Preparing for the Group Dissertation: Pitfalls and Potentialities
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Recent initiatives by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have rekindled discussions about doctoral education in the fields of chemistry, education, English, history, mathematics, and neuroscience (Golde & Walker, 2006) and impact of 21st century technological advances on doctoral studies (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008). A notable distinction among the five disciplines examined is that “the field of education has struggled to strike a balance between the practice of education and research in education” (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006, p. 26), evidenced by its two terminal degrees—the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), first awarded in 1893 by Teachers College at Columbia University, and the Doctor of Education (EdD), first awarded in 1920 by Harvard University. Research on education doctoral programs over the past six decades suggests that the only distinctive difference between the two is the inclusion or exclusion of a course on advanced inferential statistics (Anderson, 1983; Deering, 1998; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Osguthorpe & Wong, 1993). Nonetheless, the PhD is often described as a research degree and the EdD as a practitioner degree (Brown, 1990; Golde & Dore, 2001; Guthrie, 2009).

The number of doctorates awarded in the United States annually in the field of education (approximately 6,500) is second only to those in life sciences, despite the fact that “most education students have had careers before pursuing the doctorate” and “attend school part-time while continuing to work” (Shulman et al., p. 26). The expansion of doctoral programs in education and the high productivity of terminal degrees has fueled discussions and debates about “the nature, the similarities, and the differences in programs” (Anderson, 1983, p. 55), particularly those in educational administration and leadership. A growing literature on the education doctorate includes recommendations for making greater distinctions between the two degrees (Andrews & Grogan, 2005; Deering, 1998; Silver, 1978; Toma, 2002; Townsend, 2002), particularly the traditional dissertation based on independently conducted research by EdD candidates (Archbald, 2008; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2005; Riehl, Larson, Short, & Reitzug, 2000).

Recently, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council of Academic Deans in Research Education Institutions partnered to sponsor the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) “to reclaim the education doctorate and to transform it into the degree of choice for the next generation of school and college leaders” (http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/). Representatives of the 21 invited colleges and universities are working independently and collaboratively to design new programs and examine features of their recently implemented EdD programs that make them uniquely distinctive from PhD programs. During semi-annual convenings at locations across the United States, representatives from CPED-partner institutions have reported their efforts to transform doctoral education through emphasis on (a) scholarship of teaching, (b) identification of a signature pedagogy, (c) creation of laboratories of practice that undertake best evidence analyses, and (d) development of new capstone experiences in which EdD candidates work together to demonstrate their proficiencies in scholarship. The program from which this paper emerged was initiated and implemented by professors at a CPED-member institution.

This paper describes efforts by instructors during the first two years of an EdD program to prepare participants for the required group dissertation. The cohort-based program, a hybrid model of online learning activities and monthly face-to-face class sessions, is delivered through a partnership between

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two departments within the university’s college of education and the administrative office of the local statewide system of community and technical colleges. The paper begins with an overview of the program, followed by a short review of literature that informed instructional practices during the first two years of coursework. Next, data gathered through post-assignment surveys completed by students are used to assess effectiveness of faculty efforts toward preparing doctoral students for their required group dissertation. The paper closes with faculty reflections about needed next steps to assure candidates’ success.

Program Design

The curricular content for the EdD program, launched in the fall of 2007, was developed collaboratively by program faculty from the university, representatives of the community and technical college system office, and adjunct faculty with experience in two- and four-year institutions. Program planners designed courses and learning activities to educate students to work resourcefully and imaginatively in the current environment of their home institutions and to lead community and technical colleges as components of a single, integrated P-20 educational system within the state. The program of study is framed by five themes (i.e., innovation and change within institutions, community and technical college students, postsecondary curriculum, effective leadership, diversity and social justice), whereas the program curriculum is organized into four major components (i.e., community and technical colleges within the P-20 education landscape, organizational practice, learning and teaching, applied research and decision analysis). Students complete the 15 required courses during the first three years of the program, with content emphasis spanning from foundations (first year) to application for practice (second year) to organizational leadership and academic practices (third year).

Signature Pedagogy

The signature pedagogy for this CPED-affiliated program is use of a closed cohort, an intact group of students that proceeds together throughout the program (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000), and ongoing group-development processes to transform the cohort into a community of practice that emphasizes generative learning (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008; Wenger, 1998). A review of literature that informed the development of the program’s signature pedagogy is presented in a later section of this paper.

