# Developing Evaluation Evidence: *An Evaluation Handbook for Educational Leadership Preparation*

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This publication was developed and published by **UCEA** in cooperation with the *Institute for Systematic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership* **(INSPIRE)** ([www.edleaderprep.org](www.edleaderprep.org)). The primary purpose of the institute is to make available valid and reliable evaluation research tools and methods, a systemic process for collecting and analyzing program- and state-level data, training materials and opportunities for program faculty and evaluators, and strategies for leveraging data for leadership preparation program improvement. The second purpose of the institute is to support a rigorous and longitudinal research program focused on the preparation and practice of educational leaders.

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## Evaluation Planning for Leadership Preparation Programs

Educational leadership preparation program faculty engage in formative and summative evaluation of leadership candidates and graduates for a variety of purposes and uses. These include

- *providing relevant and timely information on graduates and alumni outcomes to ascertain program effectiveness;*
- *comparing groups of graduates' experiences to determine benefits of program differences;*
- *comparing program features and delivery type with other programs regionally and nationally for benchmarking;*
- *identifying areas for program and course improvement;*
- *making the case for program resources and support; and*
- *researching the relationship between program design and delivery, graduate outcomes, and school improvement leadership work.*

This evaluation planning handbook was created to support such efforts, which involve the collection of both formative and summative evaluation data. The handbook is organized according to how program inputs and outcomes have been conceptualized and validated in evaluation research on leadership preparation programs. The program evaluation process outlined in this handbook has multiple uses, including those cited in the text box on the right.

The handbook includes

- *a conceptual model of the link between leadership preparation and outcomes;*
- *a guide for identifying evaluation evidence; and*
- *an evaluation planning worksheet.*

Each leadership preparation program is guided by its own theory of action or program logic model, which connects its choices in program content, delivery, and design to expected outcomes (UCEA, 2017). Weiss (1988) defined program theory as "the set of beliefs that underlie action" (p. 55) and explained that these represent the mechanisms that mediate between the delivery of a program and the intended outcomes. In planning for evaluation, program officials, therefore, first need to determine the outcomes they hope to achieve and then need to identify the attributes of the program they think will be most influential in

> **Handbook Uses**
>
> Identify Formative and Summative Assessments
>
> Identify Measures and Outcomes (e.g., program and participant outcomes)
>
> Evaluate the Relationship Between the Program Attribute and the Outcome
>
> Use Data for Preparation Program Improvement

achieving such outcomes. This handbook should help program officials make such decisions by focusing their attention on what they want to measure and the sources of evidence they plan to use. Moreover, the recommended evaluation evidence categories may help program officials consider evaluation options they had not anticipated.

Figure 1 below illustrates a **Model for Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs**. The model was constructed using available evaluation research validated through several studies. As indicated in the model, two elements make up Phase 1 of the model. These program input elements include what program candidates bring with them to the program as well as what the program offers candidates through the program. Phase 2 identifies three types of initial program graduate outcomes. The graduate outcomes include not only what candidates learn during the program, but also whether or not they are hired for a leadership position and how they use their new knowledge and skills as educational leaders. The final phase is concerned with the impact that program graduates have on others once they have served as educational leaders. Together these phases provide insight into the quality and impact of leadership preparation, which then can be used to support the improvement of educational leadership preparation and practice.

