Tools to Make Your Program Stand Out

A Toolkit for Members of the University
Council for Educational Administration

uc ea   University Council for Educational Administration
Quality Leadership Matters   since 1954

About UCEA

The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) is a consortium of higher education institutions committed to advancing the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of schools and children.

Although our member faculty and deans come from different states and regions, we all share the same goals of building knowledge for the field and providing quality preparation and lifelong learning experiences for school and school system leaders. Our collective wisdom, expertise, and research create the body of knowledge for our profession. In UCEA, you will always find resources and colleagues who are committed to providing the learning experiences, professional knowledge and research that leaders need. Together, UCEA members shape the future of our profession.

Dear UCEA member,

Research tells us that [school leadership is second only to instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning](). And we know that improving school leadership ranks high on the list of priorities for school districts.

As a member of the University Council for Educational Administration, you are committed to the highest standards of excellence in your educational leadership preparation and research programs. Those standards set your program apart from others.

But many of you have expressed the need to better tell your program's story to attract promising students. You've also noted that you don't have much capacity for marketing.

I'm pleased to welcome you to this online marketing toolkit that will take you step-by-step through the process to set long-term goals, identify your target audiences, conduct market research, analyze your competitors, refine your messages, and ultimately craft realistic strategies to reach your audiences.

We developed this resource using a fellow UCEA member, the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, as a real-life test case. As you go through each step in the toolkit, you can see how the process worked for Curry's Administration and Supervision program and draw ideas from their experiences. Inside, you'll find examples of Curry's marketing materials, as well as downloadable resources that you can customize and use to promote your program.

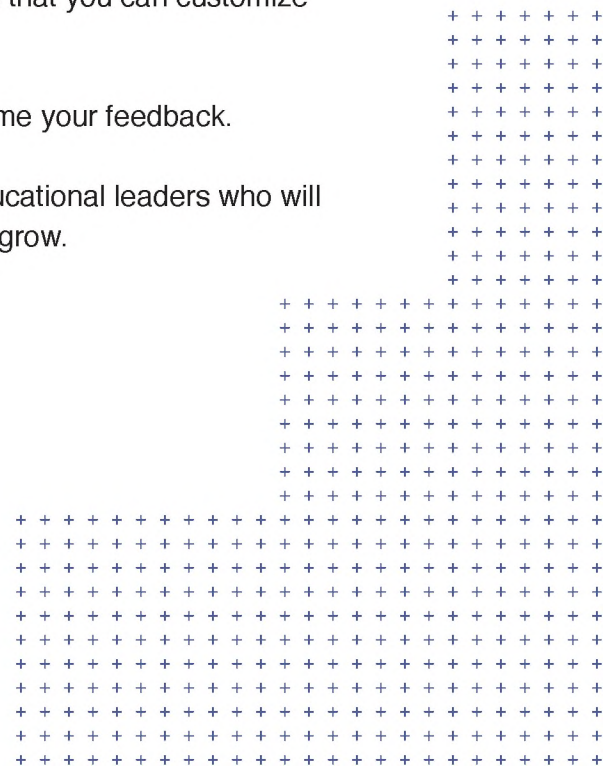I hope you find this toolkit useful, and I welcome your feedback.

