

**OFFICE OF QUALITY PROFESSIONALS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**April 19-20, 2012**

**OFFICE OF EDUCATOR LICENSURE**

29. Approval of Request from The Mississippi Community College Foundation for The Mississippi Alternate Path to Quality School Leadership Alternate Route Administrator Program as recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure Development

Background Information:

All current and proposed Administrator preparation programs, both traditional and alternate route, have recently undergone an in-depth review. MDE contracted with Dr. Joe Murphy from Vanderbilt University to conduct these reviews. Each administrator preparation program was required to submit a proposal to have their program approved or re-approved to meet national ISSLC standards. The board recently approved the Educational Leadership program from William Carey University as the first of those to passed the review. This was followed by the approved Administrator program at Delta State University. In February, the board approved the redesigned Educational Leadership programs at the University of Southern Mississippi and at Mississippi University for Women.

In March of this year, the Certification Commission approved the master's degree program in Educational Leadership from Jackson State University that has been redesigned and meets approval by Dr. Murphy. Also approved are the programs from Mississippi State University and the The Mississippi Community College Foundation's alternate route administrator preparation program called MS Alternate Path to Quality School Leadership.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**Mississippi Alternate Path to Quality School Leadership  
Program**

**Proposal by the**

**Mississippi Community College Foundation**

**January 2012**

## Abstract

The Mississippi Alternative Path to Quality School Leaders (MAPQSL) offers an alternative path to certification of highly qualified instructional leaders prepared to create effective school learning communities where all students learn and perform to their highest potential. In Mississippi, as in states across the nation, there is a critical shortage of individuals who are prepared to provide such leadership, but personal economic responsibilities and the overwhelming time demands of traditional leadership preparation programs keep many highly qualified potential instructional leaders from enrolling and entering the administrative workforce. This program is designed to bring such candidates into the administrative ranks and to equip them with the highest caliber research-based instructional leadership preparation.

The proposed program combines numerous state-of-the-art features to produce graduates well-versed in the requirements of high-performance learning communities capable of delivering powerful curriculum and instruction to all students in an environment of accountability and continuous improvement for results. At the heart of the program is an exceptionally strong classroom curriculum with grounded clinical experiences paired with a year-long administrative internship. Tight integration and alignment of classroom and internship experiences are achieved through the focused, practice-based orientation of the instructional modules, the Action Learning Project (ALP), a performance-based portfolio, strong mentoring, effective field supervision, and the involvement of partners in all elements of the program.

The program aims to recruit and select master teachers currently serving in MS schools as strong instructional teacher leaders. A proactive recruiting program, based around a rigorous profile of the potential instructional leader, will engage every superintendent in the state in identifying succession needs and potential candidates for nomination to the program. At the same time, comprehensive advertising and outreach through the profession will target promising candidates. Program partners—including not only superintendents but also professional associations, regional technical assistance centers, community college and university departments, and community organizations—will contribute to each stage of the recruitment and selection to ensure that the program is focused on, reaches, and selects the best possible candidates. Support activities and faculty and mentor relationships will help candidates meet the challenges of a demanding program. Rigorous assessment at every phase of the program will reinforce learning and enable candidates, faculty, and mentors to focus on areas of greatest student needs.

The program design enables master teachers to stay employed and earning wages while they complete the requirements of the program. They begin with an intensive 15 day summer classroom program, completed over a five week program, based largely around the NISL core instructional program adapted to the requirements of ISLLC and the state of Mississippi. Candidates then enter a full-year internship with substantial school administrative responsibilities under the carefully mentoring of an accomplished instructional leader. During their internship, candidates also meet for nine all-day Saturday sessions for reflection, diagnosis, and academic learning that sifts and integrates

the learning from summer work, practical challenges at school, their ALP, and their portfolio development. In all, candidates will spend 150 hours on summer instruction, 90 hours on Saturday meetings during the year, about 1600 hours on the internship, some 10 hours on their action-learning project, and 126 hours on their portfolio. They will also take the SSLA at the program mid-point and again at its completion. Once they have met the initial requirements, students will be required to complete two three-hour courses in educational leadership at the University of Mississippi or other accredited institution and successfully complete units that are equivalent to 5 OSL credits to obtain their Mississippi administrator license.