Laboratories of Practice

The intent of the EdD program is to expand the candidate pool of prospective leaders for the statewide system of community and technical colleges. Because 14 of the 16 colleges are located in rural settings, program designers perceived that participants needed opportunities to learn about the unique differences among the system’s colleges. Thus, during the first two years of the program, one weekend each semester the cohort and instructors convened as guests of a college. Prior to the campus visits, hosting cohort members provided documents and other materials about their home colleges and suggested sections on the colleges’ Web sites for review. While at the college sites, cohort members and program faculty met with administrators and program directors, participated in site-specific learning activities, and visited satellite campuses. The fieldtrips as well as guest presentations by system personnel during regular cohort meetings served as laboratories of practice. Group and individually written reflections about those experiences and meetings—with regard to application of theories in course readings—provided opportunities for cohort members to assess evidence of promising practices in community college leadership.
Learning and Performance Assessments

In addition to instructor-designed course-based assessments, student learning is assessed through three formal evaluations. The first was a comprehensive examination about program content conducted at the close of the second year of coursework. Program faculty arranged two week-long, student-facilitated study sessions at the university’s campus in preparation for the two-day, on-demand writing requirements of the June 2009 comprehensive exam. All cohort members passed that benchmark assessment. The second assessment is the qualifying examination, which will be the defense of students’ dissertation proposals developed during their third year of coursework. Students will be eligible to sit for their qualifying examinations during the Summer 2010 semester. The final evaluation will be cohort members’ defense of their capstone project, which is discussed later in this paper.

Signature Pedagogy: Experiential Learning in Cohorts

Transformative learning requires adult learners to develop new frames of reference encompassing “habits of mind and a point of view” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5) that help them become autonomous critical thinkers as they move along the continuum from novice to expert. Whether learning is oriented toward cognition (developing new knowledge), dispositions (developing new orientations to self and others), or behavior (interacting appropriately with others), “learning involves change” (Beghetto & Alzono, 2006, p. 285). Thus, adult learners need sufficient time to explore new information and develop concepts related to new information before they are able to connect it with their prior knowledge and apply it in different settings. They also need to practice using their new knowledge and skills in settings where their performance can be monitored and assessed because external feedback and reflection about learning are essential (Braford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; McCombs, 1991).

Learner-centered Instruction

Learner-centered practices, based on constructivist and intrinsic-motivation theories, emphasize learner’s constructing knowledge, meaning, and understanding based in their experiences and interactions with others. When learner-centered principles, such as those developed by the APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs (1997), are used in postsecondary education, individual characteristics of diverse adult learners (e.g., beliefs, expertise, motivation) and course requirements (e.g., content, assessments) can be addressed simultaneously through active, collaborative learning environments that support freedom of self-expression and accommodation of individuality. Adult students thereby become personally responsible for fitting their learning to their particular needs (Hiemstra, 1991; Thompson, Licklider, & Jungst, 2003).

Adult-learning Theory

Use of adult-learning theory constructs (Cranton, 2002; Knowles, 1990; Merriam, 2001; Mezirow, 1997) and constructive-developmental approaches that value knowledge adult learners already possess and support their active participation in learning processes (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Cross, 1981; Hansman, 2001; Kegan, 1980; Muth, 2000) produce new knowledge and skills transferable to and usable in diverse authentic settings. Further, when instructors assume diverse roles (e.g., guide, mentor, facilitator, explorer, discussant, provocateur), experiential learning can provide opportunities for adult learners to practice transferable skills in conflict resolution, teamwork, and community building (Burnett, 1999; Churchill, 1996; Witt & James, 1998), which are essential to effective leadership.
Cohort-based Delivery Model

The closed-cohort model of program delivery is required for the creation of generative learning communities within postsecondary education; however, the cohort structure alone is not sufficient. Transforming a cohort into a community of practice emphasizing generative learning requires careful attention by instructors to necessary stages of group development that can generate conflict if ignored (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003, 2004). By modeling development of group norms during the early months of the program and encouraging open discussions of controversial topics and opposing opinions, students engage in the intentional, collaborative effort of community building. Over time cohort members became responsible for creating and sustaining learning environments (a) where all participants are respected and appreciated for their uniqueness and feel free to express their views about relevant issues and (b) where risk taking is supported by mutual trust and candor is protected by confidentiality (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008).

