

# School Leadership News

The Newsletter of AERA Division A: Administration, Organization, & Leadership

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The American Educational Research Association (AERA), a professional membership organization, strives to improve the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education. AERA offers a comprehensive program of scholarly publications, training, fellowships, and meetings to advance educational research, to disseminate knowledge, and to improve the capacity of the profession to enhance the public good. Division A of AERA is devoted to furthering the aims of the organization through scholarly contribution in the areas of educational administration, organization, and leadership.

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## Vice President's Column

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Many of us recently attended and participated in the annual convention of the University Council for Educational Administration. As these two organizations intersect in various ways, it is usually the case that many presentations at UCEA are made by members of Division A.

I participated on a panel in the last General Session at the convention titled “Explorations of Social Justice: Some Thoughts and Provocations.” It was organized by **Fenwick English**, my colleague at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Fen always seek to “provoke thought” about a variety of issues, but particularly about our various stances with respect to administration, leadership, and organization.

**Jackie Blount** (Iowa State University), **Judy Alston** (Widener University), **Tina Reyes** (University of Houston), and I were asked to discuss our thoughts on social justice (e.g., what social justice means in the field, what social justice means or does not mean to us, how we go about conceptualizing social justice, some examples of social justice in action). This did not appear to be a particularly daunting task. Most of us have discussed the topic of social justice in presentations, in our classes, and with each other. However, as the time for the session approached, I began to struggle with what I would say and if what I said would make a difference to anyone. So I must confess, I took my place on the stage and wrote my notes just before the session began. While I was not as prepared as I should have been, I chose to use this opportunity to examine *myself* rather than examine “social justice.”

One of the things I focused on in my remarks was my own struggle with “doing social justice.” That is, I am less intrigued with defining social justice and more interested in looking at in what ways I “do social justice.” It occurred to me that I do a

better job in some areas than in others. For example, I believe a socially just educational environment extends to university settings. Thus, I attempt to attend to the needs of my students in ways that let them know I believe in an *ethic of care* in my teaching and advising. Like Fen, I try to provoke thought about what a socially just educational leadership department might look like and how the people in it should act. I usually couch my comments in “doing social justice” rather than putting it in a box and making a list of things that everyone should conform to (bad grammar, but I think you get my point). So I’m giving myself an A with respect to this aspect of doing social justice.

I have been less attentive to doing social justice in K-12 settings. That is, I have had limited exposure to doing social justice in schools. I have rarely studied issues about socially just leadership in the context of schools or its influence on teacher competency and student achievement. Nor have I explored systematically policies, practices, and procedures that may marginalize students due to race, class, gender, disability, and other markers of difference, as **Michael Dantley** (Miami

University) and I suggest that we should do. It is in this area of my socially just musings that I have not matched my social justice walk with my social justice talk. I must give myself a grade of C with respect to doing social justice in K-12 settings.

But I believe it is important to take a stand on this issue. Thus, in the end I believe that whatever we think or believe about social justice should be grounded in our actions and those actions must take place not only in our ivory tower existence, but more importantly in K-12 schools where they are likely to matter most. I hope that each of us will re-examine what social justice means to us, provoke ourselves not only to write about social justice but also do social justice and continue to engage in open and honest conversations about the role of Division A in promoting a more socially just educational system for all students.

With this issue of the Division A Newsletter, **Rodney Muth** (University of Colorado at Denver and Health Services Center) and **Tricia Browne-Ferrigno** (University of Kentucky) will end their tenures as co-editors. We thank them for all of their hard work over the last four years.

## Graduate Student Update

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Division A is well represented this year on the AERA Graduate Student Council. In addition to our two appointed graduate student representatives, **Leslie Hazle Bussey** (Saint Louis University) and **Cristi Dawn Ford** (University of Missouri–Columbia), three Division-A students hold elected positions on the council. **Alex Bowers** (Michigan State University), former Division A Graduate Student Representative, is in his third year of service as Web Secretary. **John Oliver** (Michigan State University) is the Secretary/Historian, and **Sheila Sherman** (Michigan State University) is serving her first year of a two-year term as the Newsletter Editor.

The Graduate Student Representatives have been busy this year developing new channels to reach out to and support graduate students in Division A.

