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Graduate Program Redesign to Prepare 21st Century Educational Leaders

Michelle Abrego

University of Texas at Brownsville

Chuey Abrego

University of Texas at Brownsville, jesus.abrego@utrgv.edu

Timothy W. Gilson

University of Northern Iowa, tim.gilson@uni.edu

Nicholas J. Pace

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, nick.pace@unl.edu

Mary J. Goggins Selke

ATE SIG for Educational Leadership

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Michelle Abrego, Chuey Abrego, Timothy W. Gilson, Nicholas J. Pace, Mary J. Goggins Selke, and Peggy Smith

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Michelle Abrego

University of Texas at Brownsville

Chuey Abrego

University of Texas at Brownsville

Timothy W. Gilson

University of Northern Iowa

Nicholas J. Pace

University of Northern Iowa

Mary J. Goggins Selke

Chair, ATE SIG for Educational Leadership

Peggy Smith

Campbell University

Abstract

The content of this article is focused on the theme of curriculum renewal and redesign in three university-based principal preparation programs from diverse sections of the country: Campbell University in North Carolina, the University of Northern Iowa, and the University of Texas at Brownsville.

Questions originally posed to representatives of the three principal preparation programs were as follows:

- *To what state or national standards are the programs aligned?*
- *How did program faculty engage in curriculum redesign and ongoing renewal?*
- *What delivery systems are offered: cohort, online, hybrid, etc.?*
- *How are field experiences and internships conducted?*
- *How do faculty members assess candidates' mastery of standards-aligned competencies?*

The redesign processes undertaken by faculty members from the three leadership preparation programs were explored by addressing common components culled from the questions: standards, curriculum renewal and redesign, field experiences and internships, assessment, and lessons learned. Conclusions summarize the common points that have made the processes successful. It is the authors' hope that the lessons learned from our combined experiences with principal preparation program redesign will be helpful to educational leadership faculty members engaged in similar processes at other colleges or universities.

University-based educational leadership preparation programs are under intense scrutiny to defend their purpose and relevance (Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2006). As early as 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration determined that administrator preparation programs “lacked a definition of good leadership ... collaboration between school districts and universities ... systemic professional development and ... sequence, modern content, and clinical experience” (Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Two and a half decades later, the Southern Educational Regional Board (2011) issued the statement that “too many states continue to produce unnecessary surpluses of poorly qualified school leadership candidates, rather than encouraging partnerships between

districts and universities to create a new system based on producing fewer but better prepared candidates to serve as school leaders” (p. 6).

Recent research has made it clear that the influence of school leadership is second only to that of teacher quality (Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Educational leadership preparation programs play a critical role in preparing those future leaders of America’s schools. Educational Leadership preparation programs must produce leaders capable of leading schools for the challenging contexts of increased accountability demands at both the federal and state levels, diminished resources and funding, and changing student demographics (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Attempts to study and improve school leadership preparation have been undertaken by organizations such as the Danforth Foundation, the Institute for Educational Leadership, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the Wallace Foundation. These organizations have released documents with content that has been critical of the quality of principal preparation programs and the lack of systematic succession planning by school districts and states. Many suggestions have been made for the improvement of principal preparation programs including course content and sequence, pedagogy, and internships as well as advice for state and local policy makers.

One such example is a recent report from the Southern Educational Regional Board, *Who’s Next: Let’s Stop Gambling on School Performance and Plan on School Succession* (2011). Attention was drawn to the lack of high quality principal candidates for future school leadership positions. It also underscored the need for school districts and state-certified university leadership programs to build systems that blend university coursework with quality field-based experiences.

Given the increased scrutiny under which educational leadership programs operate, and the increasing recognition of the importance of the principal’s role in school improvement, many university/college principal preparation programs are engaging in curriculum renewal and redesign efforts in an effort to address these concerns. Attempts are increasing to identify those educational leadership programs that are successful in producing strong school leaders (Orr, 2006).

Research on key features and components of effective leadership preparation programs exists which may serve to guide the work of preparation programs engaged in curriculum renewal and redesign. Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, and Orr (2010) noted that exemplary programs implemented program features which had been previously established as ‘best practice’ in the research literature for the preparation of educational leaders. These features or program elements/characteristics were: 1) purposeful targeted recruitment of teachers; 2) coherent curriculum focused on instructional leadership, organizational growth and development including change management, and strong support and alignment with state and national leadership standards; 3) active problem-based learning; 4) use of cohort structures; 5) strong collaboration/relationships between school systems and university preparation programs; and 6) well designed and supervised internships (p. 50). Contextual components found to support program success included funding for leadership

candidates to complete a full-time internship; state, district and university policies that guide the work of program redesign, and supported it with financial resources; and local individuals that ‘championed’ the cause of improving principal preparation (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, & Orr, 2010).