Constructivist-oriented Paradigm

The program employs a constructivist paradigm that “empowers the learner by changing the focus from teaching to learning and from consuming knowledge to creating it” (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009, p. 94). Instructional materials and assignments are carefully selected and designed to assure alignment of course content with community and technical college issues. The intent is to enhance requisite knowledge and skill development and support immediate applicability to students’ professional practices.

During the first two years of the program, program faculty engaged students in the collaborative development of experiences that addressed their individual learning needs and group-oriented reasoning and judgment. Assessment inventories, case studies, peer discussions, small-group projects, and other action-oriented experiences required students to be prepared to participate actively in scheduled learning events—both face-to-face and online—and to engage in those events in a timely and responsive manner. As program-implementation progressed, students assumed greater responsibility for overseeing those learning events and addressing peer-related issues that arose.

Preparing for the Capstone Project: Group Dissertation

A variety of collaborative research models are used in “companion dissertations” (McNamara, Lara-Alecio, Irby, Hoyle, & Tong, 2007, p. 1). Examples of methodologies include the meta-analytic model in which doctoral candidates analyze a topic from multiple perspectives for comparison purposes and the multiple case study model “characterized by a collaboratively developed research question that envelopes two, three, or more cases” (p. 3). A companion dissertation may also use the evaluation model in which “the same question is asked for varying samples” (p. 5) or the subsequent replication model in which doctoral students examine the same topic multiple times in a sequence using “the same target publication” (p. 7). Although formats vary, all companion dissertations share six elements: (a) a common research agenda, (b) a common inquiry statement, (c) integrated research tasks, (d) a common report format, (e) the same advisory chair, and (f) similar statements in each dissertation about its being a companion to others. McNamara and colleagues assert that although companion dissertations require teamwork and collaboration, a major benefit of the required interdependence of peer support increases completion rates of degree achievement.

A unique feature of this EdD program is the requirement for cohort members to conduct companion dissertations that are client-oriented and collaboratively conducted simultaneously by three- or four-
member teams. Six potential topic foci have been identified by the chancellor’s leadership team at the community and technical college system office: (a) student transfer from two- to four-year institutions, (b) developmental and transitional education, (c) dual credit for matriculation or employment, (d) online learning, (e) student services, and (f) workforce education. Dissertations teams will design a study that requires each member to conduct an independent study that contributes to a specific element of the problem or issue selected by the team.

Each doctoral candidate will produce a dissertation with three chapters presented in the same order: (a) the team’s technical report to the system office, (b) the individual’s research report that contributed to the technical report, and (c) the individual’s professional reflection about her or his doctoral education experience and future career plans. Each team will present its collective study findings during a formal presentation to officials at the community and technical college system office, and each team member will present her or his research report during an oral examination by university professors.

Each team will be assigned one dissertation advisor who will mentor both the team and individual members throughout the process. Other advisory committee members for the independently conducted research components of the team project will be selected according to expertise needed to assure each team member produces a quality research study. The collaborative nature of the group dissertation will require team members to support one another throughout this last phase of their doctoral studies to assure their collective and independent success.

**Intentional Team Building**

Efforts to transform the new cohort from a group of strangers to collaborative learning partners was initiated during the first face-to-face session of the Fall 2007 semester when students were asked to engage in short reciprocal interviews with individuals unknown to them and then introduce their “new friend” to the entire cohort. Throughout the first semester the cohort was required to participate in Blackboard discussion board activities in which they reviewed and critiqued their peers’ reflections about community college issues. They were formed into two different, randomly assigned small groups and required to sit with their group members during face-to-face meetings and to communicate with their peers via group discussion boards in Blackboard to complete two collaboratively developed papers (i.e., an abstract of an assigned research-based article, an outline for a research proposal). After completing these assignments, students then completed a Web-based questionnaire in which they were asked to reflect about their groups’ performance with regard to assigned readings about high-performing work teams.