**Figure 1. Model for Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs**
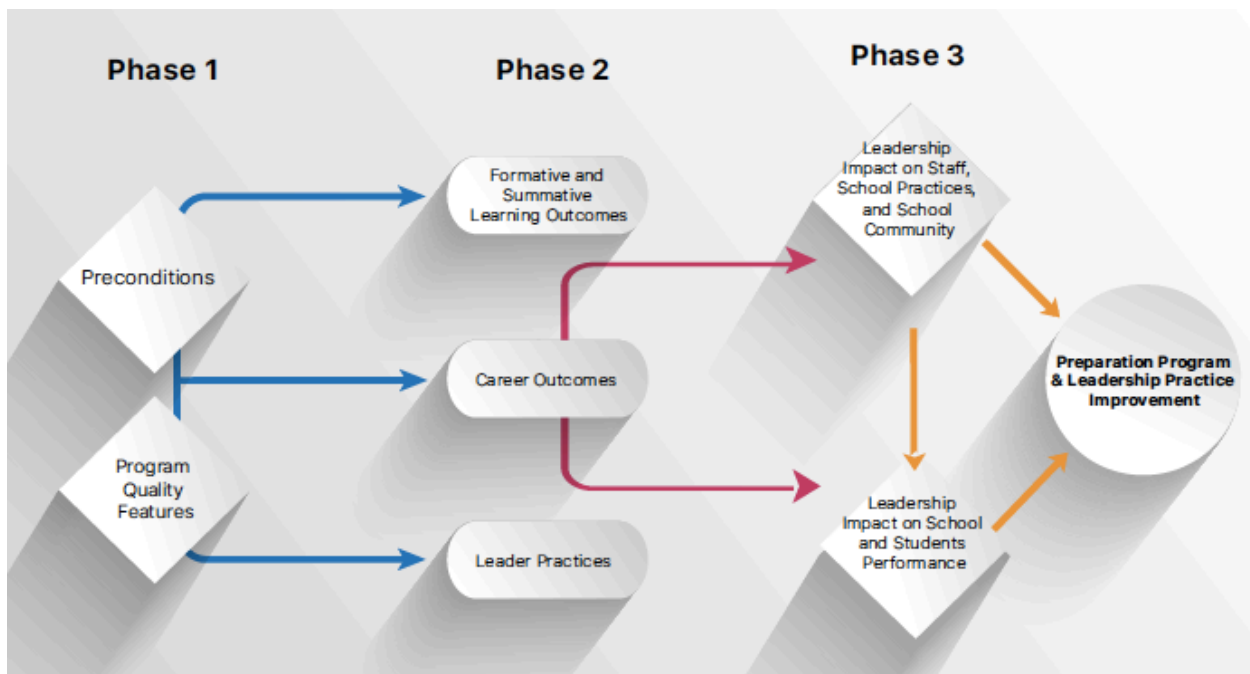


Programs need a way to measure and track each program attribute and outcome of interest. This handbook provides a blueprint for evaluation planning and enables programs to identify what they want to measure and how these sources of evidence relate to their program as they select formative and summative evaluation assessments.

## Evaluation Planning Guide

This section of the handbook offers a guide to evaluation planning. In the following paragraphs, we provide a more in-depth examination of the evaluation model delineated in Figure 1, including a substantive discussion of each facet of the model and a set of recommended sources of evidence about which programs could collect data for their program evaluation efforts, including data collected through *INSPIRE Leadership Program Evaluation Surveys,* which were specifically designed for these purposes (see www.ucea.org). The planning guide also includes suggested timing for data collection.

**Preconditions**: Participants and Prior Experiences**.** For the purposes of evaluating leadership preparation, program preconditions include the characteristics and qualities that candidates have prior to their program experience.  Some programs establish selection criteria that set parameters on candidate preconditions (e.g., the number of years of prior teaching, instructional effectiveness, prior leadership experiences). Some programs strive to recruit candidates that help to diversify the field or create more equitable access to leadership preparation, based on gender, race, or ethnicity. In some cases, preconditions reflect a candidates' affiliation with a local district and that district's relationship with the leadership preparation program (in the form of referral, collaboration and financial support). Data on such preconditions would be collected during the selection process and might include information such as

- *candidate demographic characteristics;*
- *candidate teaching, professional, and leadership experiences and accomplishments; and*
- *district support for the candidate.*

Precondition data also could be gathered using the *INSPIRE* Preparation Program (PP) and Graduate (G) Surveys.