Thank you for all you do to prepare future educational leaders who will influence how our nation's children learn and grow.
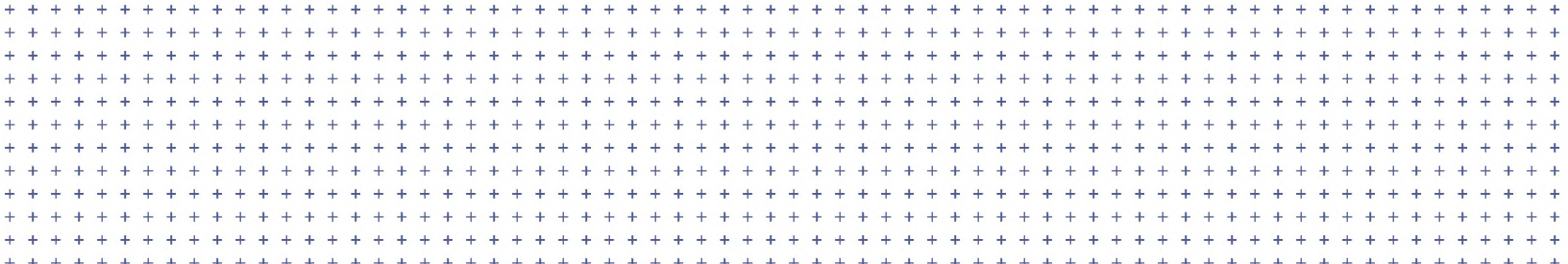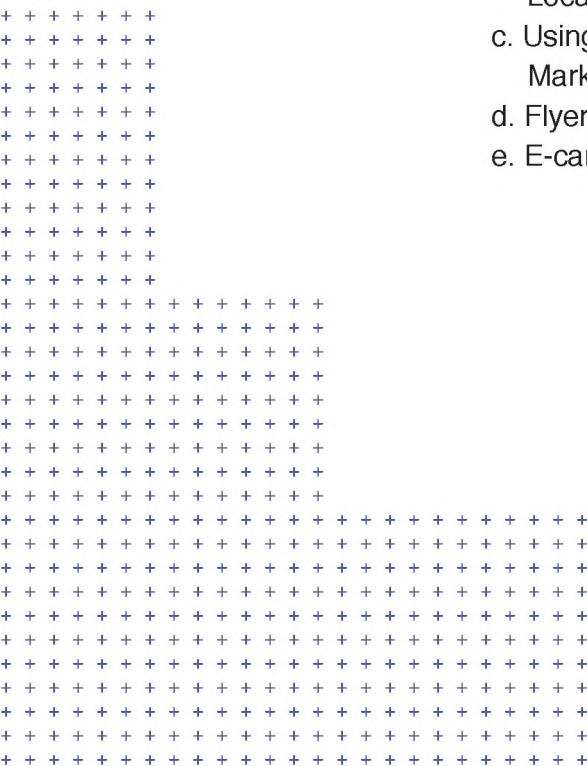
Sincerely,

Michelle Young
UCEA Executive Director

In UCEA, you will always find resources and colleagues who are committed to providing the learning experiences, professional knowledge and research that leaders need.

Getting Started

1. Create a timeline and assign roles:

Most marketing plans span one year, which gives you enough time to set long-term goals, but enough flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Set deadlines for the work ahead of you and identify who in your organization will be responsible for carrying out each piece of the plan. If organizational capacity is low, consider reaching out to a marketing or graphic design student at your university to help with the work.

Recruit a marketing or graphic design student to help implement your marketing plan.

2. Identify your target audience:

Who are you trying to reach, and what can you offer them? Potential students may be your primary audience, but you likely also have several different "intermediary" audiences who can help you reach your primary targets. For example, your district partners and alumni can help you reach potential students by referring them to your program. Brainstorm other potential intermediaries who can help you reach your targets.

3. Conduct market research:

Gather and analyze information that will help you better understand your target audience and how to best meet their needs. Conduct phone interviews with:

- Your program's current and former students to learn why they chose your program over others.

- Your district partners to determine your program's current reputation in the field.

- Local educational administrators who attended a program other than yours to better understand why they chose your competitors.

4. Analyze competitors:

Sign up for competitors' e-newsletters. Get inspired by others' smart approaches.

Review your current communication channels and compare them with those of your competitors. Is their information presented more clearly than yours? Are they using certain strategies that you hadn't considered?

Consider subscribing to several of your competitors' email newsletters to stay up to speed on what they are doing. Borrow approaches that make sense.

5. Set goals:

Based on the findings from your market research and competitor analysis, identify the ways in which you can use strategic marketing to better meet your target audience's needs. You likely began your marketing plan with the long-term goal of increasing enrollment in your program. Set measurable targets so you can judge progress. Identify short-term goals to help you achieve that objective. Examples of short-term goals include:

- Grow your social media following by X percent

- Send X number of recruitment emails

- Grow your email signup list by X percent

- Increase the number of downloads of your brochure by X percent

- Increase traffic to your website by X percent

- Build partnerships with X number of new districts

- Identify X number of alumni "ambassadors" to promote your program in their local districts

6. Refine messaging:

You may already have a core set of messages that define your program, but now is a good time to revisit them. Develop a one-to-two sentence "elevator speech" that concisely explains and "sells" your program. Make sure your messaging aligns with your program's reputation in the field.