Cohort members reported that “the process seemed very disjointed” and that some groups “never formally assigned specific authority within the group as it pertains to tasks or timetables.” According to one respondent,

> Our team never discussed . . . individual accountability. Therefore, no penalties were decided or discussed for those that did not complete their respective tasks. This may have been due to [fact that] formal tasks were not assigned. Overall, our team performance was not satisfactory.

These first efforts at collaborative work were challenging because cohort members were accustomed to collaborating in “physical environments,” not virtually across miles and time zones. They “thought in terms of fairly immediate feedback” and rather than “asynchronous discussions in Blackboard” and thus did not consider “how other team members used technology in responding.” Although many cohort members use Blackboard and other online platforms in their professional practices as community
college instructors, they had not experienced the process as learners. Thus, some simply “lacked the understanding of how to accomplish the task” using information technology.

These early group projects also generated conflict, which was troubling to some cohort members.

The first group in which I was assigned was recognized by both group members and observers as spending a great deal of time “storming”. . . . I have been a member of many groups in the past, but this was by the far the most difficult in which to work. . . . Our team had no management or leadership.

Issues such as “no management or leadership” within the small groups and failure to “not hold the non-contributing team member accountable” contributed to the conflict. Although most groups “followed instructions” and “produced a great final product,” it became evident that more intentional efforts at group development were needed.

During the Spring 2008 semester, students were asked to complete a Web-based assessment of their strengths (Rath, 2007) and then send their results to the instructor of the course about leadership in educational organizations. Six four-member groups were formed through purposeful selection to assure each group had at least one individual with a Gallup-defined strength within four broad domains (i.e., executing, influencing, relationship building, strategic thinking). Their first assignment was to work collaboratively to develop norms for completing two future group presentations that semester. The norm-development assignment guidelines included a worksheet based on “leading a team tools” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006, p. 13). Groups posted their norms in their designated Blackboard discussion sites and sent an electronic copy to the instructor. The instructor then informed the cohort that all decision making about group structure and processes was left to the discretion of each group.

Their responses on the post-assignment Web-based questionnaire suggest that this intervention made them aware of important requirements for successful group work. They realized that “team effectiveness must be intentional” and that “effectiveness can be improved by some thoughtful, intentional discussion before launching out toward the goal.” One cohort member, self described as a “very task/project oriented person,” found it difficult to form “a team without the focus of a project,” and admitted that developing norms for the group without a specific purpose was frustrating. A peer with prior experience in teamwork reported a different response to the activity.

The most important lesson I learned from this assignment was how to start the work of forming a team. I have developed team norms before both as a team member and team leader, but starting the process from the beginning without pre-defined roles was something new for me. I think it is always good to "experience" the process. It is one thing to read about a concept, but to actually be forced to engage with the process takes it to a whole new learning experience.

This activity focused on “the importance of team norms,” which is often “taught in a training setting [but] doesn’t seem to actually be used outside that setting.”

Cohort members have been aware since the first face-to-face session that they are required to complete a group dissertation. From their experiences during the first semester, many are aware that conflict can be disruptive. One cohort member provided a synthesized response to the questionnaire prompt asking about lessons learned from developing group norms.
This was an excellent assignment as it required our group to discuss some ground rules and guidelines. The activity itself opened up lines of communication, which is crucial in any group activity particularly one in which most of the interaction is done via technology. That was a very important thing to do for group cohesion and development. While we all agreed on specific ground rules, it will be very interesting to see how we as a group and as individuals deal with any conflict that might occur. The important thing is for everyone (including myself) to be aware that we may not agree on all aspects of what we are doing as a group and that is okay. As long as we are open and respectful in our communication, we will be a productive group.

Another outcome of this course assignment has been the understanding that “group norms, roles, and responsibilities are when working in a group that is geographically dispersed” is critical. Cohort members must “depend on communication techniques like online chats and discussion boards,” and they have gained awareness that they must be cautious of actions that can potentially “inhibit complete participation” and thus jeopardize “maximum group performance.”

One purpose for the reflective writing assignments throughout the first two years of the program has been to assist cohort members in becoming more aware of their personal styles of leadership and interpersonal interactions and how their styles can impact others. Following completion of a group project late in the Spring 2008 semester, students were again asked to reflect about any new lessons learned. The commentary below suggests that this cohort member appreciates the challenges required to balance actions by members of high-performing teams.