**Program Quality Features** (e.g., UCEA Institutional Quality Criteria). Prior research has underscored the quality features of leadership preparation programs and their influence on graduate outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, & Orr, 2009; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Young & Crow, 2016). These features, in turn, represent program domains that can be explored to understand how programs vary content, delivery, and quality (Young, Orr, & Tucker, 2012). These program domains include

- *program philosophy or theory of action;*
- *quality of faculty (whether dedicated to the program, tenured, research engaged, and having school and district leadership experience);*

- *curriculum and course rigor and relevancy (relationship to national standards, focus on instructional leadership and other program priorities);*
- *instructional approaches (such as use of problem-based learning, case studies and action research; technology supported learning);*
- *internship or residency (length, focus, and quality);*
- *candidate support and development (such as use of cohort structures to enhance peer interactions and advisement);*
- *performance-based assessments (including exams, portfolio assessments, culminating projects, internship performance assessments, and state certification assessments); and*
- *postprogram support (such as seminars, mentoring and coaching, and job placement assistance).*

Changes to program features should be documented on a regular basis. The INSPIRE-PP Survey was designed for this specific purpose. The INSPIRE-G Survey provides additional insight into program features from the perspective of recent program graduates.

**Candidate Learning: Formative Assessments.** As candidates progress through their course of study, program faculty and officials need to assess their learning and skill development. This is important not only for fostering candidate growth, but also for supporting a program's continuous improvement process. Formative and interim assessments provide information that can be used to identify candidates' skills and competencies that may need further development as well as ways in which to support such development prior to completion of the program. Performance-based assessments are considered to be most effective for evaluating whether candidates can apply knowledge within authentic leadership situations. Other processes include

- *course-related knowledge assessments,*
- *skill-specific assessments,*
- *dispositional assessments,*
- *internship-related assessments,*
- *standards-based tasks and projects, and*
- *midprogram assessments.*

It is also important to determine how these assignments are evaluated (such as with a rubric or other rating tool) and how results are tracked.

How candidates are formatively assessed can be gathered using both the INSPIRE-PP and INSPIRE-G Surveys, though the INSPIRE-PP will provide the most comprehensive picture of program formative assessment practices. In addition to documenting how candidates are

formatively assessed and the results of such assessments, programs should have a process for aggregating and examining the results.

**Candidate Learning: Summative Assessments.** At the completion of a program, candidates' learning and skill development can be assessed through a variety of culminating assignments and products, such as a

- comprehensive exam,
- candidate portfolio, and
- certification or licensure exam.

All program-generated summative assessment tools should be evaluated using a rubric or other rating tool. Summative assessments should be designed to assess candidates' attainment of program defined competencies and readiness for licensure or certification and for initial leadership positions. The results can be compiled as part of tracking individual candidates and summarized by group and program.

Both the INSPIRE-PP and INSPIRE-G Surveys can be used to gather information on the summative assessments used within programs. As noted previously, whereas the INSPIRE-PP will provide the most comprehensive picture of program assessment practices, the INSPIRE-G will document attainment of program-defined competencies. Programs should have a process for gathering, aggregating, and examining the results of summative assessments.

**Career Outcomes** (e.g., *INSPIRE* Graduate Survey and Leader in Practice Survey). A key objective of educational leadership preparation programs is to positively influence the career advancement of candidates, including the nature, timing, and efficacy of such advancement. Keeping in mind a program's mission and purpose, program faculty should give significant attention to the extent to which candidates become school leaders (e.g., teacher leaders, assistant principals, principals) and district leaders (e.g., directors, assistant superintendents, superintendents) and are able to advance fairly rapidly into such positions. Programs need to be able to track graduates' careers over time for the types of leadership positions assumed, the length of time in and between positions, and the ease or challenge of gaining advancement. In addition to considering graduate career outcomes, program evaluation should include data on the graduate demographics and the extent to which programs are yielding equitable outcomes based on gender, race/ethnicity, and other relevant demographic characteristics. This can be through self-reported information or as obtained from district or state employment information. Useful program outcome measures include

- *graduate rate,*
- *licensure rate,*

- *placement rate,*
- *length of time to advance to  leadership position,*
- *retention rate, and*
- *advancement into future leadership positions.*

**Leader Practices** (e.g., *INSPIRE* Leader in Practice & the INSPIRE 360 surveys)**.** By definition, leadership preparation programs are designed to develop the skills and capacities of educational leaders, which become most evident in their practices as school and district leaders. Whereas some leadership skills and capacities are developed by all programs (particularly those defined by national leadership standards), some programs emphasize certain skills over others and develop additional skills through their program content and delivery. Various principal assessment tools and surveys are designed to document principals' use of effective leadership practices, as reported by themselves or others, and can be used as part of a program evaluation system. These include

- *principal practice surveys (e.g., INSPIRE Leader in Practice Survey);*
- *supervisor satisfaction surveys;*
- *360-degree feedback assessments on leadership practices by supervisors, teachers, and others (e.g., INSPIRE 360 Survey); and*
- *principal performance evaluation systems (e.g., Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education, or VAL-ED; Goldring, Porter, & Murphy, 2007).*

Their use, however, should reflect alignment with the preparation program's focus and design and be used to illustrate strengths and gaps in programs.