- **UCEA Graduate Student Breakfast.** Thanks to the support of **William T. Rebores** (Saint Louis University), a new event for graduate students was inaugurated at the 2006 annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration. During the breakfast graduate students learned about leadership opportunities available to them within AERA and Division A. This first breakfast was well attended, and students enjoyed having a special time to connect with one another and with members of the Division A leadership team.
- **Graduate Student Council Representative.** Each year a new Graduate Student Council representative is selected for a two-year term. The two criteria to be eligible for this position are (a) the student must have at least two years remaining in their graduate studies, and (b) the student's institution must commit to sponsoring the UCEA Graduate Student Breakfast in the second year of the student's term. [Cost of breakfast is approximately \$500.] Please encourage students to get involved in Division A leadership. It is an excellent opportunity for them to learn about professional service and AERA governance as well as to meet scholars and mentors in the field.
- **Travel Scholarships for Graduate Students.** A new Division A Graduate Student Scholarship is available to help meet costs of attending the annual meeting. All Division A graduate students *whose papers have been accepted* for the AERA annual meeting in April are invited to apply for one of two \$500 scholarships to cover expenses of attending. The Graduate Student Council Representatives felt this was the most appropriate way to use Division A resources to encourage emerging scholars in the field, in lieu of a graduate student reception. **The deadline for applying is in January 2007.** For more information, contact **Cristi Ford** ([cdfp5f@mizzou.edu](mailto:cdfp5f@mizzou.edu))
- **Voting Members.** VP **Linda Tillman** has indicated that graduate students, as full voting members of AERA, will be invited to participate on all standing committees in Division A.
- **Division A Fireside Chat at Upcoming Annual Meeting.** We thank the distinguished panelists who have agreed to participate in the Division A fireside chat at the 2007 annual meeting in Chicago: **Colleen Capper** (University of Wisconsin–Madison), **Martha McCarthy** (Indiana University), **Matt Militello** (University of Massachusetts–Amherst), and **Linda Tillman** (University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill). The title of the session is “Teaching and Service in Educational Administration: A Competition of Commitments and Competencies.” The session is open to all conference participants. We ask all Division A members to encourage graduate students—and new faculty—to attend this interactive discussion about how to manage the pressure to publish while fulfilling responsibilities of teaching effectively and engaging in meaningful service.

## From The Editors: A Retrospective Reflection—Why We Did the Things We Did

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It now has been 4 years and 17 issues, including this one, since we began our association editing the Division A Newsletter, succeeding **James Cibulka** as he moved from the University of Maryland to the deanship at the University of Kentucky. We were asked to undertake the responsibility by **Patrick Forsyth** (Oklahoma State University), then VP for the division.

### *VP's Charge: Maximize Communication*

At Pat's behest, we were to "maximize . . . communications by increasing the number of issues . . . and ultimately e-mail the issue to all 3,000 members of Division A." While decisions about substantive content were left to us, Pat asked us to continue the ongoing "debate on ISLLC Standards" that appeared in the previous two newsletters, which we did. He envisioned that the redesigned quarterly newsletter would also include substantive material related to the "research interests, methods, emerging topics" of interest to our membership.

Pat also wanted us to use the quarterly Newsletter to update the membership regularly on what Division A "committees and task forces . . . would like to communicate to the whole membership" and to enhance networking among members. He asked that we print members' names in bold followed by their institutional affiliation within parentheses throughout the Newsletter, as modeled in the opening paragraph, to increase communication. At times we became sleuths seeking needed information, but we think it was worth the extra effort.

### *Our Strategies: Invite Member Engagement*

As we initially designed and then refined the Newsletter layout, we created our own strategies to support networking and increase member participation in Division A activities. For example, we dedicated the last page of each Newsletter as the location where members could find a current listing of officers and chairs along with their institutional affiliation and e-mail address. The *Future Issues* feature, typically the next to last page of the Newsletter, presents due dates for upcoming issues and copy submissions as well as descriptions of regular features.

Usually a month prior to each anticipated publication date, we sent a message via the Division A and L listservs inviting members to send news or announcements for publication consideration. We also added by-lines to every article or announcement that presented the author name, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address as another way to stimulate networking among members. From the start, our goal has always been to engage Division A members with us in making the Newsletter a valuable communication tool.

### *Archive Division Business and Activities*

During our initial planning for the redesigned Newsletter, we decided to dedicate two of the quarterly issues to Division A business. Each Spring issue has presented news and information

about the upcoming annual meeting, including announcements about important sessions on pull-out pages that members could use while attending the AERA conference. Then in the Summer issue, we published the annual reports by officers and chairs, thus providing an additional archived history of division activities for the year. At our request, AERA created a dedicated location on the Division A Web site for posting past issues of the Newsletter to make them readily assessable to all members.

### ***Publish Newsletter on AERA Web Site***

When we began, we decided to go entirely to an electronic format, first thinking about sending the Newsletter via the Division A listerv, with notices about it sent via snail mail to members not on the listserv (less than a 1,000 members are currently on the listserv). Our first attempt to mail postcards to all Division A members in Fall 2002 proved to be quite time consuming, very costly (nearly \$800), and disappointingly unsuccessful because many postcards were returned. We quickly decided to go to the Web through AERA, posting each issue of the Newsletter there, with electronic notifications of publication sent to the Division A and Division L listservs. This approach seems to have worked well, with most members being able to avail themselves of the latest news from the Division, according to reports at the annual business meeting of Division A.

