

## Exceptional University Programs

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Over the past decades several educational reform reports have underscored the importance of changing and enhancing educational leadership preparation (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; NCEE, 1987). These reports clearly articulate the strategic role and importance of university leadership programs and their impact on the quality of learning and development experienced by children in schools. Many of the leader preparation programs in the UCEA university consortium have taken these reports seriously. They have re-examined what they do and made substantial strides in shaping their curriculum and programs to meet the needs of their students and successfully prepare leaders and scholars for the new millennium. Seldom are we presented with the opportunity to highlight the gains and achievements of our member institutions. In this and subsequent issues of the *UCEA Review* we will share with our colleagues the strengths and innovations of UCEA programs in preparing leaders for service in school districts, professional organizations, and higher education.

Because of the unique relationship between UCEA and The University of Missouri-Columbia's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA), we have chosen to feature MU in this issue. ELPA is one of five academic units within the MU College of Education. The ELPA department offers graduate programs in four areas--K-12 educational administration, higher and continuing education, educational policy studies, and educational leadership. Recently, ELPA's graduate programs were ranked among the top 25 in the country (Administration/Supervision--17<sup>th</sup> and Higher Education and Administration--23<sup>rd</sup>) in the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* Rankings of Graduate Schools (2000). The K-12 educational administration and educational leadership area offers a master's, specialist, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration. All of these programs emphasize the application of theory and research to the practice of administration in K-12 schools. They also prepare students for teaching, research, and administrative positions in higher education. The curriculum are integrated, thematically driven, and have a problem-based orientation. Current research and theory inform instructional approaches about professional learning.

ELPA has made substantial changes to its programs using the recommendations of the 1989 National Policy Board's *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators* as a framework. For example, In 1995 ELPA abolished its traditional master's degree program in educational administration. In 1999, the department, in collaboration with other departments in the College of Education, designed and implemented a master's degree program with an emphasis on learning and instruction (MLI) and a concentration in educational administration. The MLI curriculum is integrated around important skill dimensions (e.g., learners and learning, school culture, assessment, empowerment, organizational management, reflection, and diversity) that prepare individuals for the com-

plex responsibilities of leadership positions. At the conclusion of the program, students are eligible for initial principal certification.

The educational specialist (Ed.S.) program in educational administration is a collaborative, integrated course of study focused on building leadership and is enhanced by technology. During the specialist program students establish formal partnerships with school districts, participate in site-based seminars, and conduct applied research. Along with the course work, students also participate in an intensive and meaningful internship in the public schools. These internships are designed to focus on the current working life of practicing administrators and take an active interest in problem solving activities at the local district. The Ed.S. program prepares students for advanced principal certification.

One of the most innovative developments in doctoral curriculum and delivery at MU occurred in 1997. ELPA, in collaboration with several Missouri institutions of higher education, the coordinating board of higher education, and the Governor's Office, launched an interdisciplinary Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership that has been showcased at numerous national research and professional meetings. The program's strengths are its collaborative design for curriculum planning and delivery, its orientation in preparing individuals to confront the complexities of daily practice, and the integration of a thematic and problem-based curriculum. Faculties collaborate as program instructors and dissertation advisors with students across the state.

Both the Ed.S. and Ed.D. programs have been changed from open enrollment to cohort programs, and the instruction, program delivery, and assessment are enhanced through state-of-the-art technology. The MLI program offers students the opportunity to earn their master's degree primarily through web-based instruction. The Ed.S. and Ed.D. programs are also supported by the use of web-based and interactive technological instruction. ELPA offers a Ph.D. in three emphasis areas--educational administration, higher and continuing education, and educational policy studies. The Ph.D. in educational administration emphasizes research and theory.

The ELPA K-12 faculty is involved in research and service. The research interests include the study of professional learning of teachers and administrators, superintendent-school board relations, middle level leadership, instructional leadership of school administrators, school empowerment, collaboration in higher education, educational program planning and evaluation, parental involvement, equity in leadership policy, school-community relations, k-12 school violence and prevention, migrant education, professional learning communities, teacher empowerment and leadership, and school culture. Faculty is also involved in leadership in national organizations such as UCEA and the AERA.

The Department sponsors several national and state initiatives and serves as home for major national professional associations. These include UCEA, the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the National Basic Schools Network, the University of Missouri System Consortium for Educational Policy, the Middle Level Leadership Center, and the Missouri North Central Association Office.

We would greatly appreciate hearing about the strengths and innovations of your program.  
Please contact the UCEA office.

### References

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