I. General Information

The 35th annual UCEA Convention will be held November 11-14, 2021 at the Hyatt Regency Columbus in Columbus, Ohio. The purpose of the 2021 UCEA Convention is to engage participants in discussions about research, policy, practice, and preparation in the field of education with a specific focus on educational leadership. Members of the 2021 Convention Program Committee include David DeMatthews (University of Texas at Austin), Noelle W. Arnold (Ohio State University), Paul Cruz (University of Texas at Austin), DeMarcus Jenkins (University of Arizona), and Yinying Wang (Georgia State University).

II. UCEA Convention Theme

The 35th annual UCEA Convention theme, Emerging Stronger: Reuniting to Advance Educational Leadership, is an opportunity to join together after an unprecedented time of isolation and loss. Having both exposed and intensified well-documented opportunity gaps (Dorn et al., 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has forever left its mark on our communities, schools, academic field, and lives. The pandemic’s effects have not only been “unfolding before our eyes,” as novelist Arundhati Roy (2020) pointed out, but also exist as “wreckage of a train that has been careening down the track for years.” Such pandemic realities have largely limited our ability to cocreate knowledge as a community, intensifying long-standing disciplinary and epistemological silos that limit our field’s collective impact. This is especially troubling given the problems encountered by educational leaders do not fit neatly into academic fields or disciplines. Yet, the pandemic has reminded us how important collective research efforts are to responding to complex social problems, such as those confronting educational organizations during and in the eventual aftermath of the pandemic (DeMatthews et al., 2020). As Roy further highlighted how prior pandemics have “forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew,” this year’s theme encourages reunion and collective effort in support of public education.

Even before the pandemic, disciplinary and epistemological boundaries have led many researchers to narrowly construct research questions, adhere to specific funding-agency priorities, exclude voices of nonresearchers, adopt ahistorical approaches to inquiry, frame marginalized communities through deficit lenses, and prioritize publication in solely discipline-specific journals (Artiles, 2019; Valencia, 2010). Cliques often form within fields, leading to groupthink and limited understandings of complex phenomena (Janis, 1991). For example, some researchers examine antiracist leadership to address issues of White supremacy and anti-Blackness; others focus on inclusive leadership for students with disabilities. In cliques, both groups can miss opportunities to share and learn from each other, a critical step in addressing the intersectional oppressive forces that operate within schools (not limited to racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia; Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). While not a panacea for binary thinking, intersectionality is a necessary framework for methodological and pedagogical approaches to complexity and conflict. This is even more paramount now as longstanding systemic social inequities have put historically underserved populations at greater risk for the worst effects of COVID-19 (Price-Haywood et al., 2020).
Although there is not broad agreement on what constitutes interdisciplinary scholarship, a growing consensus in the scientific community recognizes how diversifying expertise can push the boundaries of knowledge production. Interdisciplinary research has been conceptualized as borrowing tools, methods, and concepts from other fields, as well as engaging in complex problem solving that requires multiple forms of knowledge (Chubin et al., 1986). The National Academies Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (2005) defined interdisciplinary research as

a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice. (p. 26)

The constellation of potential interdisciplinary efforts will provide new voices, new questions, and new approaches to advance educational leadership.

We call on faculty, researchers, practitioners, and graduate students from across disciplines and organizational affiliations¹ to join the UCEA community. We invite state education agencies and school districts, as well as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods researchers from diverse disciplines within colleges of education and other fields to join our collective efforts. We have provided the following six areas below to stimulate your thinking about the UCEA Convention theme. Rather than viewing each area as a “bucket,” we envision them as branches stemming from one tree that extend to cover new terrain. Just as a tree gains strength from its branches, so too does our field grow as we extend the boundaries of our work. Together we can emerge stronger.