### ***Seek Ways to Improve Newsletter***

**Jeffrey Brooks** (Florida State University) joined us two years into our tenure with his idea for an interview column, “Listening to Leaders,” first published in the Spring 2004 issue. The column provides a strong counterpoint to the more formal articles and discussions that we have encouraged. In addition, we have tried to report regularly, with the essential help of committee and task force chairs, about Division A work and about the successes of individual members. We believe that the Newsletter might profit from additional emphasis on the progress of Division A members, perhaps acting as a networking device for those interested in particular strands of research or other scholarly pursuits.

### ***Transitions and Thanks***

While we believe that we have accomplished Pat’s goals for the new Division A Newsletter and have carried them out now through two successor VPs—**Rod Ogawa** (University of California-Santa Cruz) and **Linda Tillman** (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)—it is for you, our readers to judge the quality of the publication and to suggest needed changes to Linda and to Jeff who assumes editorial responsibilities for the Newsletter with the Winter 2007 issue.

In our last *From the Editors* message, we want to thank all of you who have contributed in one way or another to improving the Newsletter, whether through pieces of interest to the members, comments about the format, many short e-mails thanking us for “keeping in touch,” or kind words spoken publicly and privately the final product. It has been our pleasure to serve the interests of Division A.

# **PERSPECTIVE: Of Dubious Efficacy—Questioning the Core of University-based Preparation Programs for School Leaders**

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*Editors' note: During the past four years we have invited readers to submit manuscripts that were "trenchant and of interest to Division A members" for publication as a Perspective or Commentary feature. Our goal has been to stimulate conversations and provoke debate about issues in our field. Many readers may find this reflective essay to be quite provocative.*

I argue in this essay that much of university preparation of educational leaders is, at best, of questionable value and, at worst, harmful. Let me start with a few points to ground my claims.

## ***Sources of Concern***

First is the question of the "information base" that informs my reflections and subsequent conclusions. Insights are drawn from three sources. To begin with, my own research on the profession of school administration writ large and its preparatory function in particular grounds my observations. Empirical and conceptual analyses based on this scholarship have appeared regularly in print over the last quarter century. Collectively, this body of work, and a much more extensive body of analysis by colleagues in school administration, helps us to tally a grim catalogue of problems that have befallen prospective school administrators.

In addition, I have had the opportunity to work with colleagues in over 60 university-based preparatory programs and some of the leading non-university based programs over the last 15 years as they individually and collectively, voluntarily and involuntarily labored to strengthen their certification and degree programs in school administration. While insights and conclusions from this policy and developmental work are less

accessible than is the case with the more research-grounded work just noted, a number of published pieces are available.

Finally, across the last two decades I have talked both formally and informally with hundreds of practicing school leaders about their education within departments of school administration. These conversations and interviews produce distinct themes, and some of these patterns assume a positive hue. Unfortunately, collectively they reveal a less than flattering portrait about the work we do and the methods we employ to accomplish that work.

## ***Long-time Insider Perspective***

Second is the question of my "perspective" or "motive." Let me begin by stating that this is not an essay from the camp of the unhappy or the disenchanting. Neither is it some cloaked effort to disenfranchise university-based education of school leaders.

I am an insider and am honored to be a member of the school administration family. On the other hand, it seems to me that some serious problems at least lie at the very core of our profession, problems that are much deeper and much more foundational than those uncovered by the cottage industry of criticism that is so prevalent in school administration today.

Not surprisingly, I argue that we have made almost no progress in addressing these profound deficiencies that have been deeply woven into our professional tapestry over the last half-century. But again, my intention is not simply to dismantle preparation as we know it but to assist in the re-building work.

### ***Level of Critique***

Third is the issue of the “level of critique.” A large body of scholarship of varying quality reveals that educational programs in school administration leave much to be desired across the entire preparatory experience—from recruitment and selection on one end of the continuum to program evaluation on the other.

All of this “analysis” has been nicely laid out multiple times since the formation of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in the mid-1980s. It serves little purpose to recapitulate that work here. Rather, my critique is intended to cut deeper, to the core of the preparation work itself as it has become defined by and embedded in our universities—especially our “research-oriented” institutions of higher learning.

### ***Bleak Professional Mosaic***

The central argument of the essay is that the foundations of the educational function in departments of school administration are wrong. That is, prospective school leaders have been largely miseducated because universities, especially research universities, have built their programs with raw materials from the academic storehouse while marginalizing practice.

Better recruitment, more attention to ethics (or policy), and more effective program evaluation—and the host of related “reforms” in preparation programs, even

when they meet with some success—do not address this central deficiency. These and similar reforms bring different and generally better raw materials to the building site, but they continue to privilege materials from the academic warehouse.

The point is that without reframing what education for professionals is supposed to be, the field will continue to spend massive amounts of energy and very scarce resources in pursuit of marginal gains.

