

2023-2024

EPP Master's of School Administration

UNC-Charlotte



North Carolina Department of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

Overview of Master's of School Administration Program

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Master of School Administration (M.S.A.) and add-on administrative licensure programs are based on a curriculum that meets the pre-service North Carolina Executive Leadership Standards. The program model is designed to instill a more integrated "systems thinking" perspective in candidates, and in the process, foster collaboration between professors to assure that all candidates will complete the same major assignments. Through the required assignments, course products, and electronic evidences, candidates will do an analysis/assessment of themselves, schools and schooling, instruction, school organization (and management), and school climate and safety. Since all of these factors are inextricably related, the goal is to provide candidates an integrated, holistic learning experience so that they firmly grasp how these elements come together to affect school effectiveness. The program is designed so that the six required evidences are congruent, complementary, and pedagogically integrated; courses are directly tied to required electronic evidences. The internship addresses additional skills and expectations relevant to work as a school leader. Internship seminars are held once per month covering topics related to 21st Century leadership, teaching, and learning. Practicing school executives and partners currently hosting interns in their districts may co-facilitate seminars or co-teach courses. An electronic evidences portfolio documents the candidate's proficient completion of the internship activities and competencies. The North Carolina State Board of Education requires all add-on licensure students to complete the same requirements related to the electronic portfolio as degree-seeking students.

Admissions criteria consist of a minimum of three years of successful teaching or related experience, a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate or graduate credit, three letters of recommendation, one of which must be from the school principal or from school leaders who can attest to

the applicant's leadership potential, a writing sample, and an on-site interview with members of the M.S.A. faculty. Candidates for the master's degree must successfully complete 36 hours of course work that includes the internship. Candidates for add-on licensure must successfully complete 21 hours of course work that includes the internship. Courses are offered in the evening on the main campus and in a face-to-face delivery model at distance-education sites in Rowan, Gaston, Union, Cabarrus, and Mecklenburg counties as well as in Kannapolis City School and Iredell-Statesville School districts.

Special Characteristics of Master's of School Administration Program

Early Field Experiences: The M.S.A. program includes early field experiences, which allow for timely application of knowledge learned in courses. The program's on-site field experiences become a part of each core course professor's syllabus throughout the candidate's program of study. The program is designed to assure complete articulation across courses, field experiences, projects, activities, etc., leading to the comprehensive internship. This fosters greater integration throughout the entire program in courses, projects, and at various stages of the school-based field experience, which guides faculty to embed the required elements of the standards throughout the program of study. Faculty may coordinate activities and projects that can be expanded and refined in later courses, thereby adding a holistic, value-added dimension for coordinating the required standards with specific projects.

Enhanced Program Outreach to Local School Districts: Six off-campus programs are typically offered, one each in Gaston, Rowan, Union, Mecklenburg, Cabarrus (Kannapolis City), and Iredell-Statesville Schools. M.S.A. faculty worked collaboratively with superintendents in the university's service region to identify the districts' needs and to assess faculty ability to offer the program off-campus, the goal of which is to increase the number of candidates for anticipated future vacancies. In these cases, strong applicants have been targeted for recruitment in these programs. Continuing efforts are to respond to their requests when it is feasible to do so. In 2013-14, a program was started for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools that has continued each year. During 2015, program faculty responded to requests from superintendents of Union County Schools and Rowan-Salisbury Schools to offer the degree and certificate programs for targeted candidates in their districts. We started a program in Gaston County and Kannapolis in 2016 and in Iredell-Statesville Schools in the fall of 2017. We extended to Cabarrus in 2019. Access to the program within the region at the local district level significantly increases the opportunity for currently licensed teachers to complete preparation for future school leadership positions in these and surrounding communities. The interest in this particular field is especially high due to the number of possible principal retirements in the districts. Appropriate school district representatives and program faculty meet regularly to discuss the needs of the districts and how the M.S.A. program may be tailored to meet each district's specific needs.

