

## 1.1 Program Narrative Description

A large portion of California's rural poor live in the Central Valley, a population characterized by high levels of Hispanic migrant farmworkers and English learners. Being one of the fastest-growing regions in the state, much of the Central Valley's population consists of school-age children, who bring a set of unique challenges and opportunities to California's rural education system – including a high population of English learner students and economically disadvantaged students receiving disparate educational outcomes. Fresno State, located in the heart of the Central Valley, and specifically, our Educational Leadership and Administration program is focused on serving the needs of our surrounding school districts that serve these high poverty, diverse, rural and urban communities. We understand that “great schools do not exist apart from great leaders” and we offer our program to ensure that all students have access to high-quality schools. Strong leadership is essential to best serve the needs of our Valley's schools, close the historic achievement gaps, and meet the needs of our historically under-represented students. This has been the foundation of our past, to best build the capacity of leaders, and will continue to be the focus of our future – to graduate administrative education leaders with the skills necessary to lead schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Our mission is to create relevant and credible leaders who possess the knowledge and skills to respond to the complex and dynamic needs of the educational community. To fulfill this mission, our program is, and will continue to be, framed around adult learning theories that include “hands on field experiences, collaboration, thematically integrated curricula and problem-based instruction . . .” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Our intent is to balance theory with application following Knowles (2012) principles of andragogy to ensure that our future principals and administrative leaders receive relative, purposeful, developmental and integrated real-world learning experiences based on and aligned with the *California Administrator Performance Expectations*. Coursework includes aligned curriculum system, socio-cultural, self-learning and change theories integrated into active, collaborative learning experiences using real-life problems, inquiry, reflection and extended projects that support “learning by doing” (O'Neil, 2000), “encourages learners to move through complex problem solving, challenging them to think in new ways” (Allen, 2007), and increases transferability of skills and knowledge. Research-based, highly-interactive, authentic professional learning experiences apply systems thinking, data-driven decision making, cyclical planning and field experience to deepen understanding about how leadership behaviors and actions affect others, influence decisions, and create change.

Our program is based on a cohort model, similar to that practiced by innovative leadership training programs, in which cohorts “of students enroll in and move through coursework together . . .” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Candidates are organized by partnership

cohorts that are maintained throughout the program to provide purposeful, professional and collaborative learning experiences that accelerate learning, support development of broader perspectives, gain an appreciation for diversity in thinking and promote practical real-world interactions, including generation of new ideas, team building, effective communication skills, problem solving and shared decision making. Cohorts meet off-campus in school districts, complete common research-based assignments to ensure quality course outcomes, and receive instruction delivered by university instructors as well as highly-qualified and trained district leaders, who partner to “integrate the work of the program into the work of schools” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Quality on-site learning supports the development of leadership skills and knowledge needed to understand, analyze, and systematically apply change processes to make data-driven decisions. Additionally, leadership experiences, in the context of the school setting, emphasize the human aspects of leadership, inherent in productive collaboration and partnership. Field experiences are integrated in all courses and designed to be completed on site, or in close proximity to the actual work. Purposeful and active instructional approaches, applied overtly and systematically, link theory with real, critical problems of practice.

Each Candidate is assisted and guided by a PASC Field Mentor who is selected and supported by district leadership (Superintendent/Designee). Mentors hold an administrative credential and serve in the position of principal or have recent experience as a principal. The PASC Field Mentor stays with the Candidate throughout the program. Throughout the duration of the program, Candidates engage in conversation with their Field Mentors and share key learnings and content knowledge and skills developed as a result of active participation and work in their courses. PASC Field Mentors guide and assist candidates in deepening their knowledge and skill by providing real world connections of the candidate’s course learnings to the role of today’s principal, providing context to current issues in the district/organization, enhancing candidate learning through the Field Mentor’s personal experience, asking clarifying and probing questions to deepen candidate learning in the specific focus areas, and providing honest, effective feedback about the candidates’ work.

*Allen, Scott. “Adult Learning Theory & Leadership Development,” Kravis Leadership Institute, Leadership Review v.. 7, Spring 2007, pp. 26-37.*

*Davis, S & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Innovative Principal Preparation Programs: What Works and How We Know. Planning and Changing. v. 43:12, pp. 25-45.*

*Knowles, M. (2002). Lifelong learning: A Dream. Creating the Future: Perspectives on Educational Change, v. January. October 10, 2003.*

[http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/future/creating\\_the\\_future/crfut\\_knowles.cfm](http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/future/creating_the_future/crfut_knowles.cfm)

*O’Neil, J. & Lamm, S.L. (2000). Working as a learning coach team in action learning. New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, v. 87, p. 43-52.*