiled glass syringes on the stove to sanitize them. Now, I wear an insulin pump connected to a glucose monitor that provides real-time data and controls my insulin to help prevent low blood sugar like I experienced during the test. These data help me be the human being I most want to be.

Ultimately, I am a complicated individual, in ways that test scores or class participation grades do not always capture. Having diabetes does not define me, but it is also fundamental to who I am. I am more than a number. My goal—as a scholar, teacher, and person—is that we recognize the same for all people.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. Stanford Graduate School of Education. 2011-2015.
M.A. in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership. Stanford University. 2007-2008.
Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude. Haverford College. 1998-2002.

CURRENT APPOINTMENTS & AFFILIATIONS

Associate Professor of Research, Statistics and Evaluation, School of Education & Human Development, University of Virginia. 2019-present.
Director of Measurement, Virginia Literacy Partnership. 2019-present.
Affiliated Research Fellow, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). 2019-present.

PRIOR POSITIONS & EXPERIENCE (SINCE GRADUATE SCHOOL)

Senior Research Scientist. Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), 2015-2019.
Adjunct Faculty, Oregon State University. 2015-2019.
Research Assistant. Center for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford University. 2011-2015.
Senior Policy Analyst. Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO). 2008-2011.

SCHOLARSHIP – PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (2024 ONLY)

Total Count (All Years) = 66 Articles; Citations = 4,003; i10-index = 46; H-index = 27

1. Kuhfeld, M., & Soland, J. (2024). Scoring assessments in multisite randomized control trials. In Press at *Psychological Methods*.
2. *Edwards, K. & Soland, J. (2024). Improving the precision of classroom observation scores. In Press at the *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
3. *Xu, R.J., & Soland, J. (2024). Beyond group comparisons: Accounting for intersectional sources of bias in international measures. In Press at *The International Journal of Testing*.
4. *Sadikova, E., Soland, J., *Menezes, M., & Mazurek, M. (2024). Impact of adverse childhood experiences and family resilience on sleep duration in autistic children. In Press at *Autism*.
5. Soland, J., *Edwards, K., & *Talbert, E. (In Press). Towards best practices in measurement for evaluation purposes. In Press at the *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
6. Soland, J. (In Press). Item response theory models for difference-in-difference estimates (and whether they are worth the trouble). *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
7. Edwards & Soland, J. (2024). Impacts of survey item ceiling effects on growth estimates: a few solutions. In Press at *Applied Psychological Measurement*.
8. Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Soland, J., & Kuhfeld, M. (2024). Social and emotional competency development from fourth to 12th grade: In Press at *American Psychologist*.
9. Soland, J. (In Press). Understanding and mitigating the impact of low effort on common uses of test and survey scores. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*.
10. Kuhfeld, M., McEachin, A., Soland, J., Register, B.* (In Press). Testing an explanation for summer learning loss: Differential examinee effort. *Education Evaluation & Policy Analysis*.

SCHOLARSHIP - GRANTS (FUNDED SINCE 2023)

1. **Spencer Foundation:** The Landscape of Education for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Kenya (2024-27) (\$498,000). *Role:* Co-PI.
2. **National Science Foundation:** Understanding How Approaches to Scoring Survey Item Responses Affect Results from Growth Mixture Models (2023-26) (\$420,000). *Role:* PI.
3. **Templeton Foundation:** A Multifaceted Investigation of the Measurement of Intellectual Humility (2023-26) (\$892,000). *Role:* Co-investigator.
4. **Institute of Education Sciences:** Project EMU: E-Book Centered Mathematics Vocabulary Instruction for Mathematical Understanding (2023-27) (\$2,000,000). *Role:* Co-investigator.
5. **Institute of Education Sciences.** U.S. Department of Education. Integrative Data Analysis of the Coping Power Program (2023-26) (\$1,293,703). *Role:* Co-investigator.

6. **Virginia Department of Education.** VA Early Literacy Screener K-3 Expansion (2023-25) (\$4,500,000). *Role:* Co-principal Investigator
7. **Virginia Department of Education.** VA Early Literacy Screener (Spanish) K-3 Development (2021-24) (\$3,500,000). *Role:* Co-principal Investigator.

SCHOLARSHIP – INVITED TALKS SINCE 2023

1. **Soland, J.** (2024). Invited Talk. *Why Evaluators Should Lose Sleep Over Measurement.* Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.
2. **Soland, J.** (2023). Invited Talk. *Understanding the Effects of COVID-19 on Student Learning Trajectories.* Pomona College. Claremont, CA.
3. **Soland, J.** (2023). Invited workshop. *How to Make Sure Measurement Decisions Don't Bias Study Results.* Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE). Washington, D.C.