The argument is that the current frames by design and by weight of accumulated sediment have failed, are failing, and will continue to fail us into the future. They cannot be salvaged in any real sense, nor should we continue to pursue this path. Let us turn to examine half dozen or so tangible patterns in a rather bleak professional mosaic.

### ***Practitioner-Scholars: Who Are They?***

One of the most amusing and damning forms of university dominance and concomitant marginalization of practice lies behind the ubiquitously espoused mantra that our goal is to prepare “scholar-practitioners.” While no one would argue against the aim of helping prospective and practicing administrators learn and sharpen habits of scholarship, it requires a considerable leap of faith to conclude that traditional academic frames of scholarship have much applicability in the world of practice. The arrogance of the metaphor—and its embedded reality—is striking. A reasonable question in a profession with two distinct yet overlapping domains is why do we not spend an equal amount of time and energy advocating for the education of “practitioner-scholars” in the professoriate?

I have been on the educational leadership team for 30 years now and have never once

heard such an idea proposed—or more importantly its meaning addressed. I am sure many colleagues could help answer this query. My own sense, based on the information sources noted above, is that a palpable (but quite civilized) presumption of academic superiority is embedded in the culture of university preparation programs—one that often overwhelms and silences—or transforms—colleagues from the practice arm of the profession who join the university family.

### ***Theory-to-Practice Bridge: A Myth?***

Let us explore another form of the core problem, the famous “bridge from theory to practice.” Hold in abeyance for a moment these two facts: (a) Despite freight train loads of rhetoric and happy talk at the university over 50 years about the foundational nature of this bridge, it has never been built; and (b) even if it were to materialize, it is highly unlikely that it would carry much traffic.

Ignore for a moment, if you can, the directional flow of the concept and the venue of its origin. Rather, focus on the concepts themselves, especially theory. I am aware of no body of evidence that suggests that theoretical constructs from the behavioral sciences guide practice in school administration to any real extent.

Indeed, some published evidence indicates that this is simply not the case. If confirming evidence is required, talk with 25 practicing school leaders—not enrolled in preparation programs—and listen to their conversations with their colleagues in an assortment of formal and informal settings for a week or two.

Why then are “theory” and this lamentable construction metaphor placed at the heart of the preparation narrative? The simple, and I

believe most honest, answer is that it is so because university professors are writing the story. It is what university professors know and can do; therefore, it is privileged. The fact that it has only, at best, limited relevance to the folks being educated does not seem to bother us much. To be sure, practitioners need a considerable store of intellectual equipment to lead schools effectively. But let’s not fool ourselves as we roam around the palace; more of the knowledge that they need is on their side of the profession than on ours. When examined carefully, the bridge metaphor tells us more about what is wrong with university-based preparation programs than provide us with a useful heuristic to help us educate prospective school administrators well.

It is time to put the concept to rest. Frameworks that privilege just-in-time knowledge in the service of addressing authentic problems of practice offer us a much better alternative. Think of a DNA strand in lieu of the bridge.

### ***Field Experience: Missing in Academy?***

Let us address a third manifestation of the problem of scaffolding preparation on academic frames and of privileging academic disciplines by turning the spotlight on the question of who teaches in these university-housed preparation programs. At the risk of offending some colleagues, let me remind us that it is highly unusual—and, I would add, highly questionable—to have professionals educated/trained/developed mainly by people who are not part of the profession.

To make the point clear, you do not become a dentist, or a veterinarian, or accountant—or a professional in any of the applied fields—by studying about the field, or worse yet studying about something that someone at the university thinks might be helpful to

the profession. One becomes a professional in the field by engaging in the work of the profession.

Yet, the most recent data on this issue reveal that over two-thirds of us have had no P-12 administrative experience. And over 90 percent of us at research universities lack P-12 administrative experience (McCarthy & Kuh, 1997). The explanations for this phenomenon that regularly cross my path have an Ozonian and Wonderland quality of justification at their core. It is odd, to say the least, that a professional school would have so many non-professionals preparing the next generation of professionals.

Reasons for this abound to be sure. From where I sit, the major explanation is that we consistently marginalize practice in the face of higher status university-based knowledge and “better” ways of doing business as determined by increasing numbers of people who really do not know the business of schooling or leading schools.

### ***University Norms: Stumbling Blocks?***

For a fourth example, let us turn to the high culture and norms in university preparation programs. Thirty years ago, much to the displeasure of his colleagues in research universities, Ed Bridges (1977) exposed the fact that university preparation programs are almost incapable of and highly resistant to situating learning in (or based on) the culture of schools and school districts.

Rather, onto an assortment of common-sense points of entry, universities load their own norms, ways of doing business, and perspectives into the education caldron in which preparation is brewed. Examples abound, but we will confine ourselves to three that are regularly, and often mindlessly, exposed by colleagues in departments of school administration.