7. Outline strategies:

Create a communications calendar of action items for achieving each goal you outlined above. Be clear about who is responsible for each item. Plan content for all of your various communications channels: website, email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Practice your elevator speech on friends and family.

Conducting Market Research:
Questions to Consider

For recent graduates of and current students in your Ed Admin program:

- How did you first hear about our program?

- What was your first impression of our program?

- Why did you choose to attend our program?

- What was unique about our program? What did we offer that others didn't?

- Describe our program in one or two sentences.

- (For graduates only) How did our program help to prepare you for the job you have now?

For district partners:

- What is your impression of the Ed Admin program at our school? What's the school's reputation in the field?

- What is unique about our program? What do we offer that others don't?

- Where do we have room to improve?

- In your experience working with aspiring Ed Leaders, what do they tend to look for in an Ed Admin program? (Prompt with: low cost? Accessibility? Reputation? Career opportunities?)

For current Ed Leaders who did not attend your program:

- What is your current title?

- Where did you receive your degree?

- Why did you choose to attend [alma mater]?

- In searching for an Ed Admin program, what were your top 3 priorities? (Cost? Accessibility? Reputation?)

- Have you heard of [your Ed Admin program]? If so, what is your impression of it?

Market Research Findings and Recommendations for the Curry School of Education's Administration and Supervision Program

August 23, 2018

From July through August 2018, The Hatcher Group conducted market research to help the Curry School's Administration and Supervision (A&S) program better reach its target audiences. As part of this process, we analyzed existing market research based on input from current and former program graduates, and we conducted phone interviews with 12 participants from the following groups:

- Curry staff

- District partners

- Local educational administrators who **did not** attend the Curry School

This memo identifies several themes that arose throughout our research and, based on our findings, makes recommendations for marketing strategies that will help you better reach your target audience.

Overarching findings:

1. Accessibility is the top priority for most aspiring Ed Leaders:

"Students look for programs that have flexibility and understanding that many of them already have full-time jobs."
– District partner

They need a program that works with their busy schedules. Current Ed Leaders who did not attend Curry noted that they chose their alma maters almost entirely due to convenience: either because it was geographically nearby or offered online options. However, this does not always mean students are quick to turn to online-only programs. In fact, most current Curry students were opposed to fully-online programs and appreciated that Curry's program was mostly in-person, with several online courses. Students also noted the convenience of Curry's satellite locations in Richmond and Northern Virginia.

2. Personal relationships are key:

Most current and former Curry students applied to the A&S program because a mentor or supervisor encouraged them to do so. Curry students and graduates noted that frequent communication with faculty during the admissions process was helpful. Many Ed Leaders who did not attend Curry were inclined to apply to their alma maters for the same reason. Local district leaders indicated that they were most likely to recommend educational leadership programs with which they had the closest personal relationship. Several district leaders mentioned that Curry representatives often were not present at their job fairs or other district-level events and felt that the lack of physical presence hurt Curry's recruitment of potential students.

3. Curry's reputation is well-established in the field:

An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that Curry's A&S program is widely acknowledged as "one of the best" in the field. Participants noted that the coursework is relevant, the faculty are accomplished, and there is a high level of respect for Dean Pianta. However, Curry's reputation may actually deter potential students from applying to the A&S program on occasion. Several participants noted that aspiring students considered the program "elitist" and worried the coursework might be "too rigorous."

Marketing Recommendations:

1. Emphasize convenience:

Refine your messaging to highlight accessibility first and affordability second. Because Curry is widely regarded as one of the nation's best schools of education, let your reputation speak for itself and emphasize feasibility over ranking in your marketing materials. Prominently feature Curry's satellite locations and online options. When talking about the coursework, use language that strikes a healthy balance between "high quality" and "achievable." Share stories from Curry graduates who successfully completed the coursework while managing busy schedules.