University/college principal preparation programs are faced with their own additional challenges of diminished resources, faculty pressures for tenure and promotion, and lack of value often placed on the collaborative work that accompanies building and developing relevant research based programs and working with school districts (Chenoweth, Carr, & Ruhl, 2002). How do programs handle such institutional barriers? What support do universities/colleges provide principal preparation programs for curriculum renewal work? To what extent are ‘best practices’ from the literature actually included in curriculum renewal processes for leadership preparation programs? We know we can’t do business as usual and expect our students to provide leadership in 21st century schools. How do we prepare school leaders to not only have knowledge but wisdom, and the ability to use that knowledge well?

Answers to those questions will be provided by examining how three leadership preparation programs engaged in the work of curriculum renewal and redesign. In each case this was done in an effort to produce quality leaders for the 21st century in light of the ongoing scrutiny of principal preparation programs and university barriers.

The University of Texas at Brownsville Educational Leadership Program

The College of Education at the University of Texas at Brownsville recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary. The university serves a predominantly Hispanic student and community population and is situated directly on the US Mexico border

Standards

For the last 20 years, the Educational Leadership Program (EDLR) at the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) had focused on meeting local and state standards. Recently, however, the focus has shifted toward aligning to national standards for both the principal and superintendent programs. During the 2010 academic year, the Dean shared his mission and vision of having all the programs within the College of Education aligned to National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards and the national standards of their respective Specialty Professional Associations (SPAs). The EDLR program received notification that it had achieved national NCATE SPA recognition, with the condition of collecting assessment data in February of 2012.

What follows is a description of the work undertaken by UTB EDLR faculty to align their educational leadership programs with NCATE standards. The alignment to national standards involved leading the program through a curriculum renewal process that will help the program continue improvements based on the evaluation of student performance data aligned to the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards.

Before discussing the work involved in aligning the program to NCATE standards, it is important to consider the program courses, field experiences, and final clinical experiences required for the UTB Educational Leadership programs designed to prepare school principals. The next few sections include a brief description of the requirements for the master's educational leadership program and the administrative certification-only program.

Master of education in educational leadership. The 36-hour Master of Education in Educational Leadership program at UTB is designed to produce change-oriented administrators. Graduates are prepared to provide administrative leadership and are competent in site-based school management, organization, school law, finance, curriculum leadership, and contemporary personnel practices. Upon completion of the degree and the additional six semester credit hours (for certification), the students may apply for the Principal Certificate in Texas. In addition, successful completion and defense of an electronic portfolio is required. (The electronic portfolio is not required for state certification.)

Certification-only program. This program offers a certification-only route to students who already have a master's degree in an education field other than educational leadership. Thus, completion of 18 post-graduate semester credit hours will meet requirements for certification.

Curriculum Renewal and Redesign

The curriculum renewal process began about a year before the department submitted the report to NCATE, involving many lengthy discussions and multiple drafts of program component revisions and additions. The faculty met as often as possible to discuss potential changes to program courses, internships, and related assessments. Courses were carefully examined and revised where necessary to demonstrate alignment to the ELCC standards. The e-portfolio content for students in the Master's Degree Program was aligned with both the TeXes competencies (State of Texas standards) and the ELCC standards. An assessment calendar was developed for collection of assessment data. Two cycles of data were readied by the fall 2012 semester as required by NCATE, using TK20 software as the data collection system.

During that same period of time, the department took initiative by contacting the ELCC SPA representative to discuss alignment issues, standards, the NCATE/SPA process, logistics for implementing assessments, and how to best gather and submit data. The existing curriculum was examined against both state and national standards to identify gaps in existing coursework. Additionally, UTB faced the challenge of ensuring that the curriculum adequately prepared school leaders to successfully work with large numbers of Latino students, a majority of whom are English Language Learners.