As one example of this mutually beneficial partnership with our regional partners, the Cato College of Education and the Southwest Education Alliance worked together to receive a NC Transforming Principal Preparation (TP3) grant of \$3.75 million dollars. The grant offers free tuition, books and all fees for selected students to pursue a Master of School Administration Degree. Applicants to the program must be working in one of the partner districts in our region and receive a recommendation from their superintendent; in return, graduates are guaranteed a leadership position in their school district and will be supported by an executive coach provided by the program. The first cohort began in 2020. We have since received two additional grants for future cohorts and program expansion, the most recent of which focuses on preparing principal candidates from underrepresented populations and began in fall 2023. We

are extremely proud to be one of the few recipients of this grant and believe this speaks to the strong ties and collaborations we have with our districts to develop effective school leaders.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Leadership Academy Partnership: UNC Charlotte and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) have joined together in a collaborative effort to recruit, train, and support the strongest prospective high school principals to serve the families and children in the high schools in the CMS school system. Candidates are deemed to be outstanding educators who demonstrate commitment to closing the achievement gap, have professional resilience, strong communication skills, a willingness to be self-reflective, and are committed to continuous learning improvement and professional integrity. This program is a joint responsibility of CMS and UNC Charlotte. It is the expectation that at the end of this innovative program, participants will be “principal ready.” The program is characterized by intensity and rigor, and formative evaluation, guidance, coaching, and reflective practice occur throughout the program. This standards-based program offers: innovative program design, individualized support, a learning community, and profound learning opportunities. Participants in all strands of the program participate in the 5-week summer intensive, simulated experience. This program to prepare high school principals for the challenges of urban leadership is not currently offered in this service area of the University or in the state of North Carolina. Access to the program will significantly increase the opportunity for currently licensed teachers to complete preparation for future high school leadership positions in Mecklenburg County. Program delivery began in the summer 2013, and has continued into the present (2020-21). The need for highly qualified high school principals is especially high due to the number of possible principal retirements in the district and due to the shortage of highly trained urban high school principals. The 36-credit- hour and 21-hour program strands include an internship under the supervision of an experienced principal mentor to ensure a quality succession pipeline for high school principal positions in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Although an expectation of the program is that all program completers be “principal ready,” the number of graduates who receive a 4-year contract as a principal is at the discretion of CMS. All participants must be formally nominated by a CMS school or district administrator. Summer 2024 marks the intake of the twelfth cohort group for this program.

Focused Involvement of Partners: To strengthen collaboration with public school partners, the program coordinator and LEA designee work as a team to determine the most appropriate internship placements. The team matched intern needs, strengths, and interests with mentor strengths and individual school needs to insure reciprocity in the internship experience. In an effort to identify and address the needs of our partners, the program actively engaged public school partners in the M.S.A. program. Continued initiatives include co-teaching with practitioners who served as school level administrators and central office personnel, including local principals, program graduates, and district personnel to serve on interview teams for the program admissions committee, and continuing commitments from partner superintendents by appointing a district liaison to work with the program coordinator to determine internship placement and work on recruitment strategies.

Enriched Internship Supervision with More Timely Feedback: The M.S.A. program contains an enriched supervision model for the internship. Within the current internship that parallels the school year schedule, the university and the public school supervisors work collaboratively to ensure candidates meet all standards by successfully completing a series of prescribed leadership activities. Additional sessions for mentoring and coaching opportunities are scheduled to better evaluate each intern’s progress in a formative manner and provide more timely feedback. Pre-internship and ongoing training for both the public school and university supervisors has enhanced focused feedback to interns. University faculty supervisors and principal mentor supervisors hold two meetings each semester to discuss the intern’s

progress. These meetings are held at the internship site to further acquaint the university faculty supervisor with the internship site location.

Addition of Summer Internships: Part-time students take the same classes as full-time students and, therefore, have the same performance expectations, instruction, assignments, and early field experiences. While full-time, unemployed students begin their internship during the fall, part-time students begin their internship during the summer with a principal mentor selected by their school districts in collaboration with the M.S.A. Director. Summer sites may be year-round schools, schools with special summer programs or central office sites. The summer site is typically one on a different level (i.e., elementary, middle or high) than that of the students' regular work assignment. Part-time students will spend fall and spring semesters interning at their work site, affording the intern the opportunity to work under the supervision of two different principals and leadership styles. The university supervisor and principal mentor work together to provide opportunities for the part-time intern to observe and shadow other school leaders at various times during their internship. To assure that students have the same experiences, principal mentors have to certify that all interns, both full and part-time, have developed and demonstrated specific competencies and skills.

Dedicated Program Faculty: The program has an assigned faculty member dedicated to coordinating the day-to-day intricacies of the program. M.S.A. students have enriched opportunities to work with educational research faculty, instructional technology faculty as well as with educational leadership faculty. Three or four faculty members along with the program coordinator share the yearlong responsibility of supervising interns at their site locations. All of these professors, as well as carefully selected part-time faculty, are former public school administrators who are recognized for their work in the field of school administration.