

Aspiring Leaders Academy: A Partnership between Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University, and University of Alabama Educational Leadership Programs

by

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Abstract

This study explores a partnership between two university educational leadership programs and a statewide principal association, specifically focusing on its alignment with a partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). The study addresses the gaps in the literature on partnerships with associations and the need for frameworks for building and maintaining partnerships in education.

A qualitative case study method approach was selected to examine the perceived experiences of those who participated in the university/professional association partnership. In-depth interviews will be conducted to gather a thick, rich description of the partnership and perceptions of those involved in the partnership between CLAS Directors and Auburn and Alabama Educational Leadership faculty. The study's participants represented the organizations involved in the partnership: the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program. The researcher assessed the alignment of partnership participants' perceptions with the characteristics outlined in this model. The intent was to provide insight into the AU/ UA and CLAS partnership and identify its outcomes and benefits for the individuals and organizations involved.

Findings from an analysis of data sources, including interviews, agendas, participant feedback, and observation, resulted in emerging themes that led to a sustainable partnership. The findings from this study provide practical implications for educational leaders charged with developing partnerships. This study highlights the people involved as the key to the partnership's success. The data analysis revealed that the partnership participants' perceptions align with the characteristics outlined in the Reames and Kochan model (2021). Data showed the importance of

collaboration and connectedness. Insight into the AU/ UA and CLAS partnership identified two factors contributing to the partnership's success: continuous improvement and acknowledging external factors and constraints. Reames and Kochan (2021) could consider adding two components to their model: continual improvement and external factors and constraints. Continual improvement is a priority for the partnership participants as they have high expectations for themselves and the partnership and continually revise and reflect as part of the improvement process. Partnership participants anticipate external factors and constraints and are prepared to work around them. The findings from this case study will help fill the gap in the literature on partnerships with associations and the need for frameworks for building and maintaining partnerships in education.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Tables	12
List of Figures	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	14
Statement of the Problem.....	21
Purpose.....	22
Context.....	22
The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)	22
History.....	23
Mission.....	23
Structure	23
Auburn University	24
History.....	24
Educational Leadership Program.....	24
Vision	25
Mission.....	25
University of Alabama.....	25
History.....	25
Vision	26
Mission.....	26
Educational Leadership Program.....	26

Rationale for Partnership	27
Conceptual Framework.....	27
Research Questions.....	29
Significance of the Study	30
Delimitations.....	31
Assumptions.....	31
Definition of Terms.....	32
Summary.....	33
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	34
Purpose of the Study	34
Organization and Terms.....	34
National Reform Movement in Education.....	36
The State of Alabama: Specific Responses to National Reform	37
Overview of Standards for School Leaders	40
Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).....	42
National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards	42
Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership	43
Emphasis on Partnerships in Current Standards	44
Benefits of Partnerships in Leadership Preparation.....	45
Frameworks for Building and Sustaining Partnerships	47
Factors Contributing to Partnership Success or Failure.....	51
Relational and Human Resources Frame.....	51
Organizational Structures and Political/Symbolic Frame.....	55

Operational and Structural Frame.....	58
Dynamics of Learning Partnerships.....	60
The Role of Collaboration in Building Stronger Partnerships.....	62
Research on Partnerships with Professional Associations.....	65
Partnership Between CLAS and Educational Leadership Partners	70
Conclusion	72
Chapter 3: Methodology	74
Research Design.....	75
Data Collection	76
Data Analysis	77
Research Questions.....	78
Assumptions.....	78
Researcher’s Position.....	79
Participants.....	79
Credibility	79
Ethical Considerations	80
Limitations	81
Significance.....	81
Summary.....	82
Chapter 4: Findings	83
Data Collection	83
Research Questions.....	85
Participants.....	86

Research Question One: Alignment of the Reames and Kochan Model (2021)	87
Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice	88
Collaboration.....	89
Relational Factors, Organizational Structures, and Operational Processes	89
Relational Factors (Themes).....	92
Organizational Structures (Themes)	100
Operational Processes (Themes).....	115
Connectedness.....	127
Research Question Two: Facilitating Factors of the Partnership’s Success	128
Meta-Theme: People and Relationships	130
Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission, and Goals.....	135
Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure.....	138
Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement.....	142
Research Question Three: Factors That Hinder the Partnership.....	143
Meta-Theme: External Factors and Constraints	145
Legislation.....	145
Funding	145
Time	146
Geographic Location.....	146
Number of Participants	147
Differences in Requirements for Professors	148
Administrative Support.....	150
Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure.....	150

Turnover.....	150
Requirements for Outreach and Service	151
Need Administrative Support to Participate	151
Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership	152
Balance of Power/Pecking Order.....	152
Summary.....	155
Chapter 5: Discussion	157
Summary of the Study	157
Research Questions.....	158
Review of Methodology	159
Significance of the Study	160
Delimitations.....	161
Assumptions.....	161
Major Findings Related to Literature and Interpretations.....	162
Alignment of the Reames and Kochan Model (2021)	162
Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice	164
Collaboration.....	165
Relational Factors, Organizational Structures, and Operational Processes	165
Relational Factors (Themes).....	165
Organizational Structures (Themes)	166
Operational Processes (Themes).....	167
Connectedness.....	169
Facilitation Factors of the Partnership’s Success.....	169

Meta-Theme: People and Relationships Are Facilitators	170
Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission, and Goals Are Facilitators.....	170
Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure Are Facilitators.....	170
Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement is a Facilitator.....	171
Factors That Hinder the Partnership	172
Meta-Theme: External Factors and Constraints	172
Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure.....	173
Frameworks for Partnership Development	175
Overlap of Reames and Kochan Model with Bolman and Deal's	177
Meta-Theme: People and Relationships	179
Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission, and Goals.....	180
Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure.....	181
Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement.....	182
Implications for Future Research and Application	184
Final Thoughts and Conclusions.....	185
References.....	188
Appendix A Institutional Review Board Approval	204

List of Tables

Table 1 Leadership Standards: Purposes and Intended Audiences.....	41
Table 2 Source of Qualitative Data.....	86
Table 3 Partnership Participants: Roles and Data Collection Methods	86
Table 4 Themes Leading to Broad Categories (Meta-Themes)	91
Table 5 Relational Factors (Themes).....	93
Table 6 Organizational Structures (Themes)	97
Table 7 Operational Processes (Themes).....	110
Table 8 Factors That Facilitate and Contribute to the Partnership’s Success.....	128
Table 9 Factors That Kinder Partnership Success	144
Table 10 Areas of Overlap in Meta-Themes, Reames and Kochan’s Model (2021) and Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames	177

List of Figures

Figure 1 Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice (Reames & Kochan, 2021).....	28
Figure 2 Partnership Development Model.....	48
Figure 3 A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation.....	49
Figure 4 Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice.....	88
Figure 5 Reames and Kochan Partnership Framework (2021).....	163
Figure 6 Meta-Themes That Facilitate or Hinder the Partnership	164
Figure 7 Model with the Addition of Continuous Improvement	171
Figure 8 Model with the Addition of External Factors and Constraints.....	175
Figure 9 Addition of Two Components to the Model.....	176
Figure 10 Model with the Overlap of Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames	179
Figure 11 Overlap of Findings.....	183

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Producing deep improvement that lasts and spreads remains an elusive goal of most educational change efforts.” (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2007, p. 5)

During the first decade of the 21st Century, educational reform efforts were focused on improving students’ performance on standardized tests (Hallinger & Huber, 2012). After the turn of the century, however, policymakers in the United States shifted their focus from increasing student achievement as their primary goal to developing effective school leaders through policies, standards, and partnerships that positively impact student learning. The thinking was that this would eventually result in improving all aspects of schooling, which in turn, would enhance student performance.

The demands placed on K-12 school and university leaders increased with the reformation. “Recent research on school leadership articulates what many educators already know too well: The school principal position is increasingly demanding, and most university-led training doesn’t fully prepare candidates for all of the position’s challenges” (Paul, 2022, p. 67). The expectation for principals to assume the role of instructional leaders coupled with the requirements for engaging in school/university partnerships required many to take a closer look at professional development and leadership preparation programs. The Wallace Foundation (2006) took an active role in supporting these notions and stated,

The federal No Child Left Behind law and state-level accountability rules have placed principals squarely on the front lines in the struggle to ensure that every child succeeds as a learner. The result, in more and more districts, is that if principals merely perform as competent managers, but not as engaged instructional leaders who can develop effective

teams in their schools to drive sustained improvements in teaching and learning in every classroom, they do so at the risk of their jobs. (p. 1)

Thus, school leaders were tasked with improving instruction as their primary focus, while also managing the daily tasks of running a school. Researchers Smylie & Murphy (2018) encouraged higher ed institutions to acknowledge their role in “bringing other entities together around the work of the standards, leveraging partnerships, and bridging and boundary spanning” (p.28).

In 2002, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) developed six indicators to help states prepare a system for developing and supporting principals. The six indicators were the following: recruit and select future school leaders, redesign principal preparation programs to emphasize curriculum and instruction and student learning, develop programs with school-based experiences that prepare participants to lead school improvement, base professional-level licensure on improved school and classroom practices, create alternative pathways to initial licensure, and provide training and support for leadership teams in low-performing schools. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) examined and analyzed state standards for school principals and reports from the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Wallace Foundation. SREB (2004) reported on *Progress Being Made in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School* that Alabama, Maryland and Texas were the only three states out of the sixteen states in the SREB that had standards that focused on student learning. However, they noted that there was room for improvement because only 41% of Alabama’s standards were centered on student learning (Southern Regional Education Board, 2004).

The reformation of school leaders in Alabama, the state in which this case study occurred, began in 2004 with the creation of the Governor’s Congress on School Leadership. The Governor’s Congress, appointed by former Governor Bob Riley and the former State

Superintendent of Schools, Joseph B. Morton, convened for the first time on November 30, 2004. Over two hundred educators, legislators, and delegates from across Alabama were divided into five task forces that would align standards, preparation of school leaders, certification, professional development, and incentives. The two most critical tasks were developing standards for instructional leadership and revamping the preparation of school leaders. The task forces submitted a report summarizing key findings and initiatives to the Office of the Governor and the State Board of Education for their approval. Included in the report were guidelines for instructional leadership programs, the Standards for Instructional Leaders, and a requirement for universities to engage in partnerships with schools and school systems in the development and implementation of leadership preparation programs. Alabama's Governor and the State Board of Education adopted eight standards of effective leadership in May 2005 and mandated that universities restructure their educational leadership programs around the following:

Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement

Standard 2: Teaching and Learning

Standard 3: Human Resource Development

Standard 4: Diversity

Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships

Standard 6: Technology

Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization

Standard 8: Ethics

“Redesigning Alabama’s educational leadership programs was viewed as a direct pathway to creating better school leaders, better schools and fostering enhanced student learning” (ALSDE, 2005, p. 17). The state of Alabama applied for a Wallace Foundation Grant

through a request for proposals to gain resources to restructure and enhance their educational leadership preparation program. Alabama was not one of eighteen states selected to aid in restructuring educational leadership programs in colleges and universities (The Wallace Foundation, 2005). When they were not selected, the state of Alabama worked intensely with the Southern Regional Education Board to develop their own plan for how to engage in redesign. Research from the Wallace Foundation Grant, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was used to guide the reformation of school leadership programs in Alabama.

These instructional leadership standards became a guide for universities to revamp their candidate selection process, their curriculum offerings, and to engage in the creation and implementation of school/university partnerships in the development and implementation of the school leader preparation programs. As a part of the restructuring mandate, instructional leadership programs were required to engage in K–12/university partnerships to guarantee their programs stayed grounded and balanced in both theory and practice as recommended by researchers (Fry et al., 2007). An invitation to pilot the redesigned curriculum and guidelines was extended to all Alabama colleges and universities that had educational leadership programs. Thirteen universities applied and, of those, four institutions were chosen to pilot the redesign and partner with a public-school system. Auburn University applied for and received one of the four grants (Kochan, 2010). Changes in funding and legislation were made to help universities partner with schools to better prepare future school leaders and retain quality principals in every school (Alabama State Department of Education [ALSDE], 2005).