First, we hear regularly about the need for our master’s students (or certification students) to take a statistics course (or “methods” courses in general). This is so, I am routinely informed, because newly minted leaders need to be able to understand the methods in the journal articles they read—to tease out shoddy work from more valid and robust scholarship. One really needs to consider the sanity of colleagues who make this and related claims.

The central point here is that principals and superintendents not in preparation programs by and large (and I am being very, very generous here) do not read journal articles. And anyone with 15 minutes of spare time and a phone can affirm this reality. And rather than grapple with the real world of school leadership and examining the types of reading one finds there and the avenues by which ideas are weighed and assessed, we continue to offer up views of the world that are comfortable to university folks but of remarkably little use to practicing school administrators. We privilege our world while marginalizing theirs. The hope for the emergence of an alternative universe—they should read journal articles!—is poor justification for continuing this charade.

### ***Academic Writing: For What Purpose?***

Let us turn to another regularly advanced argument that essentially ignores the reality of practice while honoring what is important at the university; that is, the need for school administration students to write extensive papers in general and “research” papers in particular. Despite a massive amount of evidence—that anyone can replicate by following a principal around for a week, or better yet actually assuming the role—that writing is a small part of the job of a school leader. These individuals live in a world of spoken words and rapid transactions, yet we

continue to push ahead with our fascination with the written medium.

Again, at-the-end-of-the-day self-serving assertions are amassed to support what is valued by universities. For example, students are routinely and smugly informed that writing sharpens thinking. End of discussion. Of course it does, but it is only academic arrogance that allows us to maintain that strategies for sharpening thinking that have so little correspondence to the world of practice should hold the high ground in preparation programs.

Let us be clear that even when school leaders write, they do not write like we ask them to in preparation programs. Stop and interview 25 school leaders not currently in a preparation program and ask them when was the last time that they wrote anything that spilled onto a third page. And then inquire about the type of writing that they do. It takes an incredible leap of faith and a fair amount of arrogance to conclude that research paper writing will bring real gains to this work.

Moving away from the master's program and to the doctoral program for a minute takes us to the most flagrant example of privileging university culture over the realities of practice—the dissertation. It is almost impossible to imagine a response to this question that would lead to an answer with the word dissertation in it: What do senior leaders in schools and districts need to be effective, and how can they best access that knowledge, those skills, and that set of values?

I have asked the following question of the last 15 or so superintendents with whom I have met or worked: “Given a newly minted EdD leader, what would you prefer that he or she have in her or his portfolio—nine hours of dissertation work or nine hours of

learning to speak Spanish?” To a person, not surprisingly given the nature of schooling, they selected the language expertise.

The point is not that all students should master a foreign language. Nor is it that one cannot learn from completing a dissertation. The point is that a huge assortment of things are more important than dissertations, and a variety of ways exist to help people learn those things that bear some resemblance to the methods that they will need on the job. We don't emphasize them because we privilege what we at the university value and know how to do.

### ***Technical Skills: Serious Omission?***

And finally, let us pause for a moment to examine the virulent strain of “anti-recipeism” that characterizes many of our programs, especially those based in research universities. Perhaps nowhere is the privileging of university perspectives clearer than at this point of infliction.

Thinking, “critically” of course, if at all possible, must hold the high ground. Reflection and analysis are presented as more valuable than “mere scripts and recipes,” technical skills of low value in preparation programs. My own sense is that only people inflicted with some social science virus and a home far away from real schools can believe this.

A central goal of professional education is to provide, dare I use the word, “answers” to real problems, scripts and recipes that improve professional practice. In the month before writing this essay, I employed the services of four professional people—an electrician (putting in a generator), a car mechanic (car that wouldn't start), an accountant (business-related tax issue), and a veterinarian (sick cat). In every case, the professional in question went to a book (or a

computer in one case) to look up the answer to the problem in front of them. Yes, they had to think and some answers were more clearly circumscribed, but in each case the search was for successful recipes that would solve the problem. I, fortunately, had the good sense not to be publicly disdainful of those recipes.

### ***Sages' Storytelling: Missing Reality?***

Another dimension of this “anti-recipeism” is found in the almost universal disdain for practitioner-based colleagues who instruct by “telling war stories,” our derogatory label for various types of evidence from the field. This attack was, to refresh our memories, at the heart of the effort by university professors to wrest control of preparation away from practitioners in the 1950s, to move us away from “naked empiricism,” to the higher ground provided by the power of unifying explanatory theories. While I am not suggesting that our curriculum should be comprised primarily of “war stories,” let us peek behind the curtain for a moment.

As already noted, the raiment of the theory movement are considerably less resplendent than we have been led to believe over the last 50 years. Given our earlier analysis of the credentials of our colleagues, we also see that the storehouse of potential stories in many preparation programs is empty.