Assessment

Program faculty designed seven assessments to serve as evidence for meeting the ELCC standards. NCATE requires that all programs provide a minimum of six assessments;

the State of Texas requires a state licensure test in the content area. Table 1 represents a breakdown of each assessment for building level and district level administrative preparation programs, the type or form of assessment, and when it is administered in the program at UTB. Assessment rubrics were carefully designed to align with leadership standards, placed into select courses and implemented beginning with the fall 2011 semester. Data collection is ongoing.

Table 1
UTB Assessments for Building Level Administrative Certification

Type and Number of Assessment	Name of Assessment	Type or Form of Assessment	When Assessment Is Administered
Assessment #1: Licensure assessment or other content based assessment (required)	TeXes	Content	State Licensure
Assessment #2: Assessment of student learning (required)	Developing a Vision Staff	Content	6338 Principalship
Assessment #3: Assessment of ability to design, align, and evaluate curriculum, guide professional learning (required)	Professional Growth Plan	Professional Skills	6397 Analysis of Teaching Behavior
Assessment #4: Assessment of internship/clinical practice (required)	Internship – Guidelines & Evaluation	Professional Skills	6398 Internship
Assessment #5: Assessment of ability to support student learning and development (required)	Family Support	Professional Skills (Effects)	6386 Admin. of Pupil Personnel
Assessment #6: Additional assessment that addresses ELCC standards (optional)	Campus Based Strategic Plan	Content	6337 Special Pops
Assessment #7: Additional assessment that addresses ELCC standards (optional)	Campus Budget	Prof. Skills	6389 Administration of School Business Services/School Finance

Field Experiences and Internships

A major change to the program was increasing the number of internship hours above the state requirement. Prior to curriculum renewal, field hours were limited to the internship capstone course. Field experiences are now embedded throughout the program culminating with a one semester internship during the candidate's final semester. Both the field hours and the one semester capstone experience require direct interaction of the candidate with staff, students, parents and community leaders. School leaders in the university's service area have been supportive of the change in the field experience.

Candidates conduct internship activities in a variety of settings including both campus-based K–12 settings and community agency settings. These activities are planned

cooperatively by the candidate, site supervisor, and university faculty. The internship requirements are based on the Texas Principal Competencies and Texas Administrative Code as well as the Educational Leadership Consortium Council (ELCC) Standard 7. Responsibilities are augmented over time in quantity and difficulty and include direct communication with staff, parents, and community.

The types of internship experiences completed in these courses include, but are not limited to: developing a school communications plan; leading a curriculum review or implementation process; participating in budget planning; chairing a school improvement committee; or serving as administrative designee for special education IEP meetings. Interns also participate in interviews, plan and implement professional development, conduct clinical supervision, and participate in student discipline hearings.

The candidates maintain a log of all experiences by activity and setting or level for a total of 240 hours (minimum) throughout the field and capstone internship activities. Interns are required to complete 140 hours of pre-internship field experiences that are documented in seven of the courses in the educational leadership program and 100 hours in the internship.

Candidates also maintain an electric portfolio of internship artifacts to be reviewed and assessed by university faculty members and site supervisors. The portfolio includes a weekly log with observations and reflections during the internship. The candidate's experiences are planned cooperatively by the individual, the site supervisor, and educational leadership faculty to provide inclusion of appropriate opportunities to apply skills, knowledge, and research contained in the ELCC standards.

Lessons Learned

Probably the most valuable lesson learned throughout this journey is that it takes a team of committed faculty to work together to accomplish the task of curriculum renewal across a program. A related challenge involves identifying the specific roles for each faculty member and the components with which each will be directly involved to ensure that the program meets deadlines. In other words, roles needed clear delineation so time can be set aside to follow up with key staff to monitor designated tasks.

Additionally, it is important that faculty develop concrete methods to gather and confirm the accuracy of data. Consequently, another area that deserves close scrutiny is how the department and college gather and archive data. Fine-tuning the process is an ongoing challenge.

The process of preparing our ELCC program report took about a year and a half. The process of curriculum renewal continues as UTB faculty gather data on candidate performance, analyze it and adjust curriculum accordingly.

The University of Northern Iowa Principal Preparation Program

In a climate in which educational leadership programs, even at prestigious institutions, have been labeled "inadequate to appalling" (Levine, 2005), educational leadership faculty at

the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) engaged in an extensive, two-year process of conceiving and implementing improvements for the principalship preparation program. The comprehensive process incorporated both internal and external reviews, review of recent research on promising programs across the country, analysis of student outcome data, and practitioner input. The resulting changes included additional course offerings, a more rigorous internship, and an enhanced connection between theory and practice in a distance education program (fiber optics TV, face-to-face, online, and hybrid), without adding time required for completion or more credit hours to the program. In addition, the revisions have earned praise from external program reviewers and an Iowa Department of Education site visit team.