Professional standards often provide a framework for streamlining entities and initiatives for revamping leadership preparation programs. “States that use standards in these

crosscutting ways make them relevant to the varied people and institutions that contribute to pipeline activities, thereby “forcing alignment” between these potentially disparate parts” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019, p. 9). Findings emphasized the importance of state policy makers creating an unobstructed vision and promoting partnerships grounded in common standards. Similarly, Gates et al. (2022) found the following:

A culture of collaboration across the state—where preparation programs, school districts, state and county government officials, and representatives of other education-oriented organizations share best practices—helped spread lessons learned and support changes to state policy cultures. (p. 6)

As noted earlier, the Wallace Foundation (2016) developed an initiative highlighting the significance of collaboration amongst higher ed institutions, districts, states, and programs and aligning standards when revamping or designing principal preparation programs. Seven universities were chosen to participate in the University Principal Preparation Initiative. The following universities had state support through policies designed to improve principal preparation programs: Albany State University (Georgia), Florida Atlantic University, North Carolina State University, San Diego State University, University of Connecticut, Virginia State University, and Western Kentucky University.

After five years of implementation of the Wallace Foundation’s University Principal Preparation Initiative, the RAND Corporation (2022) reviewed the impacts of the initiative. Susan Gates, director of the Office of Research at the RAND Corporation, shared that “Principal preparation is not something that happens discretely within the university. Rather, it is a process that extends across the entire pathway to the principalship in a district before an aspiring leader even enters a program” (Paul, 2022, p.68). The Wallace Foundation (2022) reported that

partnering with universities, school districts, and state and federal agencies is the best way to develop and sustain principal pipelines to better prepare leaders for the 21st century.

“Expanding access to high-quality learning for all principals and aspiring principals requires commitment to robust partnership and access to tools that support program design, implementation, and continuous improvement” (Paul, 2022, p. 70).

Partnerships between schools and universities is important in creating successful leadership preparation and development initiatives because professional organizations play a key role in advancing the principalship (Manna & Jordan, 2022). Professional organizations can also be an important a link between universities and k-12 schools and provide support for school leaders across the state. Peel at al. (1998) noted that “To better prepare future administrators, universities, national professional associations, and schools are working together to develop programs that more appropriately address the tasks encountered by the principal” (p. 27). Fry et al. (2007) found that the “links and partnerships among programs, districts and state agencies are crucial” (p. 27). The University Principal Preparation Initiative partnership at Western Kentucky University included Green River Regional Education Cooperative, superintendents, Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, and Kentucky Department of Education (The Wallace Foundation, 2022). The Green River Regional Education Cooperative (GRREC) served as the liaison and representative for five school districts. GRREC (2023) is a professional organization for educators in South Central Kentucky focused on providing opportunities for all learners and helping develop innovative school systems.

Authors McCarthy and Forsyth (2009) noted that “Many professional organizations are associated with education job categories and institutions, which individually, together in consortia, or in cooperation with foundations have exerted influence and pressure on what we

have called the building blocks of professional preparation” (p. 110). Researchers Manna and Jordan (2022) echoed that sentiment: “When states foster networked partnerships, they promote creative problem solving that can enhance the likelihood of principal initiatives succeeding” (p. 11). Fry et al. (2007) found that “states need assistance from external organizations that can provide information about effective school leadership, help facilitate change and objectively assess progress” (p. 27). Saputra (2021) noted the following:

Professional organizations aim to realize high standards of professionalism and fulfill responsibilities according to the fields they are involved in. In addition, the goal is to achieve high-performance results, expand connections and communication with an orientation to the public interest. (p. 59)

Peel et al. (1998) conducted research on a partnership between Halifax County Schools, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the School of Education at East Carolina University. Together, they formed the Potential Administrator’s Development Program to provide authentic learning experiences. “This project exemplifies the best of both worlds: a school system offered an excellent leadership development program, and a university offered an excellent graduate program. These programs then combined with the expertise of a viable professional organization” (Peel et al., 1998, p. 34). Gail Paul (2022) stated that “A strong learning community has many partners, and, as a collective, we must expand access to excellent learning opportunities for all who aspire to lead our schools into a brighter future” (p. 70).

Professional standards for today’s school leaders implicitly and explicitly state that partnerships and collaboration with internal and external entities are essential. Succession planning for leadership preparation programs is not effective without collaboration amongst partnerships (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Paul, 2022; The Wallace Foundation, 2016). Research

has proven that partnerships are beneficial in preparing aspiring leaders, producing effective leaders, and building better leadership preparation programs (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Hudson 2016; Manna & Jordan, 2022; Reames & Kochan, 2015; Wang, et al., 2018). There is research on how to build successful partnerships between educational entities. There are also some frameworks on building these relationships that help identify elements that contribute to the success or failure of such partnerships (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Hudson 2016; Manna & Jordan, 2022; Reames & Kochan, 2015, Wang, et al., 2018). “Succeeding will depend upon renewed efforts by states and local school districts, giving special attention to the state district nexus this report has highlighted, and further work to recruit into the effort other partners inside and outside government” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019, p. 43). Reames and Kochan (2021) suggest that factors that contribute to initiating and sustaining partnerships are relational, organizational, and operational. Learning partnerships vary depending on the goal or purpose of the partnership (Barnett et al., 2010; Kochan et al., 2021; Wenger, 2009). Kochan et al. (2021) found in communities of practice that “evidence suggests a K-12 school/district’s internal learning partnerships will become stronger when collaboration can flourish” (p. 348).

Statement of the Problem

According to the findings and citations above, research indicates that school/university partnerships in educational leadership are beneficial. There is not, however, a strong body of research that guides those wishing to form and sustain partnerships between educational leadership programs in universities and professional organizations for principals, focused on enhancing and supporting educational leaders. This study seeks to add to the body of literature on this type of relationship and its value by examining the factors that facilitate and hinder one

such partnership and by testing a research-based model for building a sustainable collaborative partnership between two universities and a state association of principals.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to add to the literature about partnership development in educational leadership by investigating a partnership between two university educational leadership programs and a statewide principals' association. "Recent research on school leadership articulates what many educators already know too well: The school principal position is increasingly demanding, and most university-led training doesn't fully prepare candidates for all of the position's challenges" (Paul, 2022, p. 67). This study aimed to examine the elements that foster and hinder the success of this partnership and the degree to which this partnership reflected the elements of creating partnerships as proposed by Reames and Kochan (2021).

Context

The three organizations represented in the partnership are the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University's (AU) Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's (UA) Educational Leadership Program. This section provides an introduction, history, and overview of each organization.

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) is a professional association for school leaders. The organization's name evolved since its inception in 1969. The group was first known as the Alabama Council of School Administrators (ACSA) and then in 1971 became the Alabama Council for School Administration and Supervision (ACSAS). In 1998, the association's name changed to the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS).

History

The Alabama teachers' association changed directions in 1969, and the need for a professional association for school administrators became apparent. Alabama school leaders recognized the need for an organization that focused on “children, professional development and the needs of school administrators” (CLAS, 2024, History Heading). A constitution was adopted in 1971 to form the professional organization known as the Alabama Council of School Administrators (ACSA).

Mission

“The mission of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) is to coordinate and facilitate the resources of all members for the advancement of public education” (Council for School Leaders in Alabama, 2024, Mission).

Structure

CLAS offers membership to school leaders and aspiring school leaders across the state of Alabama. The affiliated organizations serve as additional support for members through professional learning conferences and networking opportunities. “As an umbrella, CLAS provides professional development, communications, legal support, legislative lobbying, recognition and more to all members” (CLAS, 2024). Members can join national organizations like the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) and the Association of Career and Technical Administrators (ACTA), which extend the number of networking opportunities (CLAS, 2024, Structure Heading).

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) plays a significant role in public education in Alabama. It supports Alabama's instructional leaders through professional learning, legal services, podcasts, publications, and book summaries. “As Alabama's premier school leader

organization, CLAS represents over 4,000 members. We work every day to help improve K-12 public education by providing exemplary services for administrators” (CLAS, 2024, About Us Heading). “CLAS has over 4,270 members throughout the state of Alabama and provided more than 35 professional learning and network opportunities” (CLAS, 2024, Membership Heading).

Auburn University

History

Auburn University is in Auburn, Alabama. Their website (<https://auburn.edu/about/>) provides a wealth of information about the University’s history. Roots can be traced as far back as 1856 and to the East Alabama Male College and the Methodist Church. The college was closed because of the Civil War from 1861 to 1866. Following the war and due to financial constraints, the Methodist church gave legal control of the college to the state in 1872. It became the first land-grant institution in the South. Known as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama, it was established as an independent university not affiliated with the state university system. In 1892, women were admitted and the name changed to Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1899. In 1960, the Alabama Legislature granted university status, and it became part of the state’s university system. The institution experienced its fourth name change and officially acquired the name Auburn University in 1960. More than thirty thousand students are currently enrolled, a majority of which are Alabama residents.

Educational Leadership Program

Auburn University’s educational leadership program prepares K-12 instructional leaders and administrators. Their goal is to prepare engaged, collaborative, and effective administrators. "Our Administration of Elementary and Secondary Education program prepares engaged, collaborative, and effective administrators by integrating theory, reflection, and applied

leadership” (Auburn University, 2024, Educational Heading). There are seven faculty members in the department.

Vision

Auburn University strives to be a leader in higher education and mold its future (Auburn University, 2024, Vision Heading).

Mission

Auburn University’s goal is to better the people of Alabama, our nation, and the world by enhancing the quality of education through research, community service, and rich learning opportunities that prepare students for the future (Auburn University, 2024, Mission Heading).

Auburn University strives to be among the best land-grant universities by excelling in three responsibilities; educating students and preparing them for life, driving the development of research and scholarship that creates and advances knowledge, and transforming the fruits of research to maximize their impact on Alabama and the world. (Auburn University, 2023, Strategic Plan Heading)

University of Alabama

History

The University of Alabama is in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In 1827, Tuscaloosa was the state’s capital, so it was chosen as the University’s home. It is the state of Alabama’s oldest public university. Established in 1820 as ‘a seminary of learning’ and named “The University of the State of Alabama,” the institution’s goal is to better the state by enhancing the knowledge and social awareness of students through the program design that is steeped in theory, practice and servant leadership (University of Alabama, 2024, History Heading).

Vision

The University's vision is to provide quality learning opportunities for its students, to excel in academia and research, to better the communities of Alabama and to make an impact worldwide (University of Alabama, 2024, Vision Heading).

Mission

The University of Alabama strives to better the people in Alabama, in the United States and worldwide through theory, learning, and service (University of Alabama, 2024, Mission Heading).

Educational Leadership Program

The University of Alabama's educational leadership program's mission is to 'to prepare ethical and reflective practitioners, researchers, and scholars for work in K-12, higher education, and other educational settings' (University of Alabama, 2024, Educational Heading). Their program applies research to best practices for P-12 administrators. "They foster high quality independent and critical inquiry into educational ideas and issues and provide candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to function as scholarly, ethical, and reflective decision makers" (University of Alabama, 2024, Educational Heading). They encourage students to be independent, critical thinkers and equip them with theory and practice to make decisions. The educational leadership program strives to enhance education regionally, statewide and nationally and to make an impact by developing leaders that are socially aware, grounded in theory, and apply their learning to better the field of education. The program partners with local, state, national professional associations, and educational organizations to discuss and improve schools. There are seven faculty members in the program. Three of the faculty members were involved in the partnership in this research study.

Rationale for Partnership

The partnership between the educational leadership programs at AU, UA, and CLAS began with the creation of an aspiring leaders' program. All three organizations share unifying visions of educating aspiring leaders and enhancing educational leadership across the state of Alabama. The official program name is the Aspiring School Leaders Academy:

The Academy is designed with content to support aspiring school leaders in attaining the essential skills and practice needed to advance to the next level of leadership and is composed of 2 in-person and 4 virtual meetings held October 2023 to May 2024. (CLAS, 2024)

The CLAS *Professional Learning Guide* (2021-2022) provides the following description of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy:

Ready to move to the next level? This conference, led by faculty and staff from the University of Alabama and Auburn University, strives to provide aspiring administrators with an awareness of the unique characteristics and comprehensive dimensions of the principalship. Program content follows NAESP's 21st Century Principalship...Getting the Job Done Right. Hear from practicing instructional leaders as they share realistic views of daily tasks and responsibilities of administrators.

Topics also include tips for applying, interviewing, and preparing for an administrative role.

