
Partners in Leadership: Training the Next Generation of Executive Leaders

Sherry Hoyle
Winthrop University, hoyles@winthrop.edu

Jeremy Spielman
Paidea Institute, jeremy@paidea.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoyle, Sherry and Spielman, Jeremy () "Partners in Leadership: Training the Next Generation of Executive Leaders," *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 6.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol7/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu.

Partners in Leadership: Training the Next Generation of Executive Leaders

Like many states, South Carolina has experienced a shortage of school leaders. The retirements of members of the baby boomer generation, coupled with increased school enrollment, generated additional demand for educational professionals including teachers, principals, and district leaders. This growing demand, coupled with the realization that advanced degree training needs to focus on action-based, strategic improvements in educational settings and educational outcomes, caused several of South Carolina's institutions of higher education to collaborate in order to provide Educational Specialist (EdS) programs and a new Doctor of Education (EdD) program. A major objective of the consortium is to establish a progression from member institutions' graduate degree programs. Several universities (Clemson University, Winthrop University, and The Citadel) established a collaborative route to a Doctorate of Education. After years of planning, this collaborative was unveiled in 2018 as the first students entered EdS programs at Winthrop University and The Citadel, knowing that they would eventually have the opportunity to seamlessly matriculate into the Clemson EdD program. The focus of this article will specifically address the collaboration between Winthrop University and Clemson University.

This partnership program was designed based on the principles and philosophies of the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED). CPED describes the Education Doctorate as an application-oriented degree for stewards of the profession. The partnership requires students to complete the EdS at a partner institution before moving into the Clemson EdD program. The Ed.D. program is designed to build upon the student's specialist program to address complex and persistent problems of practice through research and scholarship that is application driven.

The degree is unique for a variety of reasons, chief among those reasons is the fact that the degree is a collaboration between institutions of higher education, Clemson, and local school districts.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as well as the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate advocate for the creation of networked communities to drive educational improvement. It is through these communities of practice that students and faculty examine persistent problems of practice, to develop and test theories of practice, and to implement new models of delivery that meet the needs of all students. The Ed.S. at each of the institutions of higher education is offered in collaboration with local school districts, thus creating a pipeline of interested students, a setting in which to study schools and school districts, an opportunity to pilot improved educational practice, and the ability to change practice for the betterment of all students. This degree is about the study of education and the development, testing, and refinement of interventions in education. The cognate classes at Clemson are contextual to South Carolina, chosen based on the problem of practice to be studied, and related to the persistent problems faced by educators in this state. Chief among those problems are underachievement related to poverty, race, and rurality.

Defining the “Why” of the Partnership

The mission of the educational leadership department at Winthrop University is to prepare future district leaders to be visionary and culturally astute educators and pedagogically skilled practitioners who can improve student achievement by addressing noted problems of practice. The partnership with Clemson University provides a pathway for candidates who wish to transition from “the work” begun in the Ed.S program at Winthrop University into the doctoral program. As both university programs focus on problems of practice in schools, the mutual goal is for candidates to ultimately translate their learning experiences into improved an improved educational system. This includes understanding the structural systems that contribute to the challenges faced by schools, and

then addressing complex and persistent problems of practice through the application of research and scholarship.

Importantly, the partnership between Winthrop University and Clemson University has yielded many benefits for candidates and both institutions. Some of the benefits include, but are not limited to the following: (a) all course credits from the Winthrop University Ed.S program are transferrable toward the Clemson University Doctorate in Improvement Science, (b) close alignment of courses of study across both universities, (c) enhanced student recruitment, (d) the sharing of program resources, (e) collaboration of faculty in research and grant writing, and (6) opportunities for faculty to co-teach and co-present.

Innovation and Collaboration

A very unique component of the partnership is the collegial, non-proprietary relationship of the faculty at both institutions. The dialog regarding alignment of the two programs, alignment of the courses, and sharing of the resources is driven by the desire of both institutions to provide the best preparation and transition possible for candidates. Consistent and constructive communication (both formal and informal) among the faculty of the universities, as well as regularly scheduled meetings, assisted in establishing program continuity with process improvement occurring every year based on feedback from each institution. These meetings are used to ensure alignment between the two programs and to identify process improvement points for both programs.