TEACHING & MENTORING

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA COURSES (~250 STUDENTS TAUGHT)

2024. Numbers Are People: Examining the Ethics of Data-driven Decision-making in Education.

2019-2024 (Fall Semester). Survey Research Methods and Design (EDLF 7430).

2019-2024 (Spring Semester). Structural Equation Modeling (EDLF 8361).

2019-2020 (Fall and Spring). Quantitative Methods 1 (EDLF 5530).

Research Overseen (Past Year Only): 14 Grad. Students, 1 Postdoc, 2 Research Scientists

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE (SELECTED)

Editorial Board Member: *Journal for Research on Educational Effectiveness (JREE)*. 2023-present. *Educational Assessment*. 2021-current. *Educational Researcher*. 2022-current.

Member, NCME Informing Assessment Policy Committee & Standards and Test Use Committee. 2021-present.

Psychometric Consultant. Commonwealth of Virginia Working Group to Implement House Bill No. 585 of the 2022 Joint Session.

Invited Panelist, National Academy of Education, Impact of COVID on National Testing. 2021.

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Faculty Affiliate, Max Planck Research School on The Life Course (LIFE). 2023-present.

Faculty Rep. Public Service Pathways Education Advisory Committee. 2022-present.

Member, Faculty Workgroup on Producing Standards for Effective Teaching, (EHD). 2021.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION (SELECTED)

Jacobs Foundation Research Fellowship Program. International Semi-finalist. Current.

Early Career Award. Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE). 2022.

National Finalist, National Academy of Education Postdoctoral Fellowship. 2021.

COVID-19 RESEARCH MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS (SELECTED)

"New research is showing the high costs of long school closures in some communities." *NYT*

"Studies Show COVID's Toll on Students Living in Poverty." *Washington Post*

"American Schools Got a \$190 Billion Covid Windfall. Where Is It Going?" *NYT*

"Do we Really Have a COVID-19 Lost Generation?" *Washington Post*

"How One District Got Its Students Back Into Classrooms." *NYT*

"How to Reopen America's Schools." *NYT* Editorial Board Opinion. 2020.

"Research Shows Students Falling Months Behind During Virus Disruptions." *NYT*

"50 Million Kids Can't Attend School. What Happens to Them?" *NYT* Editorial Board Opinion.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT (EXCERPTED)

Dr. Soland is known within EHD, the University, and his field as an influential, collaborative, and approachable scholar. He is an outstanding educator whose contributions reach far beyond the University's walls. Dr. Soland's work has accumulated nearly 2,700 citations and garnered widespread recognition for its methodological rigor and impact on understanding socio-emotional and academic growth trajectories in educational contexts. He has demonstrated exceptional mentorship and teaching effectiveness, guiding students to significant achievements in research and professional placements. His exceptional achievements and ongoing commitment to excellence make him an exemplary candidate deserving of this recognition.

- Stephanie J. Rowley, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor, Dean, University of Virginia, EHD

[Dr. Soland] is very clearly a rising star in the field of education science and a valued citizen of the school...One indicator of the high regard in which Dr. Soland is held by senior scholars in his field is his having received an Early Career Award in 2022 from the Society for Research in Educational Effectiveness, the pre-eminent scientific organization in education science...Jim is [also] held in great esteem by his peers and students. He is collegial and generous with his time and expertise; he is sought after as a mentor, advisor, and instructor; and is an active partner in major research and development initiatives related to early education in the Commonwealth...

[Dr. Soland] is an example of a faculty member who is an exceptional scholar, terrific teacher and mentor, and valued citizen that is the foundation of great universities. **- Robert C. Pianta, Batten Bicentennial Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Virginia, EHD**

Professor Soland has had and continues to have an important impact on our field...the areas in which he has focused his research are those that make a difference for students and for education policy. His work addresses issues of inequity and marginalization in education...I believe he is one of the most important contributors to the science of educational measurement of his generation...There are few people like Professor Soland who are statistically savvy, can write well, and understand education policy...He is an amazing early career scholar who has already assembled a record of accomplishment that rivals most midcareer (and beyond!) scholars. **- Stephen G. Sireci, Distinguished University Professor, U. of Mass. Amherst**