2. Continue to build relationships with district partners:

A&S representatives should attend district-level events as often as possible. Hold phone calls regularly with all district partners (and prospective partners) to stay informed of recruiting opportunities and schedule them on an A&S calendar along with which Curry rep will attend. Bring flyers or brochures to every event and leave copies behind for partners to distribute. Engage with district partners more frequently on social media.

3. Customize your marketing materials based on audience:

For those outside of the immediate Charlottesville area, prioritize language about accessibility. For those within the area, focus more heavily on affordability and the ability to prepare students for the job. Customize district-level materials based on the cohort(s) available in that district.

4. Emphasize the benefit of in-person learning:

Use compelling photography and language to highlight the advantage of learning in a classroom as part of a cohort as opposed to online. Share real-life experiences from Curry graduates about the benefit of being able to meet with professors and classmates in person.

5. Promote the A&S program more frequently on social media:

Most of your current and prospective students are active on social media, making it one of the best mediums for reaching them directly. However, Curry's Facebook and Twitter pages rarely mention the A&S program. Make it easy for Curry's social media manager to promote your program more often by sending them pre-written tweets and Facebook posts. Consider paid advertisements on social media that target specific districts or professions.

Analyzing Your Competitors

This grid can help you conduct an analysis of your program's website and social media presence, compared with those of your competitors. Download a Competitor Analysis Grid Template here.

	Your Program	Competitor Program
Title of Ed Admin program		
Description of program		
Ed Admin program displayed prominently on website?		
Online courses offered?		
Graduate testimonial?		
Tuition information prominently displayed?		
Information about graduate placement?		
Mentioned on Ed School's social media within past month?		

Getting Organized:
Creating a Communications Calendar

A marketing communications calendar can help you develop a timeline for all of the various strategies you plan to use to achieve your goals. It can also help you coordinate efforts across communications channels, such as your website, social media accounts, email, and in-person events, and assign roles for each deliverable. View a sample communications calendar below and download a customizable calendar here.

	January	February	March	April	May
Email	Email district partners to hold info session	Send district partners "save the date" for info session	Follow up with district partners after info session	Email application deadline reminder to potential students	Email district partners to hold info session, email video to full network
Website	Refine homepage messages based on market research findings	Feature district info session on homepage	Feature alumni testimonials on homepage	Feature application deadline reminder on homepage	Feature video on homepage
Social Media	Create alumni LinkedIn, Facebook groups	Collect alumni testimonials, identify ambassadors	Share alumni testimonials on Facebook, Twitter	Post application deadline reminders	Post video, purchase advertising for video
Print	Design leave-behind flyer for district session	Design student-facing flyer featuring alumni testimonials	Bring flyer to district session	Mail out student-facing flyers	Design leave-behind flyer for district session
Video	Storyboard video	Film classes	Film alumni testimonials	Add b-roll of campus, students to video	Finalize video by May 6
Roles	All	Allison	Doug	Teresa	Mark

Getting Your Message Out: What it Means to be a UCEA Member

Use this seal in your marketing materials to show that you are an official UCEA member.

As UCEA member institutions, you are committed to advancing high-quality preparation and practice of education leaders to benefit schools and children. But your target audience may not be familiar with UCEA and what it means to be a member. Below, you'll find links to the official UCEA member seal, UCEA logo and style guide, and talking points that explain how this membership sets you apart from the rest.

UCEA Member Seal   UCEA Logo   UCEA Style Guide

Talking points:

- Effective leadership is vital for school success. Research shows that leadership is second only to teaching in influencing student outcomes.

- But to succeed, education leaders need high-quality preparation.

- The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) is a consortium of higher education institutions committed to advancing the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of schools and children.

- As a UCEA member institution, we adhere to standards of quality and excellence as we prepare future education leaders.

- Every UCEA member institution undergoes a rigorous program review before being accepted for UCEA membership.

- We collaborate with schools, other educational and service agencies, and professional organizations to ensure our curriculum stays relevant, integral, and essential to the success of children, schools, and school leaders.

- We value diversity, equity, and social justice in all aspects of our work.

- We are committed to preparing high-quality education leaders who contribute to the success of all children.