Examining Complex Intersectional Equity Issues: Most equity issues are highly complex and not easily solved. We encourage proposals that consider the following questions: What interdisciplinary approaches are uniquely positioned to understand and disrupt intersectional forces of oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia)? How can educational leaders be better prepared to respond to racism, anti-Blackness, and White supremacy? As an example, education leadership researchers might collaborate with scholars in other disciplines (e.g., economists, sociologists, computer scientists) to examine how district and school leaders allocate resources and make hiring decisions that promote equity for diverse student groups.

Expanding and Refining Theoretical Framings: Researchers have increasingly drawn from alternative theories and frameworks to advance conceptions of leadership. We encourage proposals that consider the following questions: How do uncritical adoption of dominant theoretical lenses constrain contemporary understandings of leadership? How can we integrate and refine new disciplinary concepts and tools into present-day leadership practices? As an example, researchers

¹ Example of organizations, but not limited to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Association for Education Policy and Finance; American Association of School Administrators, American School Counseling Association, Association for Education Policy and Finance, Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Chief State School Officers; National Association for Bilingual Education, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and National Rural Education Association.
studying organizational leadership may incorporate neuroscience and dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit) to analyze biases and identify practices to root out racism and ableism simultaneously operating within schools.

**Researcher–Practitioner Collaboration:** Authentic connections with practitioners and community members can increase the relevance and utility of research. We encourage proposals from researchers partnered with practitioners, community organizations, agencies, and/or educational institutions that codesign, implement, and analyze complex problems or evaluate promising practices. For example, university-based researchers and district leaders might codevelop a dual language curriculum and professional development for principals and teachers, pilot the initiative, monitor progress across schools, and make ongoing improvements.

**Diversifying Methodological Approaches in Education Research:** Researchers utilizing multiple methodological tools are often able to interrogate more complex questions. We encourage proposals that incorporate a wide range of methods (e.g., simulation and virtual reality, network analysis, text mining, brain imaging, and experiments in game theory) to investigate critical PK-16 educational leadership issues. For example, qualitative researchers focused on the lived experiences of school leaders of color might collaborate with quantitative researchers conducting secondary analyses of leadership career pathways to identify barriers to diversifying the leadership workforce.

**Comparative and International Education Research:** Globalization has created a need to investigate and learn from other contexts and cultures. We encourage proposals that consider comparative and international educational leadership topics and/or contexts across multiple regions or cultures. Proposals might consider the following questions: What does leadership look like outside of U.S./Western contexts? What insights can be shared across international boundaries that might improve schools globally? One example might be international researchers examining inclusive leadership practices in several non-Western countries.

**Exploring Researcher Identities and Networks:** Homophily suggests that people’s social networks are often homogenous in relation to sociodemographic characteristics, having powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson et al., 2001). We encourage proposals that consider how homophily impacts education research. Proposals might consider the following questions: How do race, gender, sexual orientation, university affiliation, country, prior practitioner experience, and other markers of identity inform research activity? What types of opportunities to engage with nonsimilar individuals and groups lead to more diverse networks?

The 2021 UCEA Convention Call for Proposals also encourages proposals focused on quality leadership preparation, effective preparation program designs and improvement efforts, successful coalitions that enhance leadership and policy work, collaborative research that enriches the community, and other issues that impact the current and future practice of educators and policymakers.
III. UCEA Convention Session Types

Individual Session Submissions

The submission process for individual submissions includes selecting an option for "in-person" or "virtual". The choice of in-person or virtual does not influence how reviewers score your proposal.

**Paper Sessions.** These sessions are intended for in-depth reporting of current/completed research and results, analyzing educational policy issues, or presenting theoretical/conceptual frameworks that inform educational leadership.

**Practitioner-Oriented Ignite Presentations.** These sessions are specifically intended to present innovations, effective strategies or tools, problems of practice, collaborations, etc. Presentations are no more than 5 minutes long. View a 2-minute video on Ignite Presentations: [https://bit.ly/2RVkQ63](https://bit.ly/2RVkQ63)

**Roundtables.** Roundtables allow for extended discussions among a small group of individuals and are excellent venues for giving and receiving targeted feedback, engaging in-depth discussions, and meeting colleagues with similar research interests. Roundtables are excellent for new and emerging research projects.