**Staff and School Practices** (e.g., *INSPIRE* 360 survey – Leadership Practices & School Conditions sections)**.** As research on effective leaders shows, principals have their greatest effect on student learning through their work with teachers and in organizing school conditions to optimize teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Therefore, evaluating the effects of preparation on leadership practices should look first at changes in these areas. Such changes would include changes in teachers' instructional practices, support of struggling students, and collaborative work with each other to improve student learning. Examples of organizational changes might include improving the availability of relevant instructional resources, better use of school time and facilities, enhanced staff professional development, improved use of student data to guide improvement, and coherence of programs and services in supporting student learning. Assessing organizational changes and improvements can be accomplished through principal, teacher and supervisor surveys.

**Staff and School Effects** (e.g., *INSPIRE* 360 survey – School Conditions section). Research has shown that a positive school climate is associated with and predictive of improved student outcomes (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2017). As school conditions improve and staff members make progress on improving teaching and learning, there should be cultural and climate effects on students, staff, and the larger school community (Leithwood et al., 2004). Effects include

- *student attendance and positive behavior,*
- *student engagement and academic effort,*
- *teacher attendance and respectful treatment of students and colleagues,*
- *teacher engagement and academic challenge,*
- *distributed and collaborative leadership, and*
- *improved parent participation.*

Student, teacher, principal, and supervisor surveys; interviews; and other feedback mechanisms are among the best methods for determining these effects.

**Student Outcomes.** Student outcomes should be considered in terms of both cognitive (learning) and noncognitive (behavior) outcomes. The ultimate impact of leadership preparation on leadership effectiveness is determined by the degree to which student achievement improves. Such improvements, however, are influenced by many factors—not only the principal, but also teaching quality, school culture, curricula, and other resources and opportunities (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013: Coelli & Green, 2012). The improvements made by a new leader take time to affect student learning gains, which currently are best measured through standardized tests. We recommend that student performance levels be tracked and evaluated longitudinally to gauge the impact of leadership both prior to and during a principal's tenure. Measures of student noncognitive outcomes also should be tracked over time. Implementation experts suggest that student achievement gains as a result of leader actions will not be apparent for at least 3–5 years after improvement work begins (Fullan, 2001).

> The INSPIRE Suite of Surveys has been designed to provide measures for most of these evaluation categories. The suite of four surveys includes the INSPIRE Preparation Program (PP) Survey, the Graduate (G) Survey, the Leader in Practice Survey, and the 360 survey. These surveys have been field-tested and demonstrated strong reliability and validity, and are well-aligned with national educational leadership standards. For more information on INSPIRE, visit http://www.edleaderprep.org

## Evaluation Planning Guide Alignment to National Accreditation Evaluation Expectations

This handbook is aligned to recommended evaluation outcomes for programs seeking national accreditation through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Under CAEP, individual educational leadership preparation programs within colleges or schools of education are reviewed for recognition status by a specialized professional association (SPA) using nationally recognized standards. The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) SPA is the CAEP-SPA for leadership preparation and is governed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA – www.npbea.org). The NELP SPA provides both standards and guidelines to programs for the preparation of educational leaders, including expectations for program evaluation. Together, these standards and guidelines clarify expectations against which individual programs can be evaluated, including the kinds of assessments programs must use and the kinds of data that must be provided to demonstrate program effectiveness.