The Mississippi Community College Foundation (MCCF), the National Institute on School Leadership (NISL), and the University of Mississippi Institute for Education and Workforce Development (UMIEWD) are the program sponsors. This collaboration and the new elements it introduces brings additional rigor to previous, successful MAPQSL program. These partners are committed to providing a rigorous program that will continue to improve during and following each program cycle on the basis of student assessments and performance data, systematic mentor input, partner recommendations, and long-term impact data. Partner input from the individual MCC boards, which include every school superintendent in the state along with other influential individuals, and a wide range of school improvement organizations, educator associations, and community organizations will insure that the program is responsive to state, educational, and community constituencies and benefits from their range of insight and expertise.

Requested Revisions as Requested by Dr. Joseph Murphy  
Narrative Around “Dots and Xs”

This narrative describes briefly how the program has responded to the comments made as “dots and Xs” and directs the reader to the more fully developed responses in the program proposal. In light of the overall comment about the earlier proposal’s high level of abstraction and need for concrete detail, we have revised the proposal, in some places substantially, to include greater specificity and provide material needed to address points made in the dots and Xs.

Overall Proposal

The newly revised proposal provides more concrete detail throughout. It also clarifies a few areas where our previous narrative was unclear and did not adequately communicate some of the strong points of the program. Some redundant material has been removed and the sections reorganized to focus more clearly and logically. We have also benefitted from the opportunity over the past several weeks of rethinking or digging deeper into some program elements, with the result that there is some new thinking, new material, and new plans for the future reflected in some sections of the document.

Vision and Mission (pp. 8-10)

The vision and mission have been described more clearly in terms of the focus on instructional leadership, the relationship to the community colleges, and the impact of graduates on Mississippi schools.

Recruitment and Selection (pp. 33-36)

As we described in a phone call, candidates will be recruited only from among master teachers. A new candidate profile specifies the qualities we seek in applicants and candidates. The profile is included in application materials, posted on the website, and used by screeners and interviewers. More detailed information supports our commitment to proactive recruiting, especially through district superintendents but also through our many partner organizations (pp. 43-50).

The selection process has been strengthened with the addition of more focused rubrics and involvement of partners in the screening and interviewing. There are two rubrics. The Selection Rubric: Phase One Selection Criteria (Appendix I) is used in the initial screening. This requires evidence of the threshold criteria—teaching license, experience, and superintendent’s endorsement—as well as a beefed-up essay, and it now provides a further rubric to guide reviewers in reviewing the essay and reference letters. The interview stage is conducted using the Selection Rubric: Phase Two Selection Criteria (Appendix III). This rubric follows the ISLLC Standards. Core evidence here is found in records from the screening stage plus the intensive candidate interview.

Curriculum (pp. 15-24, and see pp. 10-15)

Our prior submissions did not adequately describe either the quality content of the program, its extent and rigor, or its demands on students in terms of time and effort. In order to portray the curriculum more accurately, we have added a full section on Program Structure and Delivery (pp. 10-15) to depict the entire set of program components and their relationships as an integrated whole, and we have described the individual course modules from NISL students take as the core curriculum. A slightly revised chart on pp. 14-15 shows the allocation of time across program components, totaling 256 hours in direct instruction plus additional out-of-class time, and 2056 hours overall.

Summer session and Saturday instruction during the school year cover 18 solid modules. These modules constitute a coherent, focused curriculum developing the core skills of instructional leadership. You will see from pp. 11-14 that the instruction reflects the best of adult learning principles and from the module descriptions and additional material provided in the Curriculum Addendum that instruction concentrates on building conceptual knowledge but especially practical competence in using the tools that give administrators leverage over instruction and student learning.

