

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL
LEADER PREPARATION IN ILLINOIS COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Recent reports on the quality of school leader preparation for our nation's K-12 schools have created a critical mass of attention on the need to improve higher education programs that prepare educational leaders. America's schools of education are on the verge of a national movement in which they must either justify and defend their current practices and programs, or transform the way school leaders are prepared. This item calls for the establishment of a commission that will review and evaluate the findings and recommendations of national reports on school leader preparation, examine how school leaders are prepared in Illinois, and propose strategies that the Board of Higher Education can adopt to improve school leader preparation programs throughout the state. The item outlines a five-point charge to the commission to be completed by December 2005

Action Requested: That the Board of Higher Education establish The Commission on School Leader Preparation in Illinois Colleges & Universities, and charge the commission to examine and formulate policy recommendations that address the issues outlined in this item.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL
LEADER PREPARATION IN ILLINOIS COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**

Background

Recent reports on the quality of school leader preparation for our nation's K-12 schools have created a critical mass of attention on the need to improve higher education programs that prepare educational leaders. These reports have captured the attention and concern of policy-makers, practitioners, scholars, the media and the general public.

The most recent of such reports, *Educating School Leaders* (Levine, 2005), critically examines programs that prepare future and train current principals and superintendents. Based on surveys of deans, faculty, and alumni of America's schools of education, as well as surveys of principals in the school systems and case studies of individual schools, Levine's study examines the way that education administration programs operate and what kinds of internal organizational and external environmental incentives shape their curriculum and strategies. The report concluded that school leader preparation programs are in curricular disarray, disconnected from what is needed to run a school or school system. Programs are also charged with having low admissions and graduation standards, weak faculty, poor research, inadequate clinical instruction, and an inappropriate degree/credentialing structure for the school leader profession. *Educating School Leaders'* recommendations include:

- Eliminating the incentives that promote low quality in educational leadership programs
- Enacting high standards and, when necessary, closing inadequate programs
- Redesigning curricula and degree options to make them more relevant to the needs of contemporary principals and superintendents

America's schools of education are on the verge of a national movement in which they must either justify and defend their current practices and programs, or transform the way school leaders are prepared.

**Establishment of the Commission on
School Leader Preparation in Illinois Colleges & Universities**

Staff recommends establishment of the Commission on School Leader Preparation in Illinois Colleges and Universities. Currently there are 26 colleges and universities in Illinois that provide graduate instruction in education administration. From 1990-2004, 14,162 students received master's degrees and 1,236 received doctoral degrees from these programs. The purpose of the Commission is to consider and evaluate the findings and recommendations of *Educating School Leaders*, examine how school leaders are prepared in Illinois, and propose strategies that the Board of Higher Education, higher

education institutions and other appropriate state agencies can adopt to improve school leader preparation programs throughout the state.

This commission will be charged to do the following:

1. Review and evaluate the findings and recommendations of recent reports on school leader preparation to provide a context for examining school leader preparation in Illinois, taking *Educating School Leaders* as a focal point, and pulling in material from other reports as deemed necessary.
2. Examine how school leaders are prepared in Illinois, identifying and analyzing data from available sources, and commissioning new research as deemed necessary, for the purposes of understanding program quality, recruitment practices, admissions and graduation standards, curricular relevance and bloat; quality of clinical experiences, internships and mentoring; and the appropriateness of the degree/credentialing sequence.
3. Examine how external influences impact school leader preparation programs, including regulatory, reporting, and other accountability requirements; program demand; program funding sources; and college or university policies and practices.
4. Analyze findings and determine what is working satisfactorily in school leader preparation, what needs improvement, what could be changed, redesigned or eliminated, and what might be added.
5. Develop a final report for the Board of Higher Education on each of the above items, recommending strategies that the Board, State Board of Education, district and institutions might adopt to improve school leader preparation programs, as well as areas and issues that should be examined by this or other working groups charged by the Board. A preliminary report should be submitted to the Board at its December 2005 meeting, identifying the status of the commission's work; and the final report should be submitted at the Board's spring 2006 meeting.

Staff recommends that an organizational meeting of the commission be held to review the charge and outline a work plan and timeline for completing the above.

Composition of the Commission

Given that the process of preparing school leaders involves many shareholder and stakeholders, staff recommends that the composition of the commission reflect this shared accountability, and include a cross-section of leaders from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois State board of Education, public and private colleges and universities, civic organizations and special interest groups. Staff recommends that this commission be co-chaired by:

- Dianne Ashby, Interim Vice President of University Advancement, Illinois State University
- Cordelia Meyer, member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and Executive Vice President of the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club.

Recommendation

Staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

The Board of Higher Education hereby establishes the Commission on School Leader Preparation in Illinois Colleges and Universities, and charges the commission to examine and address the issues outlined in this item.