This assignment challenged our group initially in terms of establishing the guidelines for what we were to produce. There was a great deal of discussion concerning the process and format of the final product. We had excellent participation and were able to establish our group roles and norms not only for this project, but also for any future endeavors. The most important thing I learned was to nurture the decision making process, not too heavy handed, not too laissez faire, just let things develop and keep making progress. I believe we were successful in this regard.

A peer compared past experiences as a group members to this experience in the cohort and reported new lessons learned about teamwork.

In the past, I have often found it frustrating to work on group projects because I did not appreciate the existence and value of individual strengths and behavioral styles. I am now making a conscious effort to recognize the personal style of those I work with, both in this course and in my work environment. That is where the importance of establishing norms comes in. The “rules for operation” capitalize on individual strengths so that each team member makes a positive contribution. Everyone knows what is expected of them and feels involved and appreciated. Appropriate norms assure that positive relationships are established so the group’s energies are focused on developing an excellent product.

Another cohort member, however, expressed frustrations about the norm-development activity.

The team members each have very differing approaches to team exercises. If I had complete control over the management of how the team exercise proceeded, I would have stressed very different themes, questions, and embraced a different attitude than developed within our team.

These reflections were written during the cohort’s second semester of doctoral studies. When compared with reflections written by them a year later, they provide an interesting contrast between
their responses to low-stakes learning activities and reflections about a high-stakes team project directly impacting their course grades.

**Collaborative Pilot Study**

During the Spring 2009 semesters, cohort members formed into six assigned groups to design, conduct, and report findings from a field-based study about a student-services issue. Each group included a combination of professional experience: faculty, student affairs practitioners, and administrators. They were required to use the Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) developed by Beebe (2001). Beebe defines the methodology as “intensive, team-based qualitative inquiry using triangulation, iterative data analysis and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation from the insider’s perspective” (p. xv), which makes RAP appropriate for utilization during a semester-long course. They were also required to consider the community and technical college system’s philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry in their research design. Unlike previous group efforts, this assignment was truly high stakes. The team’s score on their research report, determined by a rubric, accounted for 40 points toward the possible 100 used in determining each team member’s final grade in one course, and their documentation of research design and implementation accounted for a large portion of each team member’s final grade in their second course.

The pilot study served several purposes, but most importantly as an opportunity for cohort members to conduct authentic research with significant consequences for the team’s performance. In other words, the pilot study mimicked tasks, responsibilities, and processes that cohort members will experience while conducting their group dissertation. Their responses to the prompts on the post-assignment Web-based questionnaire provide interesting glimpses into their new learning.

They found that conducting research as a team “takes a lot of planning to get everything going well” and that an under-performing team “can have a negative effect on [that] research.” Working as an inquiry team “can be more difficult, especially when everyone has outside professional and personal responsibilities.” They discovered that the “workload was not evenly distributed because some members of the team had more skills and knowledge in research methodologies” and that the “insider [member of the team required in RAP] had to assume more organizational responsibilities.”

They discovered that scheduling interviews “can be a huge challenge” and that the need “to communicate to make sure that everyone is on the same page” is critical. They appreciated being able to conduct the pilot study because the “process of actually doing a ‘practice’ study helped [them] to envision what the dissertation will be like.” Although the process was not smooth for some teams, one cohort member described how lessons learned earlier in the program were important when the team experienced problems.

We did a lot of storming and that cost us a least a week, placing greater pressure on time later in the project. I learned that a storming team can also be productive and work together professionally despite differences in style, and to some extent, ethos. I also learned the importance of having agreements in advance on what the responsibilities are, and having norms in place to handle times when team members cannot meet their deadlines.

A peer likewise learned another important lesson about collaborative work.

I think the biggest lesson for me was to see everything from two years come together in a better understanding of what would occur during an actual research report. I was able to work with
some members that I use to have reservations about . . . but learned that judging a book by its cover is sometimes very misleading.

Completing the pilot study forced cohort members to “hold each other accountable” in order to complete the diverse tasks required to implement RAP appropriately, which several teams “successfully completed.”