The descriptions of the modules and the curriculum provided in the addendum show how the “missing material” noted in your June memo is covered in our curriculum. Note that these modules are offered during 15 summer weekdays of eight hours and nine eight-hour Saturdays; the instruction each day is intensive, but overall it stretches over the course of a year. Students report that they find the focus and depth of each session demanding but exhilarating and the year’s duration (especially given the practical tools and the internship and action project) sufficient to master key skills. As noted above, the 18 modules and two additional “special emphasis” courses provide 256 hours of direct instruction.

The state requires students to take the additional six hours noted as Curriculum Areas of Special Emphasis (pp. 22-24). The topics are Leadership for Students with Disabilities, Leadership for Excellence in Literacy, and Leadership for English Language Learners. Since most state institutions will not take alternate route students for such instruction, it’s most often the case that our students will take these through the University of Mississippi. Because we base this instruction on NISL modules (and can vouch for its quality), we are able to offer this instruction at our community college campuses, making it convenient for our students to take it.

#### Clinical Work/Internship (pp. 24-33, including ALP and Portfolio)

Students serve a full school year’s internship in a school (or sometimes a district office). Interns serve as assistant principals, coordinators, or assistant coordinators under the supervision of a skilled mentor principal or district-level assistant superintendent or superintendent. Starting in the summer and throughout the year, they carry out an Action Learning Project and develop a comprehensive, rigorous portfolio. Mentors are carefully selected, well-trained, and play a very active role in the intern’s on-site job performance and leadership development.

We know the administrators we select as mentors because they have all take one or probably several if not all the NISL executive development modules. We are always alert in our training around the state for especially able administrators who could serve as mentors. Referral thus comes either from our network or the superintendent's recommendation, but selection is made by a selection team using the Mentor Selection Form (Appendix VIII). The form focuses the selection upon key instructional and managerial leadership competencies needed to supervise and coach intern development.

Mentors have taken and continue to take NISL training in the course of their own work, and we expect that all mentors eventually will have completed the entire developmental program. MAPQSL provides program-specific training in a variety of ways. Mentors attend our annual Leadership Academy where they learn about the latest research and exemplary practice in instructional leadership and coaching. We provide a half-day debriefing at the end of each program year where mentors as a group share experiences and learning from the year. Before the beginning of the school year, we hold a meeting of all mentors for the upcoming year where we provide detailed training on the mentor role and specific responsibilities to support interns through their on-the-job activities, ALP, and portfolio development. Finally, each of the MAPQSL lead regional instructors meets one-on-one with the mentors for the coming year to review more intern- and school-specific requirements as well as to review the broader role and responsibilities.

Mentors are not remote figures. They work closely with the interns, who have real job responsibilities as assistant principals, coordinators, or assistant coordinators. They will be in daily contact, and if not they will work and meet together frequently during the week. The mention of monthly meetings refers to the required periodic formal assessment sessions, but mentors and interns will exchange feedback regularly in the course of the work situation.

Faculty mentor/field supervisors provide mentoring and support on the school site for both interns and site mentors. There is a lead instructor for each region who serves in this role. This person meets with the mentor/intern team on site twice during the year to review the relationship, work progress, and performance development and related documentation (portfolio, ALP). This faculty member is in much more frequent touch with both intern and mentor, however, by phone and email and during the Saturday sessions with the candidates. The entire faculty has completed the full NISL program and are highly qualified and trained instructional leaders. They are well-equipped to support the intern's development and also the mentor. We view the mentor position as an opportunity to grow as well as to help others grow.

We do have a thorough Coach/Coachee Handbook provided in the Addendum.

Instructional Design (see pp. 28-33)

The Action Learning Project (ALP) and the ISLLC Student Performance Portfolio provide structure, rigor, and performance assessment to the performance of the internship.

You asked concerning the portfolio what it consisted of, how interns had specific opportunities to lead, and what specific learning opportunities ensured teaching competencies required by the standards. The portfolio itself and the development process are now more structured and focused on performance and assessment of skills and accomplishments. Material starting on page 30 shows how the portfolio process is more rigorously organized. This content describes the stages in portfolio development, what the intern constructs the portfolio from, how the intern and the mentor use the portfolio, and how assessment against the portfolio is conducted. In addition to artifacts demonstrating the intern's accomplishments under the work assignment, the ALP materials will constitute a significant entry into the portfolio over the course of the year. This project is now described in clearer detail starting on Section VII, page 28.