As the revision process began, two major review processes loomed: a university required external review and a state approval visit. Program faculty determined that these reviews would be most useful if reviewers examined the proposed program, rather than existing and already approved program. This reasoning made sense to College of Education administrators and both review teams; the revision process moved forward.

Faculty, students, and members of the program advisory group consistently identified meaningful relationships with faculty and a strong, practical, field-based internship experience as being of the utmost importance. The same groups identified a need for increased structure of candidates' internship experiences while maintaining oversight from on-site mentors, faculty field supervisors, and campus-based faculty. This input came at a time of diminishing resources, faculty attrition, and central administration warnings that new courses would be viewed very skeptically.

Standards

Faculty members initially developed a common format for program syllabi, in which all assignments were aligned with the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL). This standard set mirrors the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards and McREL's Principal Responsibilities. It also aligns with the UNI Conceptual Framework which challenges each candidate to become a Leader of Service, a Leader of Change, and a Leader of Learning.

Curriculum Renewal and Redesign

In the fall of 2008, program faculty convened the UNI Educational Leadership Advisory Council for a work session focused entirely on program improvement. Practitioners from across the state reviewed the existing program's requirements and courses, and thought critically about what must be present in a new program. Concepts and skills identified included expertise in curriculum/instruction/assessment, the importance of relationships, experience leading a change initiative, and skill at conflict resolution. This input, along with graduates' outcome data, the literature, and faculty observation formed an important foundation for the revised program. This input ultimately yielded six proposed courses.

The Principal as Instructional Leader course aimed to replace the *Foundations of Instructional Psychology* course to feature a much greater emphasis on the principal as both an instructional leader and facilitator of adult learning. This was a major change in that the program for many years had included the *Foundations* course as a Graduate College requirement not taught by educational leadership faculty. Student feedback indicated that the course needed a “principalship context” that we felt was best delivered by educational leadership faculty.

Program faculty had long held the goal of finding ways to intermingle its urban and rural/suburban cohorts. Utilizing Advisory Council input and feedback from graduates and candidates, a sequence of two new elective courses was proposed: leading school activity programs and enhancing school/community connections. Both elective strands were designed to provide students with an introduction to the literature around activities and engagement/outreach in the first course, while providing an opportunity for direct, field-based applications in unique school settings in the second course.

Activities Administration I and II were designed to meet the preparation need for administration of school activities programs in a way that enhanced schools’ overall missions. Activities were aimed at preparing candidates to better understand research into the academic and social impact of student participation in activities. Designers also sought to help future activities administrators navigate the complexities that exist between athletics and other activities such as speech and debate, drama, and music.

Community Connections (CC) I and II represent the second strand available to students. These proposed courses gave students the opportunity to better understand the importance of parental and community involvement in increasingly diverse settings, providing a well-rounded grasp of the cultural competencies vital in today’s schools. Community Connections was aimed at examining research into promising practices for effectively engaging all stakeholders, not merely those that are most frequently engaged with their schools.

A third course change involved the only time in which students in UNI’s distance education principalship cohort are physically present together on campus. *A Seminar in School Leadership* was added to the three week on-campus requirement during students’ first summer in the program. The seminar was designed to more effectively utilize candidates’ time on campus with activities that do not lend themselves to distance education.

A primary example is a role-playing experience entitled *A Day in The Office* that places students in a mock office while agitated parents, teachers, and students come to express concerns and problems. Other areas addressed in the seminar include public speaking, field trips, balancing personal/family life with the new demands of school leadership, and a poverty simulation activity.

Although budget cuts had prompted central administration to admonish faculty members not to propose new courses, faculty members were able to add the courses described above by reallocating credit hours that had previously been awarded for internship experiences. This allowed the program’s credit hour requirement to remain at 37 hours. Program faculty also demonstrated to central administration that proposed courses did not

add credit hours to be taught, since faculty members' supervision of internship hours had been counted against teaching loads. The revised internship experience was strengthened even as the number of credit hours allocated was reduced.