Dr. Soland's overall scholarly activity is truly remarkable...In my opinion, Virginia has an emerging star that is going to have practically significant and also broad ranging impact...I wish there were more in the field of psychometrics like him, not only because of his interests in helping to relate statistical modeling advances to actual educational research, but because of his interests in understanding where contemporary methodological tools can have greatest impact. **- Daniel Bolt, Nancy C. Hoefs-Bascom Prof., University of Wisconsin-Madison**

If he isn't already, [Dr. Soland] has the makings of a star in his field, and his productivity to date has been remarkable...A common theme is Dr. Soland's ability to notice a seemingly esoteric issue related to the specification and use of a psychometric model that has the potential to influence evaluative decision-making and conclusions in an educational or psychological research context. **- Derek Briggs, Professor, University of Colorado Boulder**

I have been remarkably impressed by Prof. Soland's commitment to helping students understand the complexities and assumptions often required in making analytic decisions and to providing students with practical guidance on addressing statistical and measurement challenges...The feedback on Prof. Soland's classes has been so strong that...faculty agreed that a new course on Survey Design should be expanded for undergraduate students...Prof. Soland is a thoughtful and reflective teacher, and generous mentor to students and colleagues. **- Vivian Wong, Associate Professor, University of Virginia, EHD**

Just as important as the quality of [Dr. Soland's] work, perhaps even more so, is [its] reach, or impact...He is an example of the next generation of scholars who are utilizing new communication outlets and the concept of a public intellectual extremely wisely. - **Laura Stapleton, Professor, Dept. Chair, University of Maryland**

I find [Dr. Soland's] psychometric and measurement work to be theoretically rigorous, practically useful, and policy relevant. He asks interesting questions, clarifies...methods, and works across different silos...He offers practical guidance and decision frameworks around scoring and modeling that is contributing to improved research and appreciation of the importance of measurement foundations...the range of his collaborations...is [also] remarkable for an early career scholar... - **Andrew Ho, Professor, Harvard University**

Dr. Soland's work is highly innovative...One of Dr. Soland's talents is to combine questions about real educational issues with formal statistical methods... Besides the mere [quantity]... what stands out in Dr. Soland's record of publications is the quality of his work. It is justified to say that Dr. Soland has left a recognizable mark in all areas of his research, including areas not directly related to educational psychology. His papers are highly innovative, address questions that are both sophisticated and pertinent, and offer valuable insights that can be used by other researchers...Dr. Soland has demonstrated a clear dedication to the classroom, the university, and the scientific community. - **Emilio Ferrer, Professor, University of California Davis**

For someone who has performed at such a consistently high level in his teaching evaluations, [Jim's] thirst for continuing to improve is remarkable...[When] I have been invited to speak to Jim's classes, I am routinely struck by the warm environment, the comfort level of the students, and the positive impact that climate has on their willingness to ask me questions, take intellectual risks...Given the trepidation so many education students have with statistics and measurement, this strikes me as no small feat. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, his own stomach for intellectual risk-taking is impressive-we all had to pivot to teaching online during the pandemic. However, I know of very, very few who turned it into an opportunity to rethink their entire approach to teaching. - **Hunter Gehlbach, Professor, Johns Hopkins University**

Professor Soland readily adapted to the challenges of a global pandemic...[he] integrated multiple virtual elements for a dynamic class experience...[and] offered suggestions for further study and one-on-one mentoring during office hours...By the end of the semester, I was thoroughly enthralled with SEM!...The consistent partnership with fellow students [in his class] along with the open invitation to attend virtual office hours provided purposeful social engagement and helped me to feel connected to the UVA community [during the pandemic]. I appreciate that Professor Soland considered students' academic and social needs...once we transitioned back to in-person instruction, Professor Soland provided an equally dynamic Survey Design course...Throughout the course, Professor Soland sought out and incorporated student feedback, highlighting his drive to continually improve and tailor his courses to best support students...Finally, Professor Soland mentored me throughout the dissertation process. He provided valuable critique, consistently asking questions and offering suggestions that challenged my thought process. Ultimately, when people talk about the high level of education provided at the University of Virginia, I think about how Professor Soland went above and beyond to provide accessible learning experiences at the cutting edge of research. - **Christina Carroll, Breakthrough Montessori School, Former EHD doctoral student**

Professor Soland is an incredibly effective teacher, perhaps most importantly because he constantly seeks out feedback from his students and checks in about comprehension. I've personally never had a professor that willing to receive constructive feedback and also act on students' suggestions before. I learned a lot from him! **Graduate student from EDLF 5330 (Quant I)**