Conceptual Framework

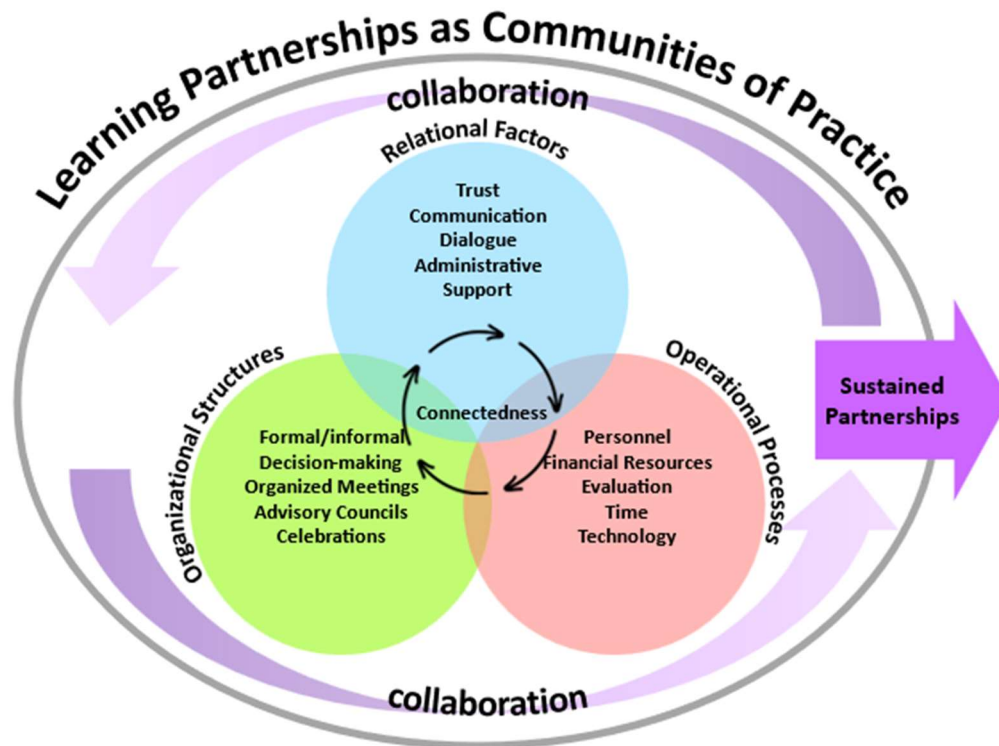
The Reames and Kochan model (2021) was used as a conceptual framework for the study. I was particularly interested in the relational, organizational, and operational processes. I was looking for whether this partnership reflects this model, and whether components of the

framework created by Reames and Kochan (2021) exist in the partnership between CLAS and the educational leadership programs at Auburn University and University of Alabama.

The Reames and Kochan’s (2021) model “brings leadership preparation programs together with K-12 schools/districts and other educational agencies” (Reames & Kochan, 2021, p. 345). The figure below depicts the elements of the theoretical framework for learning partnerships as communities of practice. It contains three elements within a collaborative framework. These consist of relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes.

Figure 1

Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice (Reames & Kochan, 2021)



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

The outer circle of the Reames and Kochan (2021) model provides a space for learning and collaboration to occur internally or externally. Collaboration between partners is the key to developing sustainable partnerships. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's Theory of Connectedness implies that the most effective learning happens when partners interactively use resources to enhance cohesion within their own organizations and to strengthen connections with external partners (Jankowski, 2020). The primary components—relational factors, operational processes, and organizational structures—must be reciprocal and the strength of connectedness between organizations determines whether the partnership will flourish or flounder. Relational factors that contribute to the success and sustainability of partnerships include trust, communication, and administrative support. Organizational structures that impact the development and sustainability of partnerships include formal agreements, decision making processes, advisory councils, celebrations, and scheduled meetings. Operational processes include the evaluation and implementation of adequate resources for personnel and financial and technological needs that impact the organizations and partnership. I aimed to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the characteristics outlined in this model.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. In what manner, if any, does the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describe the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
2. What factors do partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between

educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?

3. What factors do partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?

I wanted a thick, rich description of the partnership and perceptions of those involved in the partnership between CLAS Directors and AU and UA Educational Leadership faculty; therefore, a qualitative case study methodology was selected to examine the perceived experiences of those who participated in the university/professional association partnership. This method was chosen because a case study is appropriate when “a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, p.13).

Significance of the Study

School leaders have a powerful influence on school and student success (Southern Regional Education Board, 2006; The Wallace Foundation, 2009). There is a body of evidence that school/university partnerships can influence the quality of educational leaders' preparation and development (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Levin et al., 2020; Peel et al., 1998; Ungarean et al., 2023; Wenger et al., 2002). Although professional organizations have a role to play in the preparation and development of school leaders (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Peel et al., 1998), there is scant research on partnerships between educational leadership preparation programs and these professional organizations. This research study, which sought to gain insights into the workings of a partnership between CLAS and AU and UA Leadership Programs sought to aid in filling in that research gap. The participants in this

study have been partners for seven years. The length of the partnership should provide adequate qualitative data for studying the implementation, impact and sustainability processes of this partnership, which are all of importance when examining the value of educational partnerships (Fullan, 2008).

As the demands placed on school leaders increase and expectations seem insurmountable, partnerships between professional associations and universities may become more valuable and necessary for equipping school leaders to face the challenges of the principalship. This case study adds to the literature on this topic, adds to the body of research for the educational leadership field, and is of interest to anyone seeking to create similar partnerships in other fields.

The perceptions of the partnership were checked for alignment against the Reames Kochan model (2021). Testing the value and validity of this model should be of value to researchers seeking to foster high quality educational leadership development programs and add value to the body of research in this area of study as a whole.

Delimitations

Factors that narrow the scope of this study include:

1. This case study only investigated the partnership of one professional organization and its partnership with two university educational leadership programs.
2. I am a student in one of the educational leadership programs, so subjectivity or bias could be a limitation.
3. I used the experiences of two professors and a professional association from one state so the findings may not be generalized to all states.

Assumptions

I made the following assumptions regarding this study:

1. Each participant is or was an active member of the partnership process.
2. Participants provided answers that were truthful and gave accurate depictions of their perceptions of the partnership.
3. Participants were not pressured to provide sensitive information relative to partnership development at their university or organization.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration—a method for solving shared problems and resolving conflicts (Gray, 1989, p. 6).

Communities of Practice—foster deep learning among the partners (Kochan et al. 2021)

Educational/Instructional Leadership Program—refers to the preparation programs that prepare graduate students for the principalship

Learning Partnerships—refers to equals that share a common goal of learning from one another.

Saltiel (1998) found that “the following elements must exist between partners to create synergy: trust, a shared goal, respect, loyalty, and compatible personalities” (p. 8).

Partnerships—an alliance of resources and expertise between organizations (Barnett et al., 2010, pp. 14–15) to achieve a mutually desired outcome, one that is not likely to be realized without the involvement of both agencies.

Professional Association/Organization—refers to an association or organization for educators that strives to better the profession.

School Leaders—refers to educational leaders/principals who have completed a graduate program and hold leadership certification.

University/Association Partnerships—for this study's purpose defined as partnerships between higher education institutions and professional associations.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the study of the partnership between the educational leadership programs at AU and UA and CLAS, a principal leadership association. I introduced the study, its purpose and context, the conceptual framework, the research questions, the significance of the inquiry, delimitations, assumptions, and definitions of key terms. The next chapter, Chapter 2, contains a review of the literature and related research. Chapter 3 provides the methodology, description of the participants, data collection procedures, and the data analysis design. Chapter 4 contains a summary of the results of the data analysis. The final chapter, Chapter 5, contains a summary and discussion of my findings and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to the creation, development, and implementation of partnerships in educational leadership preparation and development programs and the factors which influence their success or failure. Research has demonstrated that such partnerships are beneficial, but there is a limited amount of research on how to build these partnerships successfully and only a few frameworks for engaging in successful collaborative endeavors (Appley & Winder, 1977; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Reames & Kochan, 2015; Scribner, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

There is a gap in literature regarding partnerships between educational leadership programs and professional organizations and there is also a need for research on the processes and frameworks for building and maintaining successful partnerships between these two groups. The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore a partnership between the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and Educational Leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA). The researcher also examined the extent to which this partnership reflects the components of partnership framework created by Reames & Kochan (2021)

Organization and Terms

This literature review consists of five sections that provide relevant research on educational leadership program partnerships and why they are essential in education. The chapter begins with an introduction, an overview of partnerships and the organization of the literature review. In the next section, the a broad view of educational reform from a national perspective is presented then narrows the focus to reform efforts in the State of Alabama. Section three

provides a look at three sets of professional standards with an emphasis on current partnerships standards. The following section provides research on frameworks for partnerships and an analysis of relational, organizational, and operational systems that cause partnerships to flourish or flounder. The final section includes a review of existing research on partnerships between educational leadership programs and professional associations. The chapter concludes with a description of the partnership between CLAS and educational leadership program partners at Auburn University and the University of Alabama.

Terms used in this literature review which may require clarification are partnership, communities of practice, learning partnerships and collaboration. Partnerships are difficult to define because the term describes diverse types of arrangements in a variety of settings. Reames & Kochan (2015) describe the dilemma of narrowing down the definition as “elusive, in large part because the parties involved will define it according to the present stage of its development (p. 244).” Korach et al. (2012) defines partnership as any type of relationship that is on the spectrum of collaboration. The definition of partnership for the purposes of this study is “an alliance of resources and expertise between organizations to achieve a mutually desired outcome, one that is not likely to be realized without the involvement of both parties” (Barnett et al. 2010, p. 14). Learning partnerships and communities of practice are also referred to in this literature review. Kochan et al. (2021) found that communities of practice foster deep learning among the partners. Saltiel and Sgroi (1996) distinguished learning partnerships from collaborative partnerships as “equals that share a common goal of learning from one another.” Another term used in this study is collaboration or “a method for solving shared problems and resolving conflicts” (Gray, 1989, p. 6).

The researcher also uses the following terms in this study: educational/instructional leadership program, professional association/organization, school leaders, and university/association partnerships. Educational/instructional leadership program refers to the preparation programs that prepare graduate students for the principalship. Professional association/organization refers to an association or organization for educators that strives to better the profession. School leaders refers to educational leaders/principals who have completed a graduate program and hold leadership certification. This study's purpose defines university/association partnerships as partnerships between higher education institutions and professional associations.

National Reform Movement in Education

The Reagan administration was a pivotal force behind educational reform efforts to improve public schools when the National Commission on Excellence in Education was founded in 1981. This commission released a report (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*) in April 1983 that exposed the need for educational reform in the United States. The push for a better quality of education led many states to develop standards and accountability methods. Other reform efforts that followed include President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (2002), which required states to increase the quality of education for all students. In 2002, the Southern Regional Education Board began to develop policies and modules for states to replicate best practices to improve education. As a part of this educational reform effort, the Wallace Foundation (2005) created a national initiative called *Request for Proposals* to help colleges and universities revamp their principal preparation programs. The State of Alabama applied for a Wallace Foundation Grant but was not one of eighteen states selected (The Wallace Foundation, 2005).

In 2008, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) created standards for developing school leaders that would impact student achievement and enhance student learning (The Wallace Foundation, 2009). Snider et al. (2007) stated, “Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation has supported a range of efforts aimed at significantly improving student learning by strengthening the standards, the training and the performance of education leaders along with the conditions and incentives that affect their success — long a neglected area of school reform” (p. 3). Research, guidelines and best practices from the Wallace Foundation, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) became a guide for the reformation of Alabama’s school leadership programs.

The State of Alabama: Specific Responses to National Reform

The Alabama Governor’s Congress on School Leadership was established in 2004 by then Governor Bob Riley to refine Alabama’s leadership preparation programs with the goal of developing instructional leaders and not just school administrators. Dr. Joseph Morton, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) State Superintendent of Education, Governor Bob Riley, other state department officials, politicians, coordinators of ed leadership programs and local educational agencies (LEAs) worked together to redesign educational leadership programs. The stated goal was, “Redesigning leadership preparation is a direct pathway to better schools, but it is vitally important that states not waste their efforts on implementing piecemeal strategies or flawed plans for re-design” (ALSDE, 2005, p. 17). Research on leadership from the Wallace Foundation Grant, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was used to guide the Congress to improve Alabama’s educational leadership programs.