Equally important, and in a more positive light as our eyes adjust to the back-screen environment, we see that “stories” are indeed a quite legitimate and important strategy for learning in many applied professions. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, we also see that these same stories are a major (often the major) source for decision making in applied professions—trumping theory consistently and other forms of empirical evidence on a regular basis.

More directly, we see that school principals and superintendents use stories heavily to expand their own action-oriented learning curves. Again, the point is not that “war stories” are the appropriate ground for our curriculum.

On the other hand, it takes an incredible wobbly compass to get everyone marching to the goal of better preparation through stronger theory. It also takes a heavy dose of academic arrogance—non-empirically justified arrogance, I might add—to continue to marginalize important lessons forged in the field and passed to new members of the profession by stories of success and failure. My own assessment is that this has at least as much to do with control and status as it does with improving practice.

The point on the issue of culture is this: The world of the university is actually fairly simple—much less complex and much more placid than the world occupied by school leaders. Really, ask yourself when anything even approaching a crisis unfolded in a department of school administration. This is not the world of most schools and their leaders.

Our culture is one that honors complexifying, questioning, and creating divergence. This is neither the culture of schools nor that of school leaders. Their work is complex, confusing, and often laced with turbulence. The touchstones here are parsimonious models and answers, perspectives that enjoy little credibility in departments of school administration generally.

### ***Our Monopoly Has Been Breached***

My sense is that our ongoing privileging of the academic arm of the profession in school administration in general and preparation

programs in particular—either through design or ignorance or arrogance—will not be tolerated much longer. The monopoly bastion of university-based preparation has already been breached and new foundations are being poured—slowly in some places and more quickly in others. And it is also clear to many of us that unless we find ways to make practice the calculus of preparation, most of the thoughtful work afoot on preparation reform will produce, at best, only marginal improvements.

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## **New Book Takes New Look at the Principalship**

Teachers College Press will soon publish *Principal Accomplishments: How School Leaders Succeed*, a groundbreaking book that “outlines a comprehensive strategy to help principals succeed amid increasingly difficult circumstances” and presents “a fresh approach to the principalship by focusing on the accomplishments needed to support student learning.” According to **Robert Donmoyer** (University of San Diego) who wrote the preface, “*Principal Accomplishments* should get us all thinking about our field and our work in new and different ways.” The team of authors include **G. Thomas Bellamy** (University of Washington-Bothel) and **Connie Fulmer, Michael J. Murphy** (Emeritus), and **Rodney Muth** (all at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center).

## **New Faculty Mentoring Programs in Research Institutions**

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More and more college leaders who work in research universities appear eager to establish formal mentoring programs for development and success of tenure-earning faculty. However, many are uncertain as to how to get started and what to do. They are asking for ideas and tips on developing, implementing, and assessing formalized faculty mentoring initiatives. Because many institutional leaders are searching for “a leg up” with respect to faculty mentoring programs that could fit their own contexts, we have compiled our thoughts from best practices and documented findings to assist those who are contemplating developing mentoring programs.

### ***Forthcoming Book***

In a forthcoming edited book (Mullen, in preparation), three stages of mentoring programs (i.e., early, developed, mature) are illustrated through a wide range of best practices. The scholar practitioners whose works we summarize together offer empirical case studies of organizational development from the United States and Canada. For example, “Birthing a New Faculty

Mentoring Program in a Research Culture,” describes the early stages of development for a new of program. Survey and group-meeting data, were analyzed, generating a portrait of strengths and weaknesses of the nascent program. Program improvements, identified at the end of Year 1, are elucidated, along with actions taken to satisfy the recommendations.

An example of a developed program is provided by “The Evolution of a University Mentoring Program from Orientation to Instructional and Emotional Support of New Faculty.” This university-based mentoring system currently focuses on faculty mentoring, instructional development, and ongoing support. The story told highlights the use of research, survey data, and collective leadership.

At the mature stage, faculty development research on structured mentoring and e-mentoring programs informs a broad-based mentoring program in “A Campuswide Faculty Mentoring Program: Putting Research into Practice.” The long-term program director puts research into practice by including training, coaching, and group mentoring.

### ***Ideas and Tips for Fostering Mentoring Programs***

The following 10 tips have been tested through our New Faculty Mentoring Program (NFMP) at the University of South Florida (USF), which is in an early stage of development. These tips also have been endorsed in the mentoring literature (Mullen, 2006; Mullen, in preparation).

