

Al DeSena, Ph.D.

Al DeSena, Ph.D. is a National Science Foundation Program Director in the Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings (DRL). He manages a portfolio that includes awards that focus on projects by museums, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and planetariums, on projects about sustainability/climate change education, on "making," invention and engineering design education, and on work at the intersection of science-art-design. He also oversees the awards for the Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE) and for the Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network (NISE Net).

Al has been in the science center and children's museum business for over thirty years, having been a program director, then founding executive director of the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh, PA (1979 - 1993) and founding president of Exploration Place in Wichita, KS (1993 - 2004). In both institutions he led the process of developing major new facilities.

Prior to entering the museum field he worked for six years at the Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, assisting with the development of K - 8 science instructional materials (*Individualized Science*) and research on science concept development in children.

His bachelor's degree is in chemistry from Fordham University, NY. He did graduate work in biophysical chemistry at Florida State University and received his Ph.D. in education from the University of Pittsburgh, with minors in sociology and higher education. His dissertation was a study in the sociology of knowledge focusing on interdisciplinary collaborations in higher education.