#### Candidate Assessment (pp. 36-41)

We have added some additional assessment activity, but primarily we have improved the presentation of the extensive assessment that is already part of the program. We do feel it is necessary to conduct a baseline assessment of incoming students. This will help focus early instruction and give us a baseline against which to measure student progress along the way and at the completion of the program. We have not yet developed this assessment, wanting to take more time on it, but we believe we have a lot of raw material to work with in the current assessments that measure what it is we intend the students to learn. The baseline assessment will be a valuable element in interpretation of the evaluations and continuous improvement steps depicted in Section XIII, pp. 50-56, and especially the chart of "Performance Outcomes and Measurement."

The program has a very extensive body of assessments as an integral part of the curriculum. We had not submitted much of this material before nor had we adequately described it. The instruction is highly practice oriented, and the assessments are generally conducted around an exercise that makes use of the concepts and tools being taught. The chart of "Classroom Assessments" shows the relationship between MAPQSL assessment processes and instruments and instructional content. Several representative student assessment instruments and rubrics are provided in Appendix V, Formative and Performance Assessments.

#### Faculty (pp. 41-43)

The faculty, both core team and adjuncts, are deeply involved in providing instruction, counseling and supporting students, and coordinating different parts of what is a complex program. The specific linkage of the faculty is shown on the chart of "Faculty Responsibilities and Commitment" at the end of Appendix IX. Information about the faculty's involvement in the program generally is provided in greater detail in Section XI, pp. 41-43.

This is a highly trained group. The entire core faculty have taken the full NISL program and are fully up-to-speed with the best of current research-based and exemplary practice. This group is also involved in providing more advanced training that keeps it at the state-of-the-art, and we are engaged in two research projects with national significance that also engage us in ongoing learning. We hold a Leadership Academy annually where national experts help us and our colleagues from around the state learn about the most current work on instructional leadership and coaching.

We are a faculty, but we are even more a team. The structure of the curriculum requires team planning, instruction, and coordination. We view ourselves not at all as individual faculty members with our own domains and courses, but as pieces of an integrated whole that functions as a cohesive unit. We work together and we learn together. Because we all have a base of common NISL instruction, we share the same concepts, mental models, and professional vocabulary. We communicate regularly and in depth around our instruction and our students and work together to determine how we can improve, both in the course of the year and at year's end. As a result of this review, our processes for evaluation and continuous program improvement are becoming more structured and rigorous. We will work as a team collecting the necessary data, interpreting it, and deciding how to improve the program.

#### Partnerships (pp. 43-50)

The new proposal describes partnership relationships in which the partners not only receive information from the program but also contribute to the program in a variety of ways. MAPQSL draws on partner perspectives and capabilities all along the course of the program, from recruiting and selection through to evaluation and program improvement. One chart on page 44 shows "Type of Partner Relationship and Contribution to Program" by partner group. A new chart on page 48, "Program Domain and Partner Contribution," shows more specifically how various partners add to the program in each of the program's operational domains.

#### Program Evaluation (pp. 50-56)

We have strengthened the program evaluation and processes for program improvement in several ways. Evaluation questions on page 52 establish a sharper focus for the work. A new chart on "Performance Outcomes and Measurement" draws on an instrument from the UCEA evaluation project to relate the important program goals to the evaluation process. We will add a baseline assessment as noted earlier. We are also planning to add even more rigorous evaluation of outcomes over the longer term.

The core team will have assigned responsibilities for tracking the data collection. The team will work as a group to interpret the data and discuss its implications for improving the program. In addition to regular meetings throughout the year, at which formative improvements are made, the team meets for an extended period of time at the end of the

year for this purpose. Most decisions can be made among this group, which has authority to make improvements that fit within the basic framework of the program. Policy-level decisions are taken to the MCCF board at twice yearly meetings.