Internships

A 425-hour internship experience is now a key attribute of the UNI principalship preparation program. This requirement, which exceeds the state minimum, includes supervision by an on-site mentor, a faculty field supervisor, and a campus-based faculty advisor/professor. Experiences in the revised program were framed around the six ISSLC Standards and the accompanying 35 skills-focused functions distributed across the standards, rather than skill areas defined by a commercially produced text. The revised program expanded the internship structure to include three components: field-based experiences, course-embedded experiences, and program-required experiences.

Field-based experiences are part of a collaboratively developed personalized internship plan, assembled by each student, the advisor, the faculty field supervisor, and an on-site mentor. The plan must include specified hours in Special Education, Early Childhood Education, and both Elementary and Secondary Education. As students complete field-based internship experiences, they record their experiences on UNI's web-based Student Management System, where they are evaluated and commented on by department staff.

Course-embedded field experiences consist of assignments that are explicitly aligned with ISSLC, McREL, and UNI's conceptual framework, as well as specific objectives from courses in which students are enrolled. These experiences engage students in authentic leadership experiences in their buildings and districts, drawing upon course content for their completion.

In response to the faculty's desire to increase students' experiences and awareness of issues in buildings and districts that are different from their own (ethically/racially, demographically, socioeconomically, geographically, enrollment size, etc.), students must complete three required internship activities. The first program required activity is to spend a full day shadowing an out-of-district principal. Second, in response to growing diversity and changing demographics in Iowa, candidates must gain four to six hours' experience in a non-profit/social-service agency. Finally, candidates must complete four to six hours in a business/industry setting to become better acquainted with the expectations of leaders in fields outside of education.

To make a stronger connection to the UNI Educational Leadership Conceptual Framework, candidates are required to specify how their internship experiences have shown their abilities to function as leaders of learning, service, and change. Additionally, the new program includes a document that allows students to provide feedback to mentors regarding how effective they were in providing guidance to the student.

Assessment

Assessment and the way student progress is tracked during all phases of the program has also been strengthened. This begins with the admission process when references are asked to specifically assess applicants' performance and potential related to ISSLC. Faculty provide students the opportunity to revise sub-standard assignments to mastery level so that the professor and student, once they are in the program, are both comfortable with the quality of final work products.

Four required critical element papers, as well as all other major writing assignments, are now evaluated using a writing rubric collaboratively developed by faculty. Specific guidance for completing the critical element papers appears in the streamlined program handbook, which is available to students online.

As candidates near completion of the program, they begin assembling an ISLLC-aligned, rubric-assessed professional portfolio, in electronic or hard copy. They also have the opportunity to view a presentation by a recent program graduate who shares tips and suggestions for assembling and formally presenting the portfolio. Finally, a new capstone end-of-program experience requires candidates to synthesize internship experiences, prior learning, and course material to address dilemmas of practice in a comprehensive exam format.

As a result of campus academic program review requirements, program assessments have been formalized and enriched. In the past, program faculty made changes informally and as necessary. The revised program features a specific student outcomes assessment plan with specific objectives. Most important, these objectives are examined at specific times of the year, rather than on an occasional basis. Outcomes assessments are independent of university-required instructor evaluations and are collaboratively examined by faculty in a professional learning community format to share ideas and suggestions.

This allows program faculty to discuss the importance of learning communities and, more legitimately, to *function as one*. Program faculty believe this process should receive serious consideration from faculty in other departments and disciplines. Finally, as a result of suggestions from the department's advisory council and a state department of education site visit team, a three year post-graduation survey is under development.

Lessons Learned

Although program reviews are understandably often viewed with dread, the process at UNI worked as intended—to drive program improvement. As a result of the preparation and the actual review, department faculty are able to provide additional learning opportunities to students. They are also better able to incorporate the literature-based best practices as well as student, graduate, and practitioner feedback in ways that fit within the university's constraints. Continued changes are anticipated as students cycle through the revised program in the next few semesters.

The Campbell University Licensure Program for School Executives: Principals Standards

Campbell University is a small, private university in rural central North Carolina. Faculty based its licensure program for School Executives: Principals upon the new North Carolina Standards for School Executives: Principals. These seven research-based standards align with both the ISLLC and ELCC standards.

Assessment

There are critical elements within each State standard and descriptors within each element, which define the skills needed to be a school leader at the proficient level. The candidate must be deemed proficient in each standard ($n = 7$), element ($n = 20$), and descriptor ($n = 37$). Candidates who are emerging or developing in any single descriptor are not recommended for licensure until they are deemed proficient.