Under CAEP policy, six assessments are required for program report templates. For NELP program submission under Option A, institutions are required to submit six assessments that collectively measure all seven standards, 20 components. Assessments 1 and 2 must measure content knowledge.  Assessments 3, 4, 5, and 6 must measure leadership skills. The programs are required to develop a matrix that maps the leadership skills to the specific assessments. Institutions may, at their discretion, submit a seventh or eighth assessment if they believe it will strengthen their demonstration that the NELP standard components are met. Assessments include

- *state licensure assessment or other content-based assessment;*
- *a second assessment of content knowledge in educational leadership, using for example comprehensive examinations, essays, and case studies;*
- *assessment of ability to develop a supervisory plan for classroom-based instruction, such as school improvement plans, needs assessment projects, and faculty intervention plans;*
- *assessment of internship/clinical practice using faculty evaluations of candidates' performance, internship/clinical site supervisors' evaluations of candidates' performance, or candidates' formative and summative logs and reflections;*
- *assessment of ability to support student learning and development, such as postgraduate 360 surveys, employer satisfaction surveys, and community feedback surveys of candidates or graduates;*
- *an assessment of the candidates' application of content knowledge in educational leadership (such as action research projects and portfolio tasks); and*

- *an assessment of candidates' abilities in organizational management and community relations (such as school-based strategic plans, school simulations, and school intervention plans).*

When reviewed by the NELP SPA, programs are rated on their use and quality of these seven types of assessment. Quality is determined by

- *the extent to which the assessment description and scoring guides are aligned to specific NELP standard components;*
- *the depth and breadth of assessment tasks as outlined in the assessment descriptions, scoring guides, and data tables, which must be of sufficient quality to determine candidate mastery of essential content knowledge concepts and leadership skills;*
- *how the scoring guide is used to measure progress;*
- *how aggregated data are aligned to specific NELP standards and the assessment scoring guide; and*
- *whether results show both areas of candidate success and provide an improvement plan for areas in which candidates are not successful.*

To encourage that evaluation data are used for program improvement and improved graduate preparation, the NELP SPA requires that programs describe how their faculty use assessment data to improve candidate performance and the preparation program. Thus, data collection, analysis, and use must be documented and their relationship to program decisions noted.


## Evaluation Planning Worksheet

The second component of the evaluation guide is a worksheet for programs to complete in their evaluation planning; see Table 1 below. Importantly, program officials should identify one or more sources of evidence for each category. The proposed sources of evidence adhere to the principles outlined in this report and attempt to identify sources of evidence that can be measured accurately and consistently. A blank form is provided as Table 2 to be used for program evaluation planning purposes.

## Table 1. Evaluation Planning Guide Worksheet

| COMPONENTS | POSSIBLE MEASURES & ASSESSMENTS | DATA SOURCES | TIMELINE | Relationship to CAEP/NELP Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PRECONDITIONS** | Admission criteria, guidelines<br><br>Enrollee profile/descriptions, including demographics, prior educational & leadership experience, etc. | INSPIRE Preparation Program (PP) Survey<br><br>Enrollment documentation<br><br>Admission data and documents rated using rubrics | Before or at beginning of program start | Documentation needed |
| **PROGRAM FEATURES** | Description of specific program elements<br><br>Candidate feedback & assessment of specific program features & overall program quality | INSPIRE-PP Survey<br><br>Program Documentation<br><br>INSPIRE Graduate (G) Survey | During the program<br><br>At or near program completion | National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) evaluation requirement |
| **FORMATIVE LEARNING** | Portfolio of program learning activities<br><br>Standards-based tasks & projects within courses &/or across program<br><br>Interns' documentation of their accomplishments for schools and student learning | Grades<br><br>Program-developed assessment rubrics<br><br>Online management program (e.g., Live Text, Chalk & Wire) | Throughout & at regular intervals throughout the program | NELP evaluation requirement |
| **SUMMATIVE LEARNING** | State or national leadership assessments<br><br>Self-reports on learning efficacy by leadership area<br><br>Pre–post assessment of leadership knowledge gains using a knowledge assessment tool | ETS PRAXIS exam or other standardized assessments<br><br>INSPIRE-G Survey section on Learning Outcomes<br><br>Program-specific rubric or assessment center evaluation (e.g., National Association of Secondary School Principals) | At or near the end of the program<br><br>At appropriate intervals during the program | |