- ***Tip 1. A clear program vision and goals, essential for guiding participants (i.e., faculty mentors and mentees), must be reinforced through group activity, in addition to electronic and printed media.*** The vision undergirding the NFMP at USF is to support the scholarly development of new faculty and help them to succeed through a structured teaching/learning process and formalized collegial relationships. This approach is expected to promote the professional development of new faculty, to provide established faculty with opportunities to share their expertise, and to assist faculties and departments in actively mentoring new faculty, enabling the scholarly development of newcomers through diverse arrangements, supporting the retention and advancement of all new faculty, and sustaining collegewide mentoring through ongoing practice.
- ***Tip 2: New faculty mentoring programs probably have a better chance of surviving if they involve the initiative of faculty with expertise in mentoring and college leaders who support a mentoring program for all new faculty.*** The NFMP at USF was rapidly developed through two-way decision-making and consultation of the literature on faculty mentoring. Bottom-up or grassroots leadership from faculty with expertise in faculty mentorship and organizational development combined with top-down or administrative leadership from deans who value faculty mentoring helps to ensure that a program will be initiated and sustained. Faculty can develop proposals for mentoring programs to share with deans for support or deans can gather examples from institutions and elicit the necessary attention from faculty and chairs.
- ***Tip 3: Program structures and activities should be deliberated carefully but also flexible and subject to change based on (a) feedback provided by faculty participants and (b) best practices featured in the mentoring literature.*** Over the 18 months with our own program, these activities have been addressed and implemented: fall orientation, “meet and greet” luncheon for new faculty and their mentors and department chairs, luncheon workshops with

the new faculty, library database tutoring sessions, and research and scholarship panels. Program participants (new faculty, department mentors, and college mentors) have appraised the effectiveness of their own mentoring experiences, in addition to that of the program itself.

- **Tip 4: *New faculty scholarly needs are both career-focused and psychosocial (Kram, 1985/1988), so assistance is required in research and teaching as well as adjustment and socialization.*** These two major functions of academic mentoring relationships—career (e.g., sponsorship, coaching, protection) and psychosocial (e.g., role modeling, counseling, friendship)—have proved relevant to the reported success and growth of our program for new faculty as well as mentors. In the 1st year of the program, the NFMP college mentoring relationships stressed career functions, while department mentorships emphasized psychosocial elements, attending simultaneously to Kram's workplace model.
- **Tip 5: *Triangulated relationships that bring together new faculty with faculty mentors from outside as well as inside their departments or units increase the potential for effective mentoring.*** The tenure-earning faculty in our college who are within their first 2 years function as the center of a mentoring triad, assigned to a mentor in the department and the college. It appears that academic protégés benefit more from multiple relationships than from single ones. Thus, our department chairs identify department mentors, and the mentoring coordinator makes the college matches, with input from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
- **Tip 6: *College and department mentoring arrangements function somewhat differently.*** As we have discovered, department mentors are likely to have close contact with new faculty member, serving as an invaluable resource and sounding board. The college mentor is a “go to” person for discussing any concerns in confidence: An outsider to the mentee’s department and possibly discipline, this college-level mentor can offer fresh perspectives. Both mentors are seasoned scholars who can provide professional guidance on the faculty member’s research and teaching, while attending to the “socialization” needs of a new professor.
- **Tip 7: *Significant barriers to formal mentoring include physical distance and time.*** Physical distance and time can become significant barriers to successful mentoring for some faculty pairs. Distance in our context has less to do with proximity within units as opposed to campus location because we are nested within a multi-institutional organization. New professors who were situated at a regional campus, instead of the Tampa campus, were inevitably challenged as were their mentors. As one solution, most of the newly hired regional faculty agreed to three mentors, with at least one from their own site and another from Tampa.
- **Tip 8: *Faculty-mentor programs need to be assessed and recommendations for changes not only solicited but also entertained.*** Assessments have been carried out through detailed surveys and distributed at the beginning and end of each annual cycle. Reliability has been achieved through several means: overlap with studies in faculty mentoring (e.g., Morin & Ashton, 2004), feedback from a survey-design specialist on the original instrument, and modifications to the survey based on participant input. Besides providing the NFMP with a means for continuous improvement, this assessment structure enables mentees and mentors alike to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and for the leadership team to

address concerns. An end-of-year evaluation is too late to discover that someone may have had a frustrating experience. Our policy of confidentiality governs the mentoring director's private communications with these individuals, and we recommend frequent monitoring to enable early "intervention" if necessary.

- **Tip 9: Faculty-initiated mentoring programs that are supported by administrative partners can propel desired changes in faculty culture.** Through synergy and reinforcement, faculty mentoring becomes contagious. What is currently modest with respect to being a movement can be expected to grow once faculty–faculty mentoring within our research culture “sticks.” Relatively minor changes have dramatically affected how faculty behave and how they see themselves. Formal mentoring programs that are successful make a difference to new academics and even seasoned faculty.
- **Tip 10: Academics truly march to the beat of their own drummers.** Not all seasoned faculty value mentoring others, and not all neophyte faculty benefit from mentoring and networking. However, no problems result if the latter are able to make the expected progress as tenure-earning faculty through acceptances from publishers, good teaching evaluations from students, and so forth. Informal mentoring supports can work well within faculty cultures that are synergistic and collegial. Some new and senior faculty prefer developing spontaneous mentoring relationships so their wishes must be respected. Nevertheless, a successful formal faculty mentoring program can create the culture and climate for robust informal mentoring to occur.