- We actively engage in a continuous improvement process to ensure that our preparation programs are of the highest quality.

Getting Your Message Out:
Building Strong Partnerships
with Your Local School Districts

Building strong relationships with your local school districts is key to boosting enrollment in your program. Here is advice from three university education leadership programs that have built successful partnerships — the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Denver and Florida Atlantic University. All three are part of a major initiative to help universities redesign their programs to better reflect the real-world demands of the principalship. A new study of their efforts finds that building relationships with local districts is at the core of this work.

Identify the school district's needs:

Partnerships between university programs and local school districts should be built around the needs of the district and its students, rather than aspiring principals' credentialing requirements. The first step is learning about the district's needs. Have conversations with district representatives about what they look for in leaders and about knowledge gaps in their schools' leadership. Do your research so you understand what your district would want to get out of a partnership.
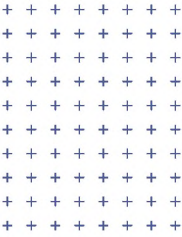
Find the right people in the district to approach about building a partnership:

Reach out to people at your school district who have a stake in building partnerships with your program. Identify the people in charge of your school district's leadership development and responsible for applying Title II funds to principal development.

Invite district stakeholders to an open house and introduce them to one or two representative students. Keep your formal program short and fun.
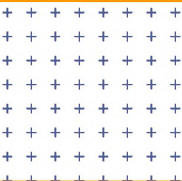
Let your school district's leaders get to know you:

Find opportunities to have in-person contact with your school district's leaders. Examples: casual meetings over lunch to discuss the district's needs, an open house highlighting your program, convenings where district leaders will be present.
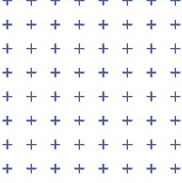
Include school district leaders in your program:

If you do not have an existing relationship with a local school district, you may not be ready to offer a partnership yet. To build that relationship, find ways to include the district's leaders in influencing how your program is developed and taught.

Consider inviting school district leaders to your program's recruitment events, bringing them into your program's interview and selection process, and hiring district leaders as adjuncts to help oversee internship programs or teach courses.

Give school district leaders and staff opportunities to provide feedback to your program's faculty and students about how your program prepares school leaders. Ideally you should do this in-person so school district representatives can answer questions — but you could also provide an online survey as a quick way to get feedback.

Offer a partnership that benefits the school district:

When you are ready, collaborate with your faculty to create a vision of a program that will appeal to your local school district and centers on meeting the district's needs.

Make sure the district has input into the program design before it is finalized. To develop a true partnership, districts should either be invited to co-design the program or should have substantial opportunities for input.

When you are developing the program, establish norms of collaboration internally and with the district. This is an agreement about how your program's staff and the school district's staff will work together.
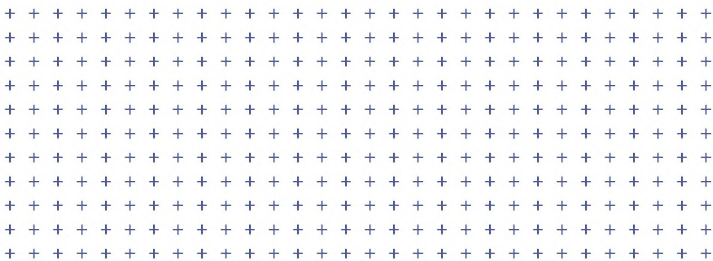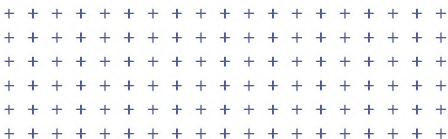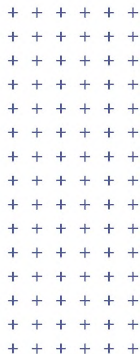
Getting Your Message Out:
Using Social Media to Bolster
Your Marketing Efforts

Leveraging social media is one of the best ways to amplify your traditional communications efforts and should be a key part of any marketing plan.