| COMPONENTS | POSSIBLE MEASURES & ASSESSMENTS | DATA SOURCES | TIMELINE | Relationship to CAEP/NELP Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CAREER ADVANCEMENT OUTCOMES** | Whether advanced to a supervisory school leadership position (assistant principal or principal)<br><br>Whether advanced to other leadership positions (district or nonsupervisory)<br><br>Length of time to administrative placement or advancement | Employment documentation<br><br>INSPIRE-G Survey &/or Leader in Practice Survey | At regular intervals after program completion | NELP evaluation requirement |
| **LEADERSHIP PRACTICES** | Self-report of effective leadership practices<br><br>Perceived efficacy as school leader<br><br>Supervisor rating of principal leadership practices or efficacy<br><br>Teacher rating of principal leadership practices or efficacy | INSPIRE Leader in Practice Survey<br><br>State or other standardized principal evaluation system<br><br>INSPIRE-360, VAL-ED | At regular intervals after program completion (e.g., 1- to 3-year intervals) | |
| **STAFF AND SCHOOL PRACTICES** | Distributed leadership/teacher role in policy making<br><br>Teacher collaboration (professional learning communities) & shared problem solving<br><br>Changes in school conditions that support student learning<br><br>Changes in how staff work to improve instructional effectiveness<br><br>District support | INSPIRE 360 Survey<br><br>District climate surveys | At regular intervals after program completion (e.g., 1- to 3-year intervals) | |
| **STAFF AND SCHOOL EFFECTS** | Student engagement<br><br>Family engagement<br><br>Collective professional efficacy<br><br>Academic rigor or press of school<br><br>Reduction in school problems that interfere with learning<br><br>Staff attendance<br><br>Teacher retention | INSPIRE 360 Survey<br><br>District annual reports on staff<br><br>District climate or other relevant surveys | At regular intervals after program completion (e.g., 1- to 3-year intervals) | |

| COMPONENTS | POSSIBLE MEASURES & ASSESSMENTS | DATA SOURCES | TIMELINE | Relationship to CAEP/NELP Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **STUDENT OUTCOMES** | Reduction in student problems that interfere with learning (student related)<br><br>Student achievement<br><br>Student attendance<br><br>Student retention<br><br>Student completion/graduation | District assessments and reports on student performance | Track annually but look for effects longitudinally (every 3 years) in a school leader position | |

## Table 2. Evaluation Planning Guide Blank Worksheet for Program Use

| COMPONENTS | POSSIBLE MEASURES AND ASSESSMENTS | DATA SOURCE | TIMELINE |
|---|---|---|---|
| PRECONDITIONS | | | |
| | | | |
| PROGRAM FEATURES | | | |
| | | | |
| FORMATIVE LEARNING | | | |
| | | | |
| SUMMATIVE LEARNING | | | |
| | | | |
| CAREER ADVANCEMENT OUTCOMES | | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LEADERSHIP PRACTICES** | | | |
| **STAFF AND SCHOOL PRACTICES** | | | |
| **STAFF AND SCHOOL EFFECTS** | | | |
| **STUDENT OUTCOMES** | | | |

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# The Institute for Systematic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership (INSPIRE)

High-quality leadership preparation is essential to educational reform and improved student achievement. To support high-quality leadership preparation, the *Institute for Systematic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership* (INSPIRE) provides

1. survey and evaluation research for program benchmarking and analysis of program features, graduate career and leadership practices, and related school and student outcomes;
2. a systematic process for collecting and analyzing state data on degrees and certification, career advancement, and school progress by graduates;
3. technical assistance and support for leadership preparation programs, including regional train-the-trainer opportunities to increase evaluation capacity locally;
4. a sustainable system for evaluation research to support program improvement; and
5. policy analysis and policy development support.

The INSPIRE Leadership Institute is supported by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Utah Educational Policy Center. To learn more about the INSPIRE Institute and the services available, please visit our website at http://www.edleaderprep.org

UCEA is an international consortium of research universities that offer doctoral and master's programs in educational leadership and management. UCEA has a single standard of excellence for membership: superior institutional commitment and capacity to provide leadership for the advancement of educational leadership preparation, scholarship, and practice consistent with UCEA's established mission. To learn more about UCEA, please visit our website at www.ucea.org

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