Group Session Submissions

**All group session submission types are initially being planned to be “in-person” sessions.**

**Symposia.** A symposium should examine specific policy, research, or practice issues from several perspectives; contribute significantly to the knowledge base; and allow for dialogue and discussion.

**International Community-Building Sessions.** These sessions, regardless of format (i.e., Paper, Symposium, Critical Conversation, etc.), require participants to be from two or more different countries. These sessions must focus on critical issues of leadership practice, development, or research from multiple international perspectives.

**Critical Conversations.** These sessions are intended to stimulate in-depth discussions around a series of provocative questions, current issues or research in process and may be structured in a variety of ways.

**Innovative Sessions / Mini-Workshops.** Proposals utilizing innovative presentation/interaction strategies are encouraged, such as web-based projects, films, and the use of technology to increase interaction and participation.

**Post-Convention Work Sessions and Workshops.** These sessions, which provide both 2-hour or 3-hour sessions for scholars of similar interest, are encouraged for (a) groups of scholars who are working on projects directly related to the core mission of UCEA and (b) scholars who wish to present a workshop for faculty members attending the convention.

[Click here for a complete description of each session type.](#)
IV. Submission Guidelines

Submission length **must not exceed 3 single-spaced pages** (about 1,500 words or 6,000 characters) using 12-point font (Times New Roman). References are **required** and **must not exceed 1 single-spaced page** (about 400 words or 2,200 characters).

Through the act of submitting a proposal, an individual is entering a professional agreement to review proposals for the convention; to attend and deliver the content described in the proposal; and, in the event that a paper is being presented, to share a copy of the work with convention attendees. Furthermore, lead authors are required to email an advance copy of their paper to the session facilitator and other session participants by **October 25, 2021**. Ignite presenters are expected to email a two-page summary of the talking points they will be sharing at the convention with the session facilitator prior to the October 25 deadline.

V. Participation Limits

To promote broad participation in the annual convention, an individual may appear as first author on no more than two proposals. In addition, an individual may appear on the program no more than four times in the role of presenter. The participation limit does not include service as facilitator or participation in invited sessions or any session connected with UCEA headquarters, committees, or publications.

VI. Criteria for Review of UCEA Convention Proposals

All proposals will be subject to blind, peer review by three reviewers, which will occur electronically. **Proposals MUST NOT include names of session organizers or presenters.** Primary authors of submitted proposals agree to serve as proposal reviewers.

VII. Proposal Reviewers

UCEA invites all convention attendees and participants to serve as reviewers for the 2021 Convention. **Through the act of submitting a proposal, an individual is entering a professional agreement to review proposals for the convention.** UCEA encourages submitters to invite their co-authors to participate in this important professional activity. Individuals can volunteer to serve as a reviewer on the UCEA website. The **deadline for completed proposal reviews is May 30, 2021.**

VIII. Participant Registration and Attendance Requirement

All presenting authors of accepted papers and all participants in accepted sessions (including session facilitators) are required to register for, pay in full, attend the Annual Convention, and to be present at the scheduled sessions. Submission is a commitment to do so.

IX. Proposal Submission Deadline
Proposals must be received by Sunday, May 16, 2021, by 11:59 pm EDT. The deadline is a week later than previous proposal submission deadlines. Therefore, no deadline extension will be provided this year. All proposals must be submitted electronically through All Academic by visiting the UCEA website (http://www.ucea.org). This site will officially open March 24, 2021.

X. Graduate Student Summit

Successfully launched at the 2012 Convention in Denver, the Summit will be returning once again this year for the 2021 Convention in Columbus, OH. Doctoral students from UCEA member institutions are invited to submit proposals for this pre-conference event. Further details regarding the Graduate Student Summit call for proposals can be found on the Graduate Student portion of the UCEA website: http://www.ucea.org/graduate-student-opportunities/graduate-student-summit/

References