What social media platforms are right for your program? Most organizations should at least have active Facebook and Twitter accounts — two of the most popular platforms for businesses and institutions. But you should also become familiar with other major platforms that are popular among your target audiences. For example, according to Pew Research Center, roughly 50% of Americans with a college degree use LinkedIn and 40% of adults ages 30-49 are active on Instagram. Sharing your content across these platforms in addition to Facebook and Twitter could help to bolster your marketing plan.

Here are a few general best practices to consider when using social media:

- **Identify** specific social media goals, such as increasing traffic to your website or promoting a video that advertises your program.

- **Prepare** the content of your posts in advance, especially if your program does not have its own social media account and your posts are directed through your School of Education's account. Those managing the account will appreciate having pre-written content to post.

- **Increase** your following by engaging in other social media conversations. Take the time to follow, like, comment, share, favorite, and retweet others' updates and posts. Those actions get your name in front of folks who will be more likely to follow you back.

- **Determine** how you will measure social media activities and report on their success. A simple spreadsheet can serve as a "dashboard" and help track activities such as number of posts, likes, comments, shares, retweets, handles, and replies.your name in front of folks who will be more likely to follow you back.

- **Use paid advertising** to ensure your posts are seen by the right people.

Twitter Basics

Twitter enables users to send and read short 280-character messages, called "tweets." Tweets can include the names of other Twitter users (handles or @names), links to interesting articles, photos, and infographics. Tweets can be organized around keywords (hashtags) by using the "#" symbol. Putting # in front of a word turns it into a hashtag, which users can then click on to see all tweets using the same tag. Twitter is a good rapid response tool for generating "buzz" about your program, sharing news and information, and connecting with potential students and district partners.

Using Twitter effectively means having followers who regularly engage with you by retweeting, favoriting, or replying to you — this is how you extend your reach beyond your own followers to the followers of your followers. The number one way to grow your Twitter followers is to follow and interact with other people and organizations by favoriting, replying, and retweeting.

Best practices for using Twitter:

- Create a unique hashtag that brands your program, especially if your posts are being routed through your School of Education's account. This also allows you to measure your success, including how many tweets used that hashtag and who tweeted on it.

- Use other hashtags to extend your reach. By using existing hashtags, such as #Principals or #EdLeaders, you can get your tweet in front of others who follow that hashtag but are not necessarily following you. The free tool Hashtagify.me can help you research the popularity of various hashtags and who is using them.

- Include visuals in your tweets. Tweets that include visuals such as images, infographics, videos, or even just webpage links receive much higher engagement than those without them.

- All links now count as 23 characters, no matter whether they are 100 or 10 characters. You might want to use a service like bitly.com, just to create an easy-to-remember link.

Facebook Basics

Facebook is one of the best platforms for promoting your program to potential students through targeted advertising and Facebook Organization "Pages." It can also provide a network, called a "Group" in which your graduates can stay in touch with one another and find opportunities to serve as local ambassadors for your program. Groups can be private or public.

Pages enable businesses and organizations to have a public presence on Facebook, which, unlike a personal profile, is visible to everyone on the internet. Facebook members connect with Pages by "liking" them and receiving updates in their NewsFeed. However, Facebook is constantly readjusting its formula for determining what it shows in the NewsFeed. Currently, Facebook only shows your Page's posts to 2-4% of your Page's fans. Crafting posts that encourage readers to interact with your content, such as liking, commenting, clicking on links, or sharing, is key.

Best practices for using Facebook:

- Write in an engaging tone and offer value with each update. Use a compelling lead-in sentence that encourages users to click on the link you've shared or hit "Like" without even needing to read the entire post. Think about whether you would be willing to share this post on your own personal account. If not, re-think your post.

- Use visuals. As with Twitter, Facebook posts that include graphics are much more likely to receive engagement. Develop simple "memes" — photos or graphics overlaid with text — to turn your key messages into compelling visuals. Canva.com is a free to low-cost online tool with hundreds of graphics templates that you can customize for your purposes.

- Consider buying Facebook ads. The quickest way to increase engagement on Facebook is to buy advertising. For $300-$400 (over the course of a few weeks), you can run a targeted Facebook ad campaign designed to drive traffic to your website or increase the number of people who like your Page. Facebook ads allow very granular targeting of your audience — by demographics, interests, zip codes, occupation, etc. If you want to run Facebook ads, it's best to carefully research the options here by visiting https://www.facebook.com/advertising.