Another unique and innovative component of the partnership is the inclusion of Winthrop University faculty in professional development and workshops alongside Clemson faculty as they collaboratively explore what it means to engage candidates in the scholar-practitioner doctorate. For example, Winthrop and Clemson faculty attended a Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) Backward Mapping Workshop Series focusing on course alignment for the Ed.S and the

Ed.D programs. The backwards mapping process facilitated the redevelopment of one of the first courses candidates take in the Clemson University EdD Program. The course was developed and co-taught by Clemson, Winthrop, and Citadel faculty members. As one of the course instructors, the lead author found the process extremely beneficial. It provided an “inside” view of the expectations of the Clemson University program, deeper knowledge of the CPED framework used to inform the doctoral degree in improvement science, and also served to provide reflection points and inform changes regarding alignment in the Winthrop EdS Program (CPED, n.d.). In addition, after co-teaching the course the candidates who completed their EdS at Winthrop in the course shared that having one of the instructors from their EdS program co-teaching on of the first courses in the EdD program provided a level of “comfort” upon embarking on a new program with new expectations.

Additional opportunities in the partnership have included grant writing and partnering with Clemson University to design and present at Consortium Partner Meetings. The purpose of the Consortium Partner Meetings is to provide a forum for updates, discussion, and input/feedback for both institutions, as well as the other consortia partners. These opportunities generate great benefits for each institution and serve as a forum for the faculty to be “thought partners” as programs identify opportunities for process improvement. The opportunity to “think together” addresses some of the concerns raised regarding how “the lack of community around teaching and learning leaves people unsupported and working alone (Schumann, et al., 2012, p.22).” The synergy produced during the formal and informal discussions regarding program improvements has resulted in strengthening both programs for faculty and the scholar-practitioners.

A Candidate’s Perspective

“The collegial scholarly-practitioner partnership between Winthrop University and Clemson University provides Ed.S and Ed.D learners a pathway to advanced learning and application in leadership and action research across multiple campuses (Spielman, 2022).”

Jeremy Spielman, a candidate in both the Winthrop and Clemson University Programs shared,

I feel that my experience as a student in each program has allowed me to expand and fortify my understanding of system improvement through transformative planning and action.

Furthermore, the pedagogical frameworks of each program, respectively, allow for leaders in the field to utilize our experiences and understanding of the systems/organizations we serve to design innovative solutions and engage, empower, advocate, and collaborate to enact positive change at the local, state, and national level.

The following sections outline highlights about both programs as reported by candidates.

Highlights from the Winthrop EdS Program:

- A targeted focus on effective executive leadership methodology
- A network approach to learning where instructors serve as guides and facilitators from the field
- A foundational experience in action research with a pathway to the Clemson EdD program
- A meticulous course selection to ensure that learners become executive leaders who understand collaborative and distributive leadership in order to effectively apply the standards associated with National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP).
- A cohort cluster of moderate size allows for authentic interactions in-person and virtually
- A strategic alignment with doctoral programs and their focus on improvement science

Highlights from the Clemson EdD Program:

- A strategic approach to understanding and implementing improvement science to enact positive systemic change
- A focus on advancing the learner's thinking as a scholar-practitioners
- A keystone experience in grounding theory to research, dialogue, application, and evaluation
- A thorough course selection anchored in the theoretical and practical to ensure that executive leaders can face the complex challenges associated with the profession and exemplify the principles of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED)
- A large cohort grouping allows for unique perspectives and diverse thinking
- A deliberate program focus on understanding the impact of race, place, and socio-economic position as it relates to equitable and socially just policies and practices.”

Implications for Practitioners

As the partner universities continue training the next generation of executive leaders, a strong case is made for collaboration and collegiality across universities whether it is in the form of developing and co-teaching a course, attending professional development as a team, and/or co-writing grants. Given the number of issues that plague the system of education, there continues to be a great need for scholar-practitioners who can carve an informed path to improvement as they address those problems of practice.

The partnership between Winthrop University and Clemson University serves as a model for the synergistic manner in which two universities can each maintain the individual personality of their respective programs while collaboratively strengthening the programs through shared training,

resources, and services as they work to provide a seamless transition across the universities and programs in order to provide the best learning opportunities for their scholar-practitioners.

References

Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (n.d.). *The CPED framework*. Retrieved from:

<https://cped.memberclicks.net/the-framework>

Schumann, D.W., Stiefel, D., Corvette, M., & Guyton C.W. (2012). Implementing a University

Learning Consortium for Shared Communication and Proactive Campus Change. *To Improve*

The Academy A Journal of Educational Development, Vol. 31,21-35.

Retrieved from: DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/tia.17063888.0031.006>