Finally, we are interested in learning from others, so let us know what you are doing and whether you need to help move your own faculty mentoring programs and agendas along. We can take all inspiration from Anne Frank, “We can start now, start slowly changing the world. How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make their contribution . . . how we can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness” (cited in Care! 2006).

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# Division A 2006 Outstanding Dissertation Competition

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Nominations are invited for the annual American Educational Research Association Division A competition for the best doctoral dissertation in the field of educational administration. This award recognizes outstanding dissertation research appropriate to the field, including the organization and administration of schools and the work and preparation of school leaders. Studies embracing both traditional and alternative conceptualizations and methodologies are welcomed. Only dissertations completed and accepted by the entrant's committee between **1/1/06-12/31/06** are eligible.

This year a \$200 honorarium will be given to the recipient of this award in addition to formal recognition at the 2007 AERA Division A Business Meeting. In the event that two (or more) recipients are selected for this award, the honorarium will be divided equally.

## *Evaluation Criteria*

1. Significance and clarity of problem and/or investigation.
2. Effective conceptualization and development of research questions.
3. Quality of review pertaining to relevant theoretical and research literatures.
4. Appropriateness and rigor of research design and methodology.
5. Clarity of findings/results.
6. Appropriate explanation of research impact for theory, policy, practice, and further research.
7. Quality and clarity of writing.

## *Submission and Selection Procedures*

All submissions *must* be made by active, dues-paying, members of AERA. In addition, nominees must also be members of AERA—both at the time of nomination and when the award is announced at the 2007 Division A Business meeting (please visit the AERA website, <http://www.aera.net>, for membership information). The following items should be submitted via e-mail by **8pm (EST) on January 19, 2007**. Incomplete or late submissions will not be reviewed. No faxes or paper submissions will be accepted.

The following information should be in separate—but attached—files:

- A copy of the complete dissertation, in Word or PDF format, using 12 point font. This must be double spaced.
- A seven-page double-spaced abstract (in MS Word or PDF format, 12-point font) that provides a concise overview of the problem, design, findings, and interpretations. *Abstracts longer than seven pages will not be reviewed.*
- Complete mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number of author.
- A letter from the dissertation chair confirming the date of the author's successful defense of the dissertation.
- An endorsement letter from a Division A member familiar with the entrant's work.

After reviewing and scoring the abstracts and supporting materials, the Committee will select no more than four finalists. The dissertations that accompany these abstracts then will be forwarded to the Committee for full review. The Committee expects to complete its selection of one award and two honorable mentions by the end of March 2007. The Committee reserves the right to award to more than one recipient, and conversely, not to select a recipient for this award.

## Future Issues

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We welcome you to browse both the AERA Division A Web Site and the Archives of the Division A Newsletter, both available at <http://www.aera.net/divisions/?id=379>

### Submission and Publication Schedule

Issue	Submissions to Editor	Published Online	Announced Via E-mail
Winter 2007	ASAP	January 15	January 15
Spring 2007	February 20	March 15	March 15
Summer 2007	June 20	July 15	July 15
Fall 2007	October 20	November 15	November 15

### Regular Newsletter Features

**Vice President's Column:** A regular feature, the Vice President provides commentary about Division A events, business and expectations for the Division.

**Secretary's Report:** *An occasional item, the minutes of Division A's annual business meeting are featured in the Summer issue.*

**Graduate Students Update:** *News and announcements from Division A's graduate student representatives.*

**From the Editors:** *This section appears regularly and supplies notes about the current and upcoming issues, requests input, and discusses other editorial concerns.*

**Perspective or Commentary:** Papers considered for inclusion will be trenchant and of interest to Division A members. Restrictions for publication will apply (preferably no more than 1,000 words or 5 to 7 pages of double-spaced text) in order to meet newsletter page limitations (2-3 pages). The editors reserve the right to edit for style and length. Suggestions for articles will be accepted from Division A officers, committee chairs and members, and members of Division A and related Divisions or SIGs.

**Listening to Leaders:** Interviews with leadership educators, researchers, policy makers, and others.

**Member News and Notes:** This section includes information about members: what people are doing, what they have accomplished, what they plan for research and with whom, what they are discovering about teaching that others might find of interest, and so forth. Books and articles, special recognitions, and the like are appropriate. If you are interested in helping with this column, please contact the editors.

**Regular Features** (as appropriate and as available, based upon newsletter publication dates)

- information about Division A committee work supplied by committee chairs
- announcements of calls for papers, dissertation award submissions, and other information
- listings of SIG contact information relevant to Division A members
- listings of annual award winners

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