Sample Tweet:

Sample Facebook Post:

Getting Your Message Out:
Flyers 101

Though we live in an increasingly digital world, flyers and other printed materials remain a staple of almost every marketing plan. It's important that your flyers get your message across in a clear, concise, and compelling way. The next page highlights a few best practices to consider when creating flyers:

M.Ed. in
ADMINISTRATION
& SUPERVISION

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA | CURRY SCHOOL of EDUCATION

A PROGRAM FOR COMMITTED EDUCATORS

1 Quality educational leadership is vital to the overall success of a school. Good leaders create collaborative environments where adults and children learn and develop. Gain the knowledge and skills to build supportive learning environments for diverse students.

2 Receive your M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision, and support the teaching of excellent instructors, manage the complex needs of students and parents and help orchestrate school reform.

3 Our state-approved endorsement program is grounded in adult development and improvement science. We develop equity-oriented leaders who create educational opportunities for all students by promoting professional growth and continuous improvement throughout their organizations.

4

BENEFITS

Top ranked - #1 program in Virginia and #10 in the nation (U.S. News & World Report)

Program elements
- o Evidence-based practices
- o Application of learning in field-based assignments
- o Personalized growth and development for candidates
- o Technology-infused coursework for today's schools

Low cost - Our educator tuition rate is one of the lowest in the state.

Convenient locations - Offering programs across the state, including district-based partnerships

Highly qualified graduates - Nearly half of 2016 graduates are employed as school leaders.

PROGRAM DETAILS

- Two-year, intensive M.Ed. program (2 courses per semester for 6 semesters)
- Combination of online and local face-to-face courses with convenient schedules
- Intensive and authentic field-based experiences
- Mentoring by local school leaders
- Mix of respected school leaders and university faculty as instructors

5

HOW OUR GRADUATES RATE THE PROGRAM

The program was challenging and intellectually stimulating.	5/5 RATING
I was asked to reflect on practice and analyze how to improve it.	4.9/5 RATING
The program content emphasized leadership for school and organizational improvement.	4.9/5 RATING
The program integrated theory and practice.	4.9/5 RATING

1 Lead with the "why" — why should your audience take that next career step to become an educational leader?

Quality educational leadership is vital to the overall success of a school. Good leaders create collaborative environments where adults and children learn and develop. Gain the knowledge and skills to build supportive learning environments for diverse students.

2 How can your program help them become a successful leader?

Receive your M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision, and support the teaching of excellent instructors, manage the complex needs of students and parents and help orchestrate school reform.

3 What makes your program different from others?

Our state-approved endorsement program is grounded in adult development and improvement science. We develop equity-oriented leaders who create educational opportunities for all students by promoting professional growth and continuous improvement throughout their organizations.