In addition to demonstrating competency in the State standards, each candidate must be deemed proficient in twenty-one specific competencies defined and required by the State Board of Education. Candidates who have not yet achieved the level of proficient are also not recommended for licensure until they achieve this level.

Ability to demonstrate proficiency in the State standards and State competencies is evaluated by the candidate's internship supervisor, the instructor of the course in which the evidence for the descriptors are completed, the university supervisor, and one or more public school partners. These evaluators must agree that the candidate is ready to assume an entry level leadership position in a school. Following State certification procedures, candidate portfolios are submitted to the North Carolina licensing agency and then to a panel of reviewers from other universities who assess the accuracy of Campbell University's evaluation. Should the university not submit quality evidences in the portfolios, the university may receive sanctions up to and including disbanding the degree/licensure program.

All candidates must produce electronic portfolio evidences containing seven evidences (see Table 2) to assure that they meet each standard, element, and descriptor. These evidences include descriptors from two or more standards and illustrate leadership in these areas: strategic, instructional, cultural, human resource, managerial external development, and micro-political.

The seven evidences require specific products designed to give candidates authentic experiences as an administrator. Six of these products are required by the State of North Carolina and Campbell University requires one additional evidence relating to ethics. Candidates are required to complete the following electronic evidences at the proficient level.

Table 2

Electronic Evidences in the Campbell University Principal Preparation Program

EE #1 Required – POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT <u>Name of evidence:</u> Student Learning and Development Case Study
EE #2 Required – TEACHER EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP <u>Name of Evidence:</u> Human Resource Development Handbook
EE #3 Required – COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT <u>Name of Evidence:</u> Staff and Community Involvement Tool Kit
EE #4 Required – ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT <u>Name of Evidence:</u> A Management Manual
EE #5 Required – SCHOOL CULTURE AND SAFETY <u>Name of Evidence:</u> “A Good Place to Be” production
EE #6 Required – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT <u>Name of Evidence:</u> Making a good school better action plan
EE #7 ETHICAL LEADERSHIP (Campbell University only) <u>Name of evidence:</u> Doing the Right Thing

In addition to the electronic evidences, candidates at Campbell University are required to take a four-hour comprehensive examination. This examination is reflective in nature and provides candidates with case studies which require that they use all of their leadership skills and competencies. The examination is assessed by university professors using a rubric which reflects the standards.

Once candidates acquire a formal leadership position, surveys are sent from the State to assess supervisor satisfaction. Those survey results are returned to Campbell University in order for the program to respond to weak areas. For example, the feedback indicated that there was a need for candidates to have more experience with crucial conversations with students, parents and staff. A course, “Leadership Interactions”, was added to the program to provide these experiences.

Curriculum Renewal and Redesign

Program evaluation at Campbell University is multifaceted. Courses and instructors are evaluated at the end of each term. These student assessments are used to make modifications in staffing, textbooks, and instructional activities. Monthly seminars also enable candidates to share concerns about curriculum, meeting the standards, and growth opportunities.

When all of the North Carolina school leader licensure programs were re-visioned in 2008, the Campbell University program coordinator studied relevant literature, held focus groups, and conducted surveys. The focus groups included interns, program completers, professors from Campbell and other universities, practitioners, and candidates who were

applying for admission. The coordinator also served on state-wide committees which designed the standards, rubrics, evidence requirements, and assessment approaches. The data gathered from these sources enabled a new approach to the graduate degree and licensure process. Changes suggested by focus groups continued through a Master of School Administration Advisory Council.

Once the program design was thoroughly vetted, the program was submitted to a committee of university professors of educational leadership and Department of Public Instruction officials. This review led to changes in the products which candidates would use as submitted evidences. The final version of the re-visioned program was then submitted for approval to the Curriculum Committee of Campbell University and the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Candidates are allowed to take as few as one 3-credit course or one 1-credit internship module per term or as many as two courses and up to ten internship modules per term. The pacing of their programs is totally based upon their personal needs.

All courses are at least 50% face-to-face. Two courses (Creating and Sustaining School Culture and Special Needs Students) are hybrid courses with topics that lend themselves to on-line rather than face-to-face collaboration.

Core courses are all taught face-to-face due to the amount of authentic materials within them. Internship activities occur at school sites with a face-to-face Saturday seminar monthly from September through April to review standards-aligned experiences and candidate presentations.