The Governor's Congress report charged University Educational Program Coordinators to shift the focus of educational leadership programs from developing school administrators to developing instructional leaders (ALSDE, 2005). Changes in funding and legislation helped universities partner with schools to better prepare future school leaders. The Alabama Governor's Congress on School Leadership released a report in 2005, that outlined the following: 1) standards for preparing and developing principals as instructional leaders, 2) selection and preparation of leaders, 3) certification of school leaders, 4) professional development to support instructional leaders, and 5) incentives and working conditions to attract and retain a quality principal in every school (Alabama State Department of Education [ALSDE], 2005). Alabama's Governor and the State Board of Education adopted eight standards of effective leadership in May 2005. Alabama's Standards for Instructional Leaders charged administrators across the State with "enhancing school leadership among principals and administrators in Alabama resulting in improved academic achievement for all students (Alabama Learning Exchange, 2016)."

Instructional leaders will be held to the following standards:

Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement

Standard 2: Teaching and Learning

Standard 3: Human Resource Development

Standard 4: Diversity

Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships

Standard 6: Technology

Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization

Standard 8: Ethics

Once the Alabama Governor's Congress on School Leadership's report was accepted by the governor and approved by the State School Board, the recommendations mandated that universities redesign educational leadership programs based on the new standards and requirements. "The Alabama State Board of Education in 2005 adopted and disseminated a set of performance assessment guidelines for university leadership programs and a significant component of the new standards was the requirement of university/K-12 partnerships to support the preparation of leadership candidates" (Reames, 2010, p. 437). This increased the expectations and demands placed on all school leaders. States across the country mandated that higher ed institutions redesign their programs to include establishing partnerships with K-12 schools to make educational leadership programs more relevant (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Fry, Bottoms & Walker, 2007; Gates et al., 2022; Hudson, 2016; Reames, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2005). The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) required all thirteen universities and colleges to redesign their educational leadership programs by 2008 to align with the new Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders (ALSDE, 2016). The Alabama State Board of Education offered a competitive grant process for colleges or universities that were willing to participate as pilot programs in the re-design process. "Auburn University's grant proposal was approved on November 15, 2005" (Reames, 2010, p. 437). The four university programs that piloted the redesign are Auburn University, Samford University in Birmingham, the University of Montevallo and the University of South Alabama in Mobile. An important aspect of the redesign was creating school/university partnerships. It was believed that these partnerships could benefit school leaders tasked with so many demands help schools to be viewed as an integral part of the larger community and also enable university personnel to develop and

implement educational leadership preparation programs that would be more closely connected to the needs of school administrators and the schools and students they served.

Efforts to reform the educational system in Alabama are ongoing. Alabama's Commission on Teaching and Learning, established by Governor Kay Ivey, released a report on December 1, 2023, that offered solutions to the challenges facing PreK through 12th grade public school students in Alabama. The report aims to improve student achievement and enhance teacher quality in every public school in Alabama. The plan outlines four main areas for educational reform in Alabama: quality teaching and learning, supporting high-poverty and low-performing schools, data collection and accountability, and educator recruitment, retention, and development. The Commission's report calls for reassessing teacher certification standards, encouraging participation in the National Board-Certified Teachers Program and encourages schools to develop innovative approaches to improve student achievement and growth. To develop leaders from within and create a pipeline of future school leaders, Alabama's Commission on Teaching and Learning (2023) suggested the following:

School-level leadership is critical to student success. Leadership begins with effective principals and assistant principals. Every school has a principal, but not enough schools have adequate staffing in the assistant principal ranks. If the Alabama Principal Leadership and Mentoring Act (Act 2023-340) is to be successful, and it must be, then adequate staffing at the assistant principal level is critical. (p. 17)

Overview of Standards for School Leaders

The move toward assuring high quality administrators in our nation's schools is an ongoing process and standard for doing so continues to be developed at the National and state levels. The researcher explored three versions of standards for instructional leaders: the

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition Standards, and the Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership. The purpose of the standards and the intended audiences are summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1

Leadership Standards: Purposes and Intended Audiences

Title of Leadership Standards	Purpose	Intended Audience	Partnerships
The Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leaders (2005)	Provides a set of standards to realize the mission of enhancing school leadership which results in improved academic achievement for all students.	Prospective Instructional leaders (principals and administrators) in Alabama	Requires leaders to develop partnerships to impact student achievement
National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for Building Level Leaders (2016)	Guides educational leadership programs on what leaders should know and be able to do after graduation.	Programs that prepare Building Level Leaders (Aspiring School Leaders)	Requires leadership preparation programs to teach how to develop partnerships
The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (2015)	Provides guidance on certification, induction and mentoring, evaluation, and professional development. PSEL standards provide a broader perspective on instructional leadership and were developed using research, knowledge of those in the field, and core educational values.	Effective leaders from the State level to district and school level	Broader view of educational leadership; Focus is on positively impacting students; Requires leadership preparation programs to emphasize partnerships

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) was adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 2015 (NBPEA, 2015). The PSEL standards were updated and renamed after research identified gaps in the 2008 ISLLC standards (NBPEA, 2015). The PSEL standards provide a broad perspective on instructional leadership and were developed using research, knowledge of those in the field, and core educational values. The PSEL standards provide guidance on certification, induction and mentoring, evaluation, and professional development. The PSEL standards target a broad audience that ranges from the State level to district and school level leaders (NBPEA, 2015).

The PSEL standards were developed to guide school leaders to positively impact students. “Grounded in current research and the real-life experiences of educational leaders, they articulate the leadership that our schools need, and our students deserve” (NBPEA, 2015). They are focused on students so that school leaders can have a greater impact on student learning and achievement. “They’re designed to ensure that educational leaders are ready to meet challenges of the job today and in the future as education, schools and society continue to transform” (NBPEA, 2015).

National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards

The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards were formerly known as the ELCC standards, since they were originally developed by the Educational Leadership Licensure Consortium (ELCC). NELP provides two sets of standards that guide instructional leaders as they prepare for either a principalship or a superintendency. The National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for Building Level Leaders (2016) serves

as a guide for programs that prepare building-level leaders. NELP Standards for District Level Leaders (2016) guides programs that prepare district-level leaders across the nation. The NELP standards were developed by a committee of education officials, researchers, and policy-oriented leaders from educational organizations, professional associations and universities across the country. The collective expertise and experiences of these educational leaders and research on preparation and practice were used to expand the NELP to include ethics, norms, equity and community engagement. The NELP standards guide educational leadership preparation programs on what leaders should know and be able to do after graduation.

Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership

The Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leaders provides a set of standards for principals and administrators in Alabama to realize the mission of enhancing school leadership resulting in improved academic achievement for all students. The standards were recommended by the Alabama State Board of Education in a resolution and were adopted July 14, 2005. The Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leaders provided eight standards with rationale and key indicators listed for each standard.

Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement

Standard 2: Teaching and Learning

Standard 3: Human Resources Development

Standard 4: Diversity

Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships

Standard 6: Technology

Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization

Standard 8: Ethics

In 2021, the Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership implemented instructional leadership standards built on those for instructional leaders and based on the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015).

Grounded in the Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders and building on the knowledge and abilities developed at the Class A (master's degree) level, candidates in the Class AA Instructional Leadership programs will use their skills to create and practice successful instructional leadership. (Ala. Admin. Code r. 290-3-3-.47, 2021)

The Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership (2021) provides ten standards with details of what program graduates will be knowledgeable of and capable of executing.

Standard (a): Mission, Vision and Core Values

Standard (b): Ethics and Professional Norms

Standard (c): Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Standard (d): Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Standard (e): Community of Care and Support for Students.

Standard (f): Community of Care and Support for Students

Standard (g): Professional Community for Teachers and Staff

Standard (h): Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standard (i): Operations and Management

Standard (j): School Improvement

Emphasis on Partnerships in Current Standards

The need for partnerships is implicitly and explicitly stated in NELP (2016) Standard 5: Community and External Leadership, PSEL (2015) Standard Elements 8j, and in Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership; r. 290-3-3-.47 (2021). NELP (2016) Standard

5 focuses on developing a leader's knowledge, engaging with stakeholders, and advocating for the needs of students, school system and the community. NELP Component 5.2 states that “Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to understand, engage, and effectively collaborate and communicate with, through oral, written, and NELP.” Component 5.3 states that “Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to communicate through oral, written, and digital means within the larger organizational, community, and political contexts and cultivate relationships with members of the business, civic, and policy community in support of their advocacy for district, school, student, and community needs.” PSEL (2015) Standard Elements 8j states that by developing and sustaining partnerships with public and private sectors schools will improve student learning. According to the Alabama Administrative Code for Instructional Leadership (2021), Standard (h) Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, explicitly states that effective instructional leaders will engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being. Alabama Code (2021), 290-3-3-.47, also states that future leaders should be prepared to:

- Create and sustain positive, collaborative, and productive relationships with families and the community for the benefit of students.
- Maintain a presence in the community to understand its strengths and needs, develop productive relationships, and engage its resources for the school.
- Create means for the school community to partner with families to support student learning in and out of school.
- Build and sustain productive partnerships with public and private sectors to promote school improvement and student learning.

Not only do these standards overlap regarding partnerships, but they also emphasize collaboration that is reciprocated, beneficial, and relevant to both partners.

Benefits of Partnerships in Leadership Preparation

Partnerships and collaboration are not only commonplace in educational settings, but have become an expectation of school leaders according to professional standards. Scribner (2013) claims that “School leaders are increasingly pressed to have an eye toward developing external partnerships and cultivating public confidence among community constituents” (p. 6). Research indicates that partnerships are beneficial. Some partnerships are more successful than others. There is not an extensive body of research on frameworks for building successful partnerships, but the primary work in this area is included in this survey of literature.

Webber (2016) shared that “our natural human desire is to connect with other people and to seek out a sense of belonging. People need to feel supported.” Relationships and people are what matter. Thus, it seems likely that relationships between people and institutions in education would also be beneficial. Writing about educational partnerships, Saltiel (1998) shared, “The relationship empowers the partners in learning to achieve more than they set out to do as individuals. This is what is known as synergy. The partners fuel one another, creating an energized dynamic, electric in its feel” (p. 8), and Reames & Kochan (2015) note the following:

Leadership is an essential element in school and student success. Preparing high-quality individuals to lead our nation’s schools requires that educational leadership programs be closely aligned with these schools to ensure that the curriculum and the activities within these programs are relevant to practice. Not doing so may make these programs irrelevant. Thus, it is imperative that those preparing leaders for schools and faculty for university programs join with schools, state departments of education, associations,

agencies, business leaders, and others to create meaningful partnerships that will ensure that all of these environments will have the best leaders possible. (p. 244)

Frameworks for Building and Sustaining Partnerships

Amey et al. (2007) suggest that even though many believe that creating partnerships is an effective strategy to meet K–16 educational demands, the reality is that this cross-organizational collaboration is often challenging to develop and hard to sustain” (p. 12). Herein lies the dilemma. Although, researchers, scholars, and practitioners may believe that partnerships are essential, Barnett et al. (1999) suggest that “there is no formula or prescribed step-by-step process organizations can rely on for initiating, sustaining, and terminating partnerships” (p. 507). Knowing the benefits of partnerships in educational settings leads us to the discussion of the limited number of existing models and frameworks built on research, that guide their success. Amey and Brown (2007) found that “despite perceived initial benefits, many partnerships fail to obtain desired results, cannot be sustained, or cease to benefit both parties” (p. 8).