4 Use blocks of color to break up text and emphasize important features like cost, convenience, and graduate placement.

BENEFITS

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Program elements
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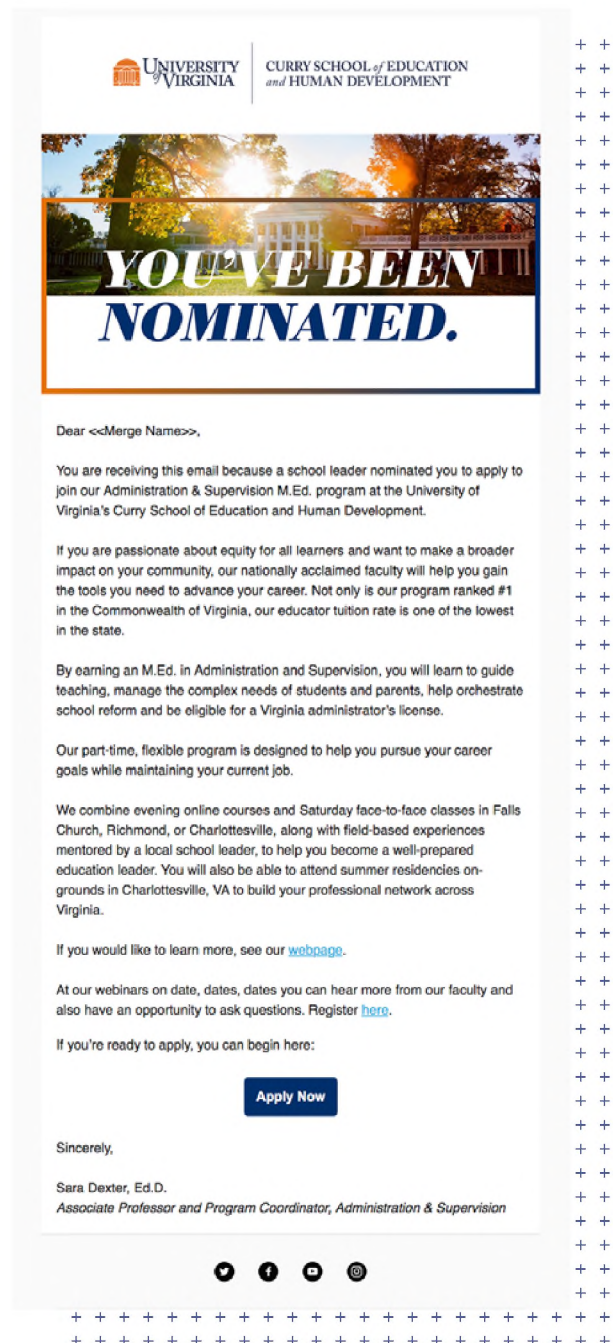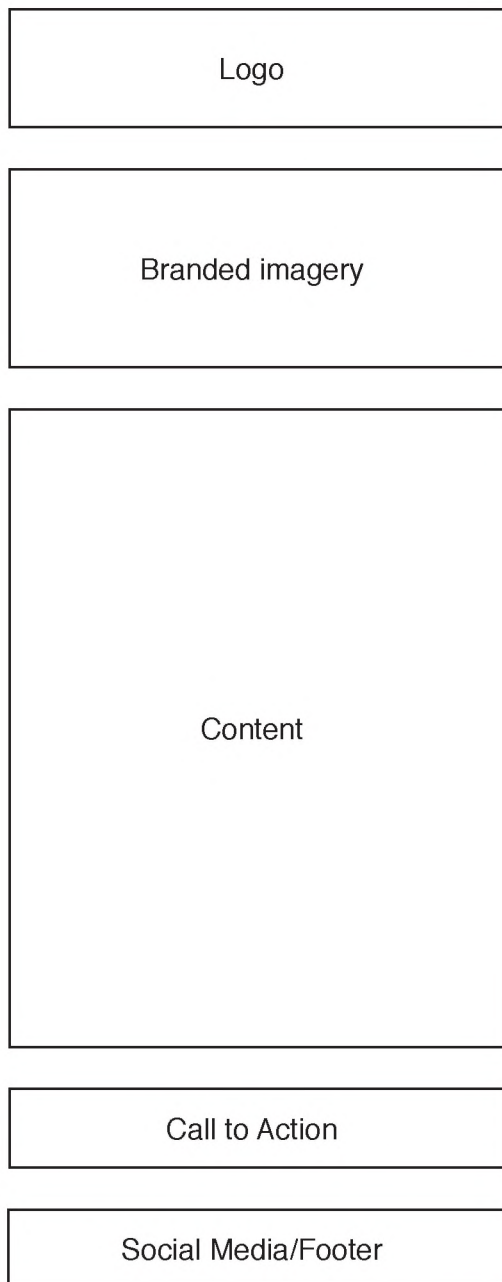- o Technology-infused coursework for today's schools

4 Feature graduate testimonials to show that your program has made a **real** impact on **real** people.

HOW OUR GRADUATES RATE THE PROGRAM

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Getting Your Message Out:
E-Cards 101

Email marketing systems like Constant Contact and MailChimp allow you to create virtual flyers, often called "e-cards" or "e-blasts." Here is a framework to help you develop your own e-card:

| Logo |
| Branded imagery |
| Content |
| Call to Action |
| Social Media/Footer |

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University Council for Educational Administration

Quality Leadership Matters   *since 1954*