Internships

When the program was re-visioned, the internship changed from an hours-based experience to one focusing on actual work as an administrator. Previously, two 6-credit internship courses required 300 contact hours each. For the add-on candidate with a previous Master's degree, the requirement was one 7-credit internship course with 450 contact hours required.

These requirements were changed to ten 1-credit modules, each of which addresses a specific skill or evidence. These modules assure that candidates are engaged in meaningful work and service to the school(s) in which they complete their electronic evidence products. Seven of the modules correlate with the seven electronic evidences. Candidates may complete their internship activities in their own school, at another school, or in a combination of the two field sites.

Internship site supervisors are oriented by the program coordinator, usually at the school site and in the presence of the candidate. All three participants sign a written agreement which addresses expectations for all three (site supervisor, university supervisor, and candidate). Site supervisors evaluate the candidate at the end of the candidate's program on both internship work and required competencies.

Observations/Conclusions

The three university programs profiled for discussion purposes evidence implementation of several components cited by Darling-Hammond (2010) as indicators of quality programs for the preparation of school leaders. This was the case despite representing public or private universities; small or large; from the Midwest, Southeast, or Southwest. Several components were found to be common factors in the redesign of the three programs.

Faculty in all three programs capitalized on external mandates to review and improve programmatic curricula. Collaboration between K–12 and university personnel was a part of the process in each case.

The UNI program went farthest with practitioner involvement, taking an inductive approach to program design in that practicing principals and current or recent candidates were asked what holes they had experienced in the preparation program and what skills or knowledge needed to be not only maintained but expanded. From that starting point, standards were aligned to what could be viewed as a skills-focused knowledge base of practice. It was interesting that when asked, practicing administrators wanted what has been identified as key to strong re-visioned programs: curriculum focused on the nuts and bolts of instructional leadership that includes real or carefully simulated practice in facilitating organizational growth, directing change processes, and productively managing conflict.

All three programs were carefully and systemically aligned with their respective state (IA, NC, TX) and national (ELCC) standards. The McRel and ISLLC standards were also used to guide work in some cases along with reflective consideration of recent reports from myriad sources that criticized the status quo of university-based administrator preparation.

Standards were implemented in ways that exceeded perfunctory alignment. Course-embedded practica that require candidates to demonstrate competence in specific standards-aligned skills have become part of each program. Required numbers of hours ranged from 250 to 425 to 450 but merely racking up hours is no longer the point.

Readers who have been university supervisors of administrative interns in the past have probably encountered practicum logs that were heavy on hours but light on experience that went much beyond bus duty, cafeteria duty, and after-school student supervision. Experience with curriculum was often limited to the grade level or content area taught.

This is no longer sufficient because the emphasis is no longer limited to defining internship quality in terms of hours spent. The implicit question, “spent doing what?” is now driving the design of capstone field experiences. The focus is on observable, specific, skills and experiences whether they are acquired in a candidate’s own building or at another site.

None of the programs specified a cohort delivery model yet the aspect of developing candidate learning communities was present. Learning cultures were also described among collaborators that some highly competitive university cultures would view as an unexpected source: the faculty. The Texas and Iowa programs expressly described the importance of a collaborative culture among university faculty, a higher education PLC of sorts, in which

colleagues became comfortable with critical conversations designed to solve problems and improve programs. The collaboration and program approval process of the North Carolina program could also not have been accomplished without strong, shared faculty involvement.

Assessment in these three programs has evolved past traditional tests and papers into the realm of standards-aligned artifacts in e-folios. (The Iowa program also provides an option for traditional, hard copy portfolios.) Technology usage ranges from a focus on the e-folio, to two courses delivered in hybrid format, to interactive television so candidates from urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state can share context-specific experiences.

In all cases, program faculty and leadership have learned to circumvent limited financial resources, diminished staffing, and a lack of time for curriculum work to develop stronger programs that better prepare administrators for the realities of being functioning school leaders in today's schools. Business as usual is changing in these schools and in others as we seek to implement the kinds of administrator preparation programs that will help our candidates adjust to a leadership future we cannot predict, just as K–12 teachers strive to prepare students for jobs, technologies, and situations that cannot be fathomed at this point. To paraphrase Collay (2006), we must prepare future educational leaders by seeking to analyze patterns of professional socialization, learn what supports or hinders leadership, and continue to construct the kinds of administrative preparation programs that model transformative pedagogy.

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