An overview of the three existing models provides insights into the challenges associated with creating a model that will help partnerships flourish. The three models include the Amey et al. partnership development model (2007), the Barnett et al. typology of partnership model (1999), and the Reames & Kochan (2015) communities of practice model. A common theme found in all three models is that all partnerships are different and ever evolving. “Because there is not one way to form an interagency partnership, the “one size fits all” approach does not apply” (Barnett et al., 1999, p.493). Terms like dynamic, growing, shifts, develops, sustaining, stages and complexity are descriptors used in these models that reflect the organic nature of partnerships. Butcher et al. (2010) shared that “all personnel involved in a partnership need to be

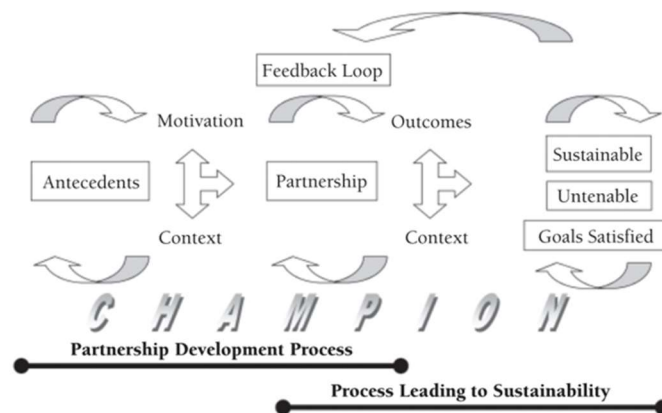
open to change. Given that initiatives are often implemented to create new knowledge and new growth, it should be expected that those involved will develop and grow (p.38).”

The first model to be examined was developed by Amey and colleagues. (2007). The following is a description of the model:

The Amey and Brown collaboration model shows that leadership shifts from being directive to facilitative, and then to inclusive and servant-oriented. As the partnership develops, aspects of it can be institutionalized. Establishing common language along with shared understanding as well as developing expectations, goals, and assessment measures represent movement toward making a partnership part of the life of the institutions involved. (Amey et al., 2007, p. 8)

Figure 2

Partnership Development Model



Note: Amey et al.’s partnership model (2007)

“The partnership model presents a fluid, interactive relationship” (Amey et al., 2007, p.9).

Components of the model include antecedents, motivation, context, and the partnership itself.

Antecedents incorporate what led to the partnership and the motivating force behind it.

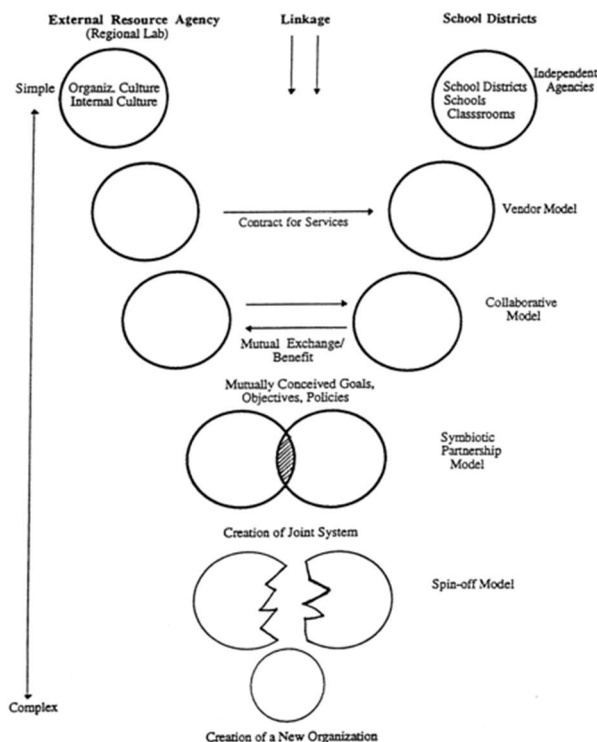
Motivation often includes the reasoning behind the partnership and varying levels of power from those involved. Understanding the role each partner plays and the context impact sustainability.

After the partnership is developed, the next phase of the model includes predictions for collaboration. Other factors that impact how the partnership evolves are continual feedback and a champion or advocate for the partnership. Amey et al. (2007) state that “the key to the model, and partnership success, is how the institution and its members frame the partnership and how this changes as the partnership continues” (p.11). Partnerships that include reflection and adjustments based on feedback are more successful.

Barnett et al. (1999) created a framework that describes the different types of partnerships that can develop between schools and external partners. Barnett et al.’s framework (1999) reflects the ‘dynamic nature of partnerships, including the growing complexity of interorganizational arrangements that exist as partnerships move from a cooperative to a collaborative relationship’ (p. 484).

Figure 3

A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation



Note: Barnett et al.'s partnership model (1999)

Barnett et al.'s (1999) Conceptual Framework of the Types of Partnerships can be viewed as a continuum for the stages of partnership formation from independent agencies to the spin off model. Independent Agencies operate autonomously and do not need or want to partner with other organizations. The Vendor Model is next on the continuum and is based on a clear and contracted agreement. The Collaborative Model is more complex, and relationship driven. The Symbiotic Partnership Model usually evolves from a Collaborative Model partnership and is built on mutual trust and collaboration and a shared goal. The Spin-off Model is found at the end of the continuum where the partnership ends, and a new organization is created.

Reames & Kochan (2021) created a model of partnerships that focuses upon building and sustaining lasting partnerships for educational organizations. This framework was used as the conceptual framework for this case study. Their model “brings leadership preparation programs together with K-12 schools/districts and other educational agencies” (Reames & Kochan, 2021, p. 345).

Reames and Kochan (2021) note the following:

The overarching concept most pertinent in our model is communities of practice, which fosters deep learning among the partners and suggests that we should frame these partnerships conceptually as learning partnerships. Additionally, our content analysis demonstrates the importance of relational factors such as trust and organizational structures involving formal decision-making mechanisms. Operational processes, such as personnel assigned to the partnership, were essential in building and sustaining partnerships. (p. 345)

The outer ring of the Reames & Kochan (2021) model echoes what Wenger et al. (2002) described as stages of community development.

Factors Contributing to Partnership Success or Failure

The relational, organizational, and operational factors of partnerships foster or hinder collaboration. The researcher wove theory found in the Reames and Kochan (2021) model into Bolman and Deal's (2019) four frames. Bolman and Deal's (2019) four frames that school leaders use to view organizations include the following frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The structural frame focuses on policies, goals and clearly defined roles. The human resource frame highlights the needs and motivations of the people in the organization. The political frame explores the drawbacks of limited resources, power struggles and change initiatives. The symbolic frame is geared towards beliefs, vision, and culture. The threads of the four frames are interwoven into the inner circles of the Reames and Kochan framework (2021).

Relational and HR Frame

Reames and Kochan's (2021) framework emphasizes the human and relational components of partnerships: "These aspects deal with how the individuals within the partnership relate to each other individually and to the group collectively and how they all might be inter-related" (p. 58). The human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019) aligns with the relational processes from Reames and Kochan's framework (2021). Bolman and Deal's human resource frame focuses on the people. Operational processes from Reames and Kochan's model (2021) focus on trust, communication, and support from upper-level administrators.

In her Patterns of Living Systems Ted Talk, Michelle Holliday (2011) shared the importance of keeping the human element first and foremost in any organization. Holliday

believes that all organizations are alive and that patterns can be seen through characteristics that are evident in all living systems. The importance of relationships should be built into the culture of partnerships and organizations. Bolman and Deal's Human Resource Frame (2019) coincides with Holliday's (2011) emphasis on the human element and with Reames & Kochan's relational aspects of partnerships (2021). One of the characteristics Holliday (2011) discussed is dynamic relationships. If partners find hope and meaning in their work, their needs will be met, and the partnership will be strengthened. The human resource frame provides the metaphor that an organization is like a family. Families are there for each other when times are tough. Leaders are tasked with encouraging and empowering others to enhance partnerships to benefit the greater good. Kochan et al. (2021) note the following: "And as you know, relationships in anything are important. People buy-in to the leader before they buy-in to the vision (p. 59)." Rebores (2014) stressed that a leader's success depends on his/her ability to communicate effectively. "Human beings develop their humanity only within relationships with other humans. Communication is the vehicle for establishing such relationships" (Rebores, 2014).

The human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019) and the relational processes from Reames & Kochan's model (2021) emphasize the importance of relationships, collaboration and trust. Price (2012) believes "there is no reason to think that collective goals invariably – or even typically – deserve priority over the interests of individuals." Price (2012) also suggests that "the commitments followers have to the organization are rightly a function of their views of the instrumental and intrinsic value of organizational goals" and emphasizes the importance of understanding that employees bring their own perspectives and past experiences into their interpretation and value of an organization's goals. Bass (2018) shared about the "iceberg of

culture” that asks school leaders to understand diversity above and below “the water” to understand the core values for both the individual and the organization.

Educators must adapt to an ever-changing society. The structure of our education system has not changed even though society has. Bass (2018) suggested that “change is a constant in educational administration, learning to strike a balance between stability and change requires flexibility. Educational administrators are continually making choices about how to best communicate their message in an ever-changing environment.” Rebores (2014) claimed that an administrator’s ability to form meaningful professional relationships is a key element in his or her success. Price (2012) and Rebores (2014) assert that effective leaders listen to employees and communicate effectively with people from different ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds. Effective leaders communicate in a way that fosters respect and understanding. Rebores (2014) defines communication as “a process through which information is generated and elicits a response in people concerning the message and the sender.” Habermas’s theory of discourse ethics (1993) also supports the importance of effective communication as a school leader and how and why conversations should take place amongst stakeholders. School leaders must have adequate knowledge and be able to apply their ethics to various leadership scenarios. Clarke and Wildy (2010) suggest the following:

Having the knowledge, understanding and skill to deal with *people* means that school leaders are able to handle a range of complex interactions on a day-to-day basis with diverse constituent groups, such as staff, parents, department personnel, and community members. These interactions highlight the importance of the interpersonal, political and ethical dimensions of the principal’s role and the need to understand human nature and the motivations of individuals. (p. 13)

It is important to have partnerships built on trust. Making others feel important and showing vulnerability as a leader helps liken relationships. Thomas Hobbes' social covenant supports communication to build trust. In the article, *Misalignment and Perverse Incentives: Examining the Politics of District Leaders as Brokers in the Use of Research Evidence*, the authors noted that "Advice seeking implies a level of vulnerability—you have to reveal to another that you are not sure of a course of action" (Daly et al., 2014). The introduction of the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics (2005) states that the "primary goal of every educator in the state of Alabama must, at all times, be to provide an environment in which all students can learn" (p. 1). Leaders are expected to collaborate, communicate effectively, and "adhere to a high ethical standard" (p. 1). Alabama leaders should "value the worth and dignity of every person, must have a devotion to excellence in all matters, must actively support the pursuit of knowledge, and must fully participate in the nurturance of a democratic citizenry" (Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, 2005, p. 1).

The political frame is evident in partnerships when each partner recognizes that people need each other. Acknowledging the need for others helps to strengthen and develop trusting relationships. Leaders must build bridges and make allies with other people to get things done. Partners must embrace the partnership as a living system and allow flexibility, fluidity, and life to happen. "It makes much more sense to understand the political landscape and to develop skills that enable you to be a deft participant in the inevitable give and take" (Bolman & Deal, 2019, p. 61). This framework and other researchers note that leadership is a distributed phenomenon. It is a result of group dynamics. It is imperative to consult all stakeholders in an organization before initiating change. It is also important to acknowledge that not everyone may like the change, but they need to understand that leadership involves everyone. *In A Bridge Between Worlds:*

Understanding Network Structure to Understand Change Strategy, Daly and Finnigan (2009)

explain that change will not happen without relationships and acknowledgement of underground social networks. If leaders build relationships, communicate, and support others, then their partnerships will be more sustainable.

Organizational Structures and Political/Symbolic Frame

The political and symbolic frames (Bolman & Deal, 2019) align with Reames and Kochan's (2021) organizational structures. Reames and Kochan's (2021) organizational structures include formal decision making, organized meetings, advisory councils, and celebrations. "Schools are political because they are inevitably a loose collection of different individuals and groups with enduring differences in background, beliefs, and agendas" (Bolman & Deal, 2019, p. 63). The most significant areas of differences and conflict in partnerships are centered around differences in philosophy and equity. "The interplay of different interests and scarce resources inevitably leads to conflict" (Bolman & Deal, 2019, p. 63). The major coalitions or alliances in education are formed around attitudes, outlooks, or dispositions. Within those groups, there is often a divide based on personalities and attitudes. Bolman and Deal (2019) state the following:

Politically, a school is a collection of coalitions—a bunch of different groups—like teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Each group has its own beliefs, its own values, and its own interests. Every group wants certain things, but their interests don't always line up very well. (p. 59)

Alliances also form around teaching philosophy, age, and seniority. Interestingly enough, positive people tend to share similar philosophies. Key players are an important aspect to analyze when looking at partnerships; therefore, when forming partnerships, it is vital to identify people

who will be supportive, who will resist, and who appear to be neutral and then work with the supporters, try to gain support with those who are neutral and either gain support of those who are negative or attempt to neutralize them or change their minds (Bolman & Deal, 2019).

Different levels of power impact partnerships. Mrachko et al. (2020) focused their case study on collaboration and change efforts from the perspectives of a higher-education leader, a field partner leader, and a faculty committee leader. The study explored laws affecting school policy and school leadership and its influence on organizational culture. Mrachko et al. (2020) suggested the following:

Implementing organizational and systemic change is difficult so it's important to be aware of underlying issues (e.g., power struggles, non-tenured professors vs. administration) that may undermine the process. It's also important to clearly communicate your vision without creating an immediate top-down decision chain and no ownership of change. (p. 74)

Butcher and Clarke (2002) found that the key to organizational democratization is acknowledging tension that lies between political and rational thinking. Hackmann et al. (2006) shared a model that could be used to “observe how the faculty works through conflicts and dilemmas in forming a new organizational culture” (p. 42). In the journal article, *The Cornerstone for Organizational Democracy*, Butcher and Clarke (2002) state, “For some, management simply does not want to relinquish power. For others, most employees, when it comes to it, do not want power, because with it comes responsibility” (p. 38). Amey et al. (2007) found that “bringing the role of power differences to the surface aids acknowledgment early in the process” (p. 13). Thus, it is important, when forming partnerships to address the human element and try to foster cooperation and communication to the best degree possible, knowing

that there will be varied levels of support and creating strategies to bring everyone together to assure a smooth working partnership.

The National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) proposed a Code of Ethical Conduct for School Leaders that “Makes the well-being and success of students the fundamental value in all decision-making and actions” (NASSP, 2018). Another challenge school administrators face is to support democratic principles. Leaders must safeguard diversity and equity within democracy and make decisions that challenge the greater good of one against the greater good of all. Bass et al. (2018) wrote that school leaders play a critical role in “safeguarding the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity,” and suggest that “when one acts with integrity, one is true to one’s calling: we act in a way in which our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Leaders should exemplify the ethic of justice, care, critique, the profession, and community into each partnership so that others know and see one’s professional integrity. Levinas’s view that others are part of who we are, is the perspective many leaders use when communicating with others. Good leaders know who they are and can express that to the people they work with. Butcher et al. (2010) posit the following:

When purposes are aligned, when relationships are nurtured through time-rich communications, and when partners acknowledge the strengths of each other and are open to change, then sustainable, transformational partnerships and initiatives can develop. The outcome is mutual capacity development; the creation of new knowledge; the forging of deep, long-term connections; and the transformation of relationships to ones of genuine engagement so as to address the educational goals of quality and equity.

(p. 39)

There are many facets that contribute to the overall culture of the school. “Every organization has a culture, that history and underlying set of unwritten expectations that shape everything about the school” (Peterson, 2002, p.10). “School culture has been identified as a key explanatory variable for positive and negative teaching and learning outcomes” (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008, p. 323). When implementing partnerships, the goal is for leaders to recognize the difference they can make in providing “an environment in which all students can learn” (Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, 2006).

Bolman and Deal (2019) note the following:

It takes grit and courage to follow it without a definite notion of where you are stepping or going. Preparing the next generation for the future they will inherit is sacred work- nothing is more important. May yours be a soulful journey of joy and reverence with the confidence that maybe you might someday touch someone's life. (p. 180)

Leaders may not see the immediate influence they have on a child. Brown et al. (2006) suggest that the benefits of transformational partnerships are found when “the parties come together to pursue common purpose and create the possibility of generative growth and change through mutual interaction as they apply their resources to addressing complex problems” (p. 31).

Burns’s (1978) theory of transforming leadership involves accepting one’s role as a moral leader concerned with values such as liberty, justice, and equality.

Operational and Structural Frame

All organizations have defined roles, responsibilities, and stakeholder expectations. According to Bolman and Deal (2019), "In a classroom, a school, or any other group, people like to know where they're headed, who's in charge, what they're supposed to do, and how their efforts relate to others" (p. 101). The structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019) aligns with

Reames and Kochan's (2021) operational processes. Bolman and Deal's structural frame focuses on the logistics, procedures, and the systems in place. Reames and Kochan's (2019) operational processes focus on personnel, financial resources, evaluation, time and technology. Reames & Kochan (2015) suggest that "There is a valid rationale for school and community partnerships in university programs as a means of enhancing leadership preparation and development, making the finding that less than 40% of those surveyed had formal partnerships alarming" (p. 239). School leaders are charged with implementing partnerships but often struggle organizing and implementing new initiatives. Barnett et al. (1999) found that the challenge is "there is no formula or prescribed step-by-step process organizations can rely on for initiating, sustaining, and terminating partnerships" (p. 507).

Although there is a small body of research on partnership in the development of educational leaders, there is a gap in the literature and a need for research on building and maintaining partnerships in education, and there is an even greater need to expound upon existing frameworks. It is imperative for partners to consider which type of partnership will be most effective and determine how resources should be allocated. Appley and Winder (1977) suggest that there are four types of partnerships: vendor model, collaborative model, symbiotic partnership model, or spin-off model. Appley and Winder (1977) claim that by aligning "talent among participating organizations, what is to be gained or lost, what resources should be invested, and how the initiative should be structured, they can avoid predictable problems that will arise in initiating, sustaining, and ending the partnership" (p. 279). Reames & Kochan (2015) found that a structural component is best "for developing and sustaining partnerships through the creation of advisory councils" (p. 236). Butcher et al. (2010) claim "Partners must be

realistic in the allocation of their resources, including people, time, and money, and need to be committed to individual projects and the partnership as a whole” (p. 39).

Implementing change or new partnerships in an organization is never easy and unexpected issues tend to arise. Policy and change impact partnerships, and organizations must be cognizant of the tension and resistance that may manifest internally and externally. Mrachko et al. (2020) wrote that “Change agents are typically tasked with balancing the needs of external customers with those inside the organization” (p. 72). Clarke & Wildy (2010) suggest the following:

By highlighting the complex and unpredictable dimensions of organizational life in this way, the framework has the potential to enhance school leaders’ knowledge and skills especially in dealing with people and relationships – a key focus of leadership as opposed to management. (p. 14)

The Clarke and Wildy (2010) study found that school leaders who had knowledge of their organization had a positive impact on their school. Theories of social constructivism, micro-political theory and complexity theory were used to describe the complexity of organizations and how principals can embrace that knowledge. Hackmann et al. (2006) shared an example of change implemented in an educational leadership preparation program at MSU using a fictional story to develop the case for readers to see the conflicts and perspectives from the program coordinator’s view and from the faculty members’ view. They posed the question of whether or not educational leadership professors would willingly accept new expectations and mandates.

Dynamics of Learning Partnerships

Research on learning partnerships reveals that goals and purpose influence the dynamics of it (Barnett et al., 2010; Kochan et al., 2021; Wenger, 2009). Saltiel (1998) shared that learning

partnerships differ from other types of partnerships because of “a defining contrast: partners are equals who select one another with the expectation that they will learn from one another” (p. 8).

Understanding the benefits of connectedness and working together are beliefs that lead to successful partnerships (Butcher et al., 2010; Dhillon, 2009; Frick & Frick, 2010). Collective efforts are beneficial to organizations and to those engaged in partnerships. Butcher et al. (2010) shared that this “encapsulates the belief that individuals and organizations can achieve more by working together (in partnership) than they can by working individually” (p. 30).

Transformational partnerships are ones where partners work together for a common purpose that benefits both parties (Brown et al. 2006; Butcher et al., 2010 ; Starratt 2004).

Amey et al. (2007) referenced Morgan’s (1998) research on partnerships with the understanding that the process is organic and similar to Holliday’s (2011) living systems approach. A crucial aspect of the Kochan et al. model (2021) is connectedness. The framework guides partners to view and act on conditions through each of the processes to increase collaboration. Saltiel (1998) notes that “The relationship empowers the partners in learning to achieve more than they set out to do as individuals. This is what is known as synergy. The partners fuel one another, creating an energized dynamic, electric in its feel” (Saltiel, 1998, p. 8).

Leaders that have an understanding of partnerships and the factors that contribute to its success or failure can use existing frameworks to guide their decisions. Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1969) claims that the only way to make an ethical decision is to be responsible and care for others without any social constructs attached. “It is not that there would first be the face, and then the being it manifests or expresses would concern himself with justice; the epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity” (Levinas, 1969, p. 213).

Relationships and people are at the heart of organizations. Price (2008) shared that we should look at people relationally not by the rules. Levinas also wanted us to look at people exactly as they are. Leaders should not generalize about people or put them into categories. Price (2008) claimed that leaders making ethical decisions should not put their goals above others. . This view could serve as a basis for how leaders build relationships. Both parties must buy into the partnership. Mrachko et al. (2020) wrote, “For effective policy implementation in our scenario, the leadership must consider not only unforeseen curricular and placement issues, but the more pervasive issue of faculty and partner ownership of the process and outcome” (p. 73).

The Role of Collaboration in Building Stronger Partnerships

Understanding partnerships and exploring case studies helps leaders build knowledge and apply their ethics to the framework. Leaders are charged with the responsibility of viewing their organization through the lens of more than just one frame at a time. The task of leaders is to use their knowledge of frameworks, ethical principles, and all four frames to view a partnership from multiple lenses. There is a need for educators to foster relationships and model partnerships to impact all stakeholders.

Partnerships look different and not all are collaborative in nature (Brown et al. 2006; Butcher et al., 2010 ; Furlong et al. 1996). Butcher et al. (2010) described the differences between school and university partnerships as transactional, “one in which the parties are concerned with the achievement of their individual purposes” and transformational, “one in which the parties come together to pursue common purpose and create the possibility of generative growth and change” (p. 31). Bullough et al. (2004) described two other types of partnerships in addition to collaborative ones—as higher education institution-led partnerships

and separatist partnerships. The higher education partnerships use the school's resources to benefit students. Separatist partnerships do not have systems in place for collaboration. While collaboration is known to be beneficial many partnerships flounder. Amey et al. (2007) suggest that "Despite perceived initial benefits, many partnerships fail to obtain desired results, cannot be sustained, or cease to benefit both parties" (p. 8). Amey et al. (2007) also posit the following:

The Amey and Brown collaboration model shows that leadership shifts from being directive to facilitative, and then to inclusive and servant-oriented. As the partnership develops, aspects of it can be institutionalized. Establishing common language along with shared understanding as well as developing expectations, goals, and assessment measures represent movement toward making a partnership part of the life of the institutions involved. (p. 8)

Saltiel and Sgroi (1996) shared that the following elements are beneficial in learning partnerships: "shared goal or purpose; trust, respect, and loyalty; personality traits and qualities that are complementary; respect for each other; synergy between the partners; a valued relationship" (p. 8). Conflicts arise and cause partnerships to flounder when the goals of the organization and the people involved are not aligned. Méndez & Rincones (2013) share a similar notion; "A long-standing issue that educational organizations confront is related to the complicated relationship between the organizational imperatives and the motives and concerns of the individuals that constitute and are part of those institutions" (p. 83). Barnett et al. (1999) add the following:

Taking into consideration the contextual factors affecting partnerships, we have conceptualized a framework of the types of partnerships that can develop between a school system and an external resource agency. The framework reflects the dynamic

nature of partnerships, including the growing complexity of interorganizational arrangements that exist as partnerships move from a cooperative to a collaborative relationship. (p. 484)

Partnerships are ever changing and the process must be evaluated to move to a collaborative and sustainable phase. Orr and Pounder (2011) used research, policy and best practices to summarize “effective leader preparation program features” (p. 35) and note the following:

Most critical among the organizational features is the importance of collaboration or partnership with local districts, both to inform content and keep programs relevant, and to share in the responsibility of recruiting and selecting candidates, teaching, and supporting internships. (Orr & Pounder, 2011, p. 35)

In their 2002 book, *Cultivating Communities of Practice - A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, Wenger et al. shared a model of the stages of collaboration and community development. The model is similar to the outer circle on Reames and Kochan’s (2021) model of communities of practice. Wenger et al. (2002) defined communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). Collaboration is the key to successful partnerships (Frick & Frick, 2010; Orr & Pounder, 2011; Reames & Kochan, 2021). A report of The Wallace Foundation’s (2016) University Principal Preparation Initiative highlighted the positive impacts of collaboration in the following:

Intentional collaboration with districts led to more targeted improvement; Curriculum and instructional changes improved program coherence; Clinical experience became more authentic, intentional, and personalized; Collaborative partners played an active role at all stages of the redesign process; Partnerships evolved to support implementation; and

Teams took steps to institutionalize redesign features, as well as partnership and process of continuous improvement. (Paul, 2022, p. 67)

Research on Partnerships with Professional Associations

As noted earlier, Alabama's reform efforts came with a directive to overhaul Alabama's educational leadership programs in 2005. New instructional leadership standards guided colleges and universities through revamping their leadership preparation programs and creating partnerships. Wang et al. (2018) found it noteworthy when "programs assembled a coherent course of study aligned to national and/or state professional standards, as well as district needs, that integrates theory and practice through active learning and input from faculty with experience in school administration (p. 49)." The State of Alabama aligned standards with a focus on student learning to develop a unified vision for preparing school leaders. Frick and Frick (2010) disputed the concept of framing the standards and common vision around student learning as the only means to encourage the formation of partnerships. The authors believe that leaders don't need a directive, but that intrinsic motivation would have more of an impact on student learning. Frick and Frick (2010) suggest the following:

Schools can and should connect us as persons, communities and cultures if we can get morally smart. This theme of connectedness is expressed eloquently by Wagner (2001), who provides a practical theory of action for school leaders for positive change.