The post-assignment questionnaire also asked cohort members to reflect about the group dissertation based on their recent experiences as members of inquiry teams. Their responses are generally positive and contain assertions that the group dissertation is “very doable and not as intimidating as” originally thought and will be “an incredible experience.” Their comments reflect understandings about the inherent challenges of collaborative work and their recent discoveries about teamwork.

I am much more comfortable with it now than in the past. I was worried about the group dynamics, especially the idea that I may have to carry someone else. Interestingly, my team carried me when I had to be out for a time during the study. I know that I can count on them. We have each other back, so to speak, and will do a great job.

Another response suggests that one cohort member has given considerable thought about the pros and cons of completing a group dissertation.

I think the group dissertation will allow a more thorough study of an issue by having multiple aspects being researched that are all intertwined and relating back to the issue. [Conducting] different pieces of research and then blending the individual components and concepts back into one cohesive document [will be challenging]. The team for the dissertation has to be able to work with each other for it to be the most successful it can be. The members of the team have to be able to work with, and rely on each other.

References to concerns about who selects dissertation team members appear throughout many responses to the prompt, particularly because they understand from experience that team composition can have considerable impact on “a high-stakes document like a dissertation as a group project.” That truth became evident when their group-developed, pilot-study reports were returned after review and evaluation by the course instructor. Team scores ranged 10 points between highest and lowest, which impacted the semester grades for several students whose team effort at writing the research report was not as successful as others.

Participant Perspectives

Based on multiple data sources (e.g., student responses to multiple post-assignment assessments, co-authored conference papers about their program experiences, cohort-wide electronic mail exchanges in which they include program faculty), the EdD students have developed collaborative relationships throughout the cohort experience. These relationships emerged most notably during required group inquiry projects and have resulted in the production of tentative team groupings for the dissertation. These student-formed groups, however, may or may not reflect the best team assignments for the diverse tasks required for completion of a dissertation, which is indeed a high-stakes enterprise. Further, some individuals within the cohort have not been invited into these fledgling groups, which is a tension that must be addressed.
Several cohort members entered the program with specific ideas about their dissertation topics. Over time those original ideas about what they thought they would study have evolved as they have learned from each other’s diverse perspectives and from their study of research in the field. This development reflects a more sophisticated understanding of broad research topic areas, such as transfer, and a more contextualized understanding of specific policy questions, such as placement-examination procedures.

As a result, the topics proposed by the system administration and the students’ current interests are well aligned. In some ways this provides further evidence that the students have reached a maturity in their knowledge of the field that they are now operating as emerging leaders rather than novices.

**Closing Thoughts: Needed Next Steps**

The upcoming semester, which is the final phase of coursework, offers a series of challenges that must be addressed by the program faculty as well as their colleagues in both partnering departments in the college of education. A primary task will be reconciling personal druthers on team formation with needs of the whole cohort. Two pilot study teams worked especially well and have already been thinking about their dissertation topic and possible individual components. Dismantling those teams could prove to be counterproductive to their forward progress. Conversely, those teams may not have the requisite expertise to meet the challenges of conducting a complex study such as the group dissertation.

A second task is the identification and remediation of any remaining methodological deficiencies so that each individual is fully prepared to successfully complete their inquiry project. Many cohort-based EdD programs, including this one, require students to take specific research courses as an intact group, rather than give students freedom to select courses to meet their individual needs. It is not yet known what impact that programmatic change will have on doctoral students until they begin developing their group and individual research proposals.

Because the client-oriented group dissertation is a new concept for faculty in the college of education, the procedures required to facilitate development of both the team projects and the individual inquiry objectives are not yet known. How group dissertations impact faculty-advising responsibilities is likewise unknown. Further, because cohort members live in locales across the state, what may be needed to ease logistical barriers caused by geographic distance and professional obligations that restrict availability of team members is not yet known. These unknowns, as well as others that may yet be revealed, can potentially create ambiguity and confusion about who is responsible for handling the resolution of the unknowns.

Finally, the overarching purpose for this partnership EdD program is preparing potential candidates for leadership positions in the statewide system of community and technical colleges. The true test of the efficacy of the proposed group dissertation will depend on the student’s ability to resolve issues themselves without undue interference or overbearing support from the faculty, while at the same time sustain the important collegial relationships they have formed with their peers—with whom they will continue to work long after they complete the program.

**References**