Collaborative relationships among adults are the key to the dilemma of school reinvention. For leaders, it is not about 'selling' an idea, program or reform model by 'getting buy-in' but rather about engendering ownership and commitment for improved student outcomes. (p.123)

School leaders rely on the experience of others for guidance. Bullough et al. (2004) suggest that “the process involved in forming university/school partnerships needs to be understood less as an administrative and motivational problem than a question of identity formation and of relationship building” (p. 518). Manna and Jordan (2022) echoed that sentiment: “When states foster networked partnerships, they promote creative problem solving that can enhance the likelihood of principal initiatives succeeding” (p. 11). Multiple organizations that come together to find solutions to common problems are called networked partnerships.

Traditionally, colleges and universities have had a major role in educating future leaders. McCarthy and Forsyth (2009) shared, “For years, many have viewed universities as ‘Ivory Towers,’ places where professors work and reside in protected castles isolated from the rest of the world” (p.132). Many aspects of education are influenced by external factors that shift the focus to more of a financially driven business model. Educational leadership programs need to adjust to be sure future school leaders are prepared. McCarthy and Forsyth (2009) posit the following:

Educational leadership preparation programs will be affected by the mounting school privatization movement because they will be expected to produce leaders who have the ability to market the salient aspects of their schools, engage in fund-raising activities, exhibit sensitivity toward preferences of parents, and demonstrate competence in other activities associated with a competitive environment. Yet, there have been few efforts to assess whether preparation programs have been altered to address the significant implications of the political shift from government control toward market control of education. (p. 104)

Ernest Boyer (1996) argued that education should be about “people over processes and come from four forms of scholarship that include the discovery of knowledge, the integration of knowledge, the application of knowledge, the sharing of knowledge to create the ‘system’ of higher education” (p. 138).

Although a great deal has been written about universities and schools forming partnerships to improve and enhance the preparation and functions of school leaders, there is a scarcity of literature on partnerships between university programs and professional associations in the preparation and further development of school leaders. There is, however, a small body of research dealing with this topic. In the article, *Improving Leadership Preparation Programs through a School, University, and Professional Organization Partnership*, Peel and Wallace (1998) describe how a school system, university and a professional association formed a partnership to better prepare new principals for the “realities of school administration” (p. NAL2). They describe the Potential Administrator's Development Program (PADP) developed in 1992 through the partnership between the National Association of Secondary School Principals, East Carolina University, and a North Carolina school system and note the following:

What this process showed was that a partnership to improve administrative training is a viable option. Additionally, new administrators were better prepared by participating in the Potential Administrator's Development Program. The practical, "hands-on" experience served to augment the traditional, higher education, theory-based programs. While further study is desirable, this process seemed to provide the Ms. Jones's with a better sense of what will be and equips them to deal with the day-to-day while allowing time for important leadership facts necessary to improve schools. (Peel & Waller, 1988, p. 12)

Professional associations/organizations can position themselves as a link between universities and k-12 schools and provide support for school leaders across their state. They can play a key role in advancing the principalship (Manna & Jordan, 2022). Fry et. al (2007) suggest that “states need assistance from external organizations that can provide information about effective school leadership, help facilitate change and objectively assess progress” (p. 27). Saputra (2021) note the following:

Professional Organizations aim to realize high standards of professionalism and fulfill responsibilities according to the fields they are involved in. In addition, the goal is to achieve high-performance results, expand connections and communication with an orientation to the public interest. (p. 59)

The Wallace Foundation (2016) developed a University Principal Preparation Initiative to provide a redesign model for preservice training that could be replicated by universities through a collaborative effort (Paul, 2022):

As a group, the selected universities and their partners participated in a common process and had access to supports coordinated and funded by The Wallace Foundation that defined the initiative, including: Quality Measures, a research based self-assessment tool and process; standards alignment; mentor programs; logic model development; technical assistance; and professional learning communities. (Paul, 2022, p. 67)

One of the key partner participants in the University Principal Preparation Initiative was a professional association. Paul (2022) writes the following:

Representing five school districts, Green River Regional Education Cooperative served as the district liaison within Western Kentucky University’s University Principal Preparation Initiative partnership that also included superintendents, Kentucky Education

Professional Standards Board, and Kentucky Department of Education. Priorities for their leader tracking system included creating a leadership pipeline at the district level and supporting data collection on leaders' and aspiring school leaders' experience, performance, competencies, and professional growth. The district unveiled the leader tracking system in 2018. (p. 69)

Investigations of partnerships between professional associations and educational leadership programs are limited. Most studies are based on a partnership between two entities, universities and k-12 school districts. Existing studies, however, reveal that the need for better preparation of new administrators is often the springboard for developing partnerships. (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Levin et al., 2020; Peel et al., 1998; Ungarean et al., 2023). Sciarappa and Mason (2014) found that the constant change that occurs in schools reveals the need to develop new ways of preparing aspiring leaders. The best professional development opportunities for future school leaders are through authentic learning experiences. Mentorships, networking, and partnerships should be integrated into traditional leadership preparation programs. Sciarappa and Mason (2014) argue that with the “high academic standards in the USA, new principals may need unique advice and technical coaching to support them through the transition that is occurring” (p. 67).

Hallinger (2003) suggested that partnerships should be developed with others in and out of the education realm. Educational entities like professional associations and universities are as essential as outside stakeholders for navigating how to prepare and develop leaders for the future. Tan et. al (2022) noted that the literature proves the need for principals to develop a host of leadership strategies to successfully lead their schools. DiPaola & Walther-Thomas (2003) suggest that “University preparation programs, professional organizations, education researchers,

state agencies, and local communities must work together to ensure that administrators develop the essential leadership needed to advocate effectively for the educational rights of diverse learners” (p. 21).

Equipping school leaders with the knowledge they need to face today’s challenges has to be a joint effort. Murphy and Smylie (2017) shared a similar sentiment, stating that “University preparation programs, professional organizations, education researchers, state agencies, and local communities must work together to ensure that administrators develop the essential leadership needed to advocate effectively for the educational rights of diverse learners” (p. 21). Darling-Hammond et. al (2007) found that “a state’s capacity to organize and offer high-quality ongoing professional development, through academies or institutes that can serve a range of needs, appears to help sustain learning opportunities for leaders in districts large and small” (p. 53).

Partnership between CLAS & Educational Leadership Partners

The case study for this research is based on the collaboration between universities and a professional association which originated from the state’s mandate to revamp aspiring leaders' preparation programs. The three organizations represented in the partnership are the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program. This partnership was the first of its kind in Alabama.

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) is a professional association for school leaders that began in 1969. CLAS offers membership to school leaders and aspiring school leaders across the state of Alabama. CLAS provides professional development and networking opportunities for Alabama's school leaders, aspiring leaders, and system administrators. The directors of CLAS were instrumental in developing this partnership with

Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA). Auburn University's Administration of Elementary and Secondary Education program "prepares engaged, collaborative, and effective administrators by integrating theory, reflection, and applied leadership" (Auburn University, 2024, Educational Leadership section). The University of Alabama's educational leadership program's mission is to "to prepare ethical and reflective practitioners, researchers, and scholars for work in K-12, higher education, and other educational settings" (University of Alabama, 2024, Educational Leadership section). The partnership between CLAS, the Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program began with the creation of an aspiring leaders' program. All three organizations could potentially benefit from developing a partnership, share the goal of educating aspiring leaders, and have mutual interests in enhancing educational leadership across the State of Alabama. Auburn University's Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology's mission is "to prepare exemplary educational practitioners and develop cooperative partnerships with University departments, schools, community agencies and business and industry to provide outstanding educators, trainers, and leaders" (Auburn University, 2024). The University of Alabama's Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies "maintains an on-going, open dialogue about school improvement through its association with various federal, state, and local educational agencies and professional organizations" (University of Alabama, 2024). "Since 1969, CLAS has focused on children by providing school administrators with the professional learning and resources needed to advance public education in Alabama" (CLAS, 2024).

The Aspiring Leaders Program began as a one-day conference in Montgomery, Alabama and evolved into two conferences year in different locations. The program design morphed into

the Aspiring School Leaders Academy which was created “to support aspiring school leaders in attaining the essential skills and practice needed to advance to the next level of leadership and is composed of 2 in-person and 4 virtual meetings held October 2023 to May 2024” (CLAS, 2024, Aspiring Leaders Section). Attendees are exposed to real world perspectives of building principals. Aspiring leaders learn about the application and interview process and best practices to prepare for a future role as an administrator. The Aspiring School Leaders Academy is based on the National Association of Elementary School Principals’ (NAESP) 21st Century Principalship...Getting the Job Done Right. The Academy is led by faculty and staff from the University of Alabama and Auburn University. The program design supports aspiring school leaders in skill attainment best practices to land a leadership position (CLAS, 2024, Aspiring Leaders Section).

Conclusion

Key findings from this literature review were developed to provide an overview of partnerships focused on leadership preparation and the factors that contribute to the success and failure of such partnership. Specifically, the researcher provided and reviewed the educational reform initiatives in the nation and in Alabama. It provided detailed information about the requirements for Alabama Educational Leadership Programs to develop partnerships with school systems as a part of revamping their educational leadership preparation programs. Limited frameworks for developing partnerships exist, and there is also a small body of research on educational leadership preparation and development programs partnering with professional associations to enhance leadership preparation, training and development. This study sought to describe and investigate one such partnership between the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University’s Educational Leadership Program, and the University of

Alabama's Educational Leadership Program. Factors that positively impact partnerships and hindrances which negatively impact collaboration were explored. In the subsequent chapter delves deeper into the methodology of this study. The findings of this study are presented in Chapter 4. The final discussion in Chapter 5 reveals implications, a conceptual framework comparison, and suggests avenues for future exploration of partnerships between professional associations and educational leadership programs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The scope of preparing future school leaders has evolved in recent years, incorporating a demand for professional development opportunities through authentic learning experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Dodson, 2015; Donmoyer et al., 2012; Reames, 2010; Reed & Kensler, 2010). Educational leadership preparation programs are now required to integrate mentorships, networking, and partnerships into their program design (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Sanzo et al., 2011; Tingle et al., 2019). These partnerships spring from the need to better prepare school leaders (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Levin et al., 2020; Peel et al., 1998; Ungarean et al., 2023). Such partnerships are also helpful in the continuing development of school leaders (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Saputra, 2021; Sciarappa & Mason, 2014; The Wallace Foundation, 2016). Hallinger (2003) suggests that these partnerships should be developed with others in and out of the education realm.

This study examined a partnership of two educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) with the Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS). Additionally, the study examined whether and in what manner if any, this partnership aligns with a partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). Their model was designed to help educational organizations build and sustain lasting internal and external partnerships. The primary elements of the Reames and Kochan model (2021) include relational factors, operational processes, and organizational structures. Those three elements must be reciprocal and the strength of connectedness between organizations and the overlap of those elements determine whether partnerships flourish or flounder. Collaboration amongst educational organizations is integral to efforts to improve schools and leadership preparation programs. The researcher aimed to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the

characteristics outlined in this model. The intent was to provide insight into the AU/ UA and CLAS partnership and to identify the outcomes and benefits for the individuals and organizations involved. A more in-depth explanation of the conceptual framework for this study was detailed in Chapter 1.

Research Design

Merriam (1998) describes the foundation for qualitative research as follows:

...the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. (p. 6)

Thus, this approach seemed appropriate for the purposes of this study.

The qualitative method employed was a case study. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). A case study provides a real-world approach with rich descriptions and insight into how and why things happen in a specific context (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). It involves the study of a specific or bounded case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Thus, case study fits the goals and purposes of this study as it provides a rich description of the partnership between Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) Educational Leadership programs, and the Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) and an analysis of outcomes based on the “hows” and “whys” of this partnership endeavor.

Data Collection

When engaging in case study research, Yin (2003) encourages multiple forms of data collection to attain an in-depth, big picture perspective of a case. Further, Yin, (2014) writes, “using multiple types of data helps to corroborate and augment evidence from sources” (p. 107). Creswell reinforces this notion, writing, “Data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (Creswell, 2013, p. 146). Data collected and analyzed for this study came from multiple sources, including interviews and transcripts, archival records like meeting documents and agendas, and reports and guidelines generated by the universities and CLAS. The researcher reviewed documents created by the universities and CLAS for implementation of the partnership and the implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy, and guidelines for the redesign of the principal preparation programs.

“One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (Yin, 2014, p. 110). For this case study, in-depth interviews were conducted, and data were collected from multiple participants. The participants for the study included eleven people from educational leadership departments at two universities in Alabama and two directors from CLAS. Once the researcher and interviewee found a date and time for the interview, the researcher emailed the interview questions, a calendar confirmation for face-to-face interviews, or an Auburn University ZOOM link to their personal email account. Although all interviewees were asked the same series of questions, the use of open-ended questions during the one-on-one interviews, along with follow-up questions as the interview progressed, allowed the researcher to gain insights into each participant’s perspective of the partnership, which allowed for more open dialogue. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. All interviews were recorded and

transcribed. To protect the identity of participants, only audio recordings were used, and their responses were transcribed using REV.com. Findings were emailed to the interviewees so that they could make corrections or additions and to increase credibility and reliability. This is in line with Lindlof's and Taylor's (2002) description of member reflections as "taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true or accurate" (p. 242). Documents provided by participants regarding the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy were reviewed, used to corroborate data, and provided additional insight into the partnership (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection process which allowed the researcher to bind the research and adhere to an objective process (Creswell, 2007). The researcher scripted reflective notes and identified themes, patterns, and inaccuracies as qualitative data were collected. The use of notes helped to provide meaning, develop codes, and highlight themes that emerged during the transcribed interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tracy, 2010). Participants were provided findings from the study to review, verify, and check for accuracy. Member reflections provided a way for the researcher and participants to check for validity and accuracy (Tracy, 2010). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe member reflections as "taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true or accurate" (p. 242).

Data analysis included narrating the participants' perspectives of the partnership (Creswell, 2013) and highlighting quotes and impressions of participants' perspectives and opinions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis of data included multiple sources: interview transcripts and documents, agendas, and observations regarding the Aspiring School Leaders

Academy. The analysis of multiple data sources helped corroborate data, gain additional insight into the partnership, and provide a thicker, richer description of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2010).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. In what manner, if any, does the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describe the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
2. What factors do partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
3. What factors do partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions regarding this study:

1. Each participant is or was an active member of the partnership process.
2. Participants provided answers that were truthful and gave accurate depictions of their perceptions of the partnership.
3. Participants were not pressured to provide sensitive information relative to partnership development at their university or organization.

Researcher's Position

I am a doctoral program candidate in one of the educational leadership programs affiliated with this partnership. At the time of this study, I was serving as a principal in Alabama and was a member of CLAS. Before and during this study, I was not a participant in the partnership and did not contribute data to it.

Participants

Participants for the study include all who were involved in the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. Eleven people serving in different roles at each organization participated in partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. The executive director and the director of professional learning represented CLAS. Representatives from the University of Alabama Educational Leadership faculty included a clinical professor, clinical assistant professor/program coordinator, and a clinical associate professor/program coordinator. Auburn University's Educational Leadership faculty representatives included a professor, two assistant professors, an endowed professor for Educational Leadership, an associate clinical professor/director of Truman Pierce Institute, and an assistant clinical professor. Participants were chosen as interviewees due to their involvement in and their knowledge of the partnership's purpose and programs.

Credibility

The researcher adhered to the following norms established by the Belmont Report (United States National Commission for Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research 1978): do no harm, avoid deception, gain informed consent, and provide privacy and confidentiality. To produce quality work that contributes to the field of qualitative research, I adhered to Sarah Tracy's Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research

(2010). High quality research is “marked by (a)worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e)resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h)meaningful coherence” (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). Ethnography that is both creative and analytical makes a substantive contribution, seems “true,” and provides "a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the 'real'" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 823).

The researcher used the following strategies to achieve qualitative credibility:

- Data analysis for this case study included a thick, rich description (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014).
- Multiple data sources were collected, and data were triangulated to provide an in-depth and accurate interpretation of the partnership (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and enhanced reliability (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2010). Member reflections were used for reliability and credibility (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

Ethical Conditions

The researcher received approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before participants were invited to participate in the study. An interview protocol was used as a data collection and organizational tool to help the researcher ask for participation, schedule interviews, and thank interviewees for participating. Participants received an informational email about the study, its purpose, and safeguards that were used to protect participants’ rights. Safeguards included confidentiality assurance, voluntary participation, and a written permission form. A signed consent form was received before the researcher scheduled interviews. Open-ended questions allowed participants to provide their perspectives of the partnership and reflect

on the development and implementation of the Aspiring Leaders program. Questions did not have right or wrong answers. I used data from interviews, which were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Member reflections provided participants an opportunity to review and ensure that the transcripts and that my interpretations were valid.

Limitations

Factors that narrow the scope of this study include:

1. This case study only investigated the partnership between a professional organization and two university educational leadership programs.
2. The researcher is a student in one of the educational leadership programs so subjectivity or bias could be a limitation. However, the researcher had no involvement in the program development or implementation.
3. The researcher used the experiences of professors from two universities and one professional association from one state so the findings cannot not be generalized to all states.

Significance

Scant research can be found on partnerships between university educational leadership programs and professional associations and their impact on developing school leaders. This research's primary purpose was to gain insights into a partnership between CLAS and AU and AL Educational Leadership Programs through the voices of those in the partnership and to add to the literature on this topic.

Data were gathered from participants on their perceptions of developing and sustaining the partnership and any elements they perceived as barriers and facilitators of the partnership. The participants in this study have been partners for seven years. The length of the partnership should provide adequate qualitative data for studying the implementation and sustainability

processes (Fullan, 2008). The perceptions of the partnership were checked for alignment against the Reames and Kochan model (2021). The study should provide insights to others seeking to create similar partnerships with professional associations and other educational leadership programs or for anyone seeking to create similar partnerships in other fields. It will also provide insights into the validity of the Reames and Kochan Partnership Framework (2021) and aid individuals, groups, and institutions seeking to form partnership and add to the literature on this topic.

As the demands placed on school leaders increase and expectations seem insurmountable, partnerships between professional associations and universities may become more valuable for equipping school leaders to face challenges. This case study will add to the literature on this topic and can provide a foundation for the development and study of similar partnerships in the future.

Summary

This case study investigated the partnership between AU and AL Educational Leadership programs and CLAS to illuminate factors that facilitated and hindered its development and operation. It also examined its operational alignment with the Reames and Kochan partnership model (2021). The participants for the study included two directors from CLAS and faculty participants from each of the universities. The collection and analysis of data came from multiple sources, including interview transcripts, meeting documents, agendas, emails, and reports and guidelines generated by the universities and CLAS. The researcher will present the results and findings for this case in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study examined a partnership between two educational leadership programs, Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS). The researcher examined whether and how this partnership aligns with a partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). Their model was designed to help educational organizations build and sustain lasting internal and external partnerships. The primary elements of the Reames & Kochan model (2021) include relational factors, operational processes, and organizational structures. Those three elements must be reciprocal and the strength of connectedness between organizations and the overlap of those elements determine whether partnerships flourish or flounder. Collaboration amongst educational organizations is integral to improving schools and leadership preparation programs. The researcher assessed the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the characteristics outlined in this model. The intent was to provide insight into the AU/ UA and CLAS partnership and to identify the outcomes and benefits for the individuals and organizations involved. Findings from an analysis of data sources will be presented in this section. Interviews, agendas, participant feedback and observation resulted in emerging themes that led to a sustainable partnership. This chapter will include detailed findings.

Data Collection

The qualitative method employed was a case study. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). A case study provides a real-world approach with rich descriptions and insight into how and why things happen in a specific context (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). It involves the study of a

specific or bounded case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Thus, case study fits the goals and purposes of this study as it provides a rich description of the partnership between the AU and UA Educational Leadership programs and CLAS and an analysis of outcomes based on the “hows” and “whys” of this partnership endeavor.

This case study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Participants responded to ten open-ended questions. Participants shared their perceptions of the partnership in response to each interview question. Once the researcher and interviewee found a date and time for the interview, the researcher emailed the interview questions, a calendar confirmation for face-to-face interviews, or an Auburn University ZOOM link to their personal email account. Although all interviewees were asked the same series of questions, the use of open-ended questions during the one-on-one interviews, along with asking follow-up questions as the interview progressed, allowed the researcher to gain insights into each participant’s perspective of the partnership, which allowed for more open dialogue. The interviews lasted approximately an hour each. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. To protect the identity of participants, only audio recordings were used, and their responses were transcribed using REV.com. Findings were submitted to the interviewees so that member checking could take place.

Documents provided by partnership participants regarding the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy were reviewed, used to corroborate data, and provided additional insight into the partnership (Creswell, 2013). I observed the Aspiring School Leaders Academy (ASLA) at the Troy University Montgomery Campus on May 8, 2024. I observed partnership participants and aspiring leaders and used field notes to capture what it was like. Agendas and survey results from those who participated in the 2023-2024

Aspiring School Leaders Academy cohort were additional data sources reviewed. Data analysis coincided with the data collection process, which allowed the researcher to bind the research and adhere to an objective process (Creswell, 2007). My scripted reflective notes were used to identify themes, patterns and inaccuracies as qualitative data were collected. I created coding boards for a visual representation of themes. Each partnership participant was assigned a color, and their responses were recorded under each theme using colored post-it notes. The different colors allowed me to see connections and patterns across the data. Pseudonyms were assigned for each participant to protect their identity.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. In what manner, if any, does the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describe the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
2. What factors do partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
3. What factors do partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?

Table 2*Source of Qualitative Data*

Research Question	Interview Notes	Field Notes	Agendas	Observation	Feedback from Aspiring Leaders
Research Question 1	X	X	X	X	X
Research Question 2	X	X		X	X
Research Question 3	X	X		X	X

Participants

The participants for the study included ten people from educational leadership departments at two universities in Alabama and two directors from CLAS. Participants were involved in the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. Twelve people serving in different roles at each organization have been involved in the partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. Participants were asked to participate in the study due to their involvement in and their knowledge of the partnership's purpose and programs. Ten people participated in the study. Two people did not participate; one did not respond and the other responded that they had not been involved in the partnership recently.

Table 3*Partnership Participants: Roles and Data Collection Methods*

Number & Pseudonym	Role of Participant	Methods
1. Dr. Helen Hand	Tenure Professor	Interview
2. Dr. John Brant	Associate Clinical Professor	Interview
3. Dr. Allen Park	Assistant Clinical Professor	Interview
4. Dr. Emily Sands	Director of Professional Learning	Interview
5. Mr. Rick Williams	Executive Director	Interview
6. Dr. Billy Baker	Clinical Professor	Interview

7. Dr. Violet Bates	Clinical Professor	Interview
8. Dr. Betty Murphy	Clinical Professor	Interview
9. Dr. Barry Black	Clinical Professor	Interview
10. Dr. Alice Sears	Tenure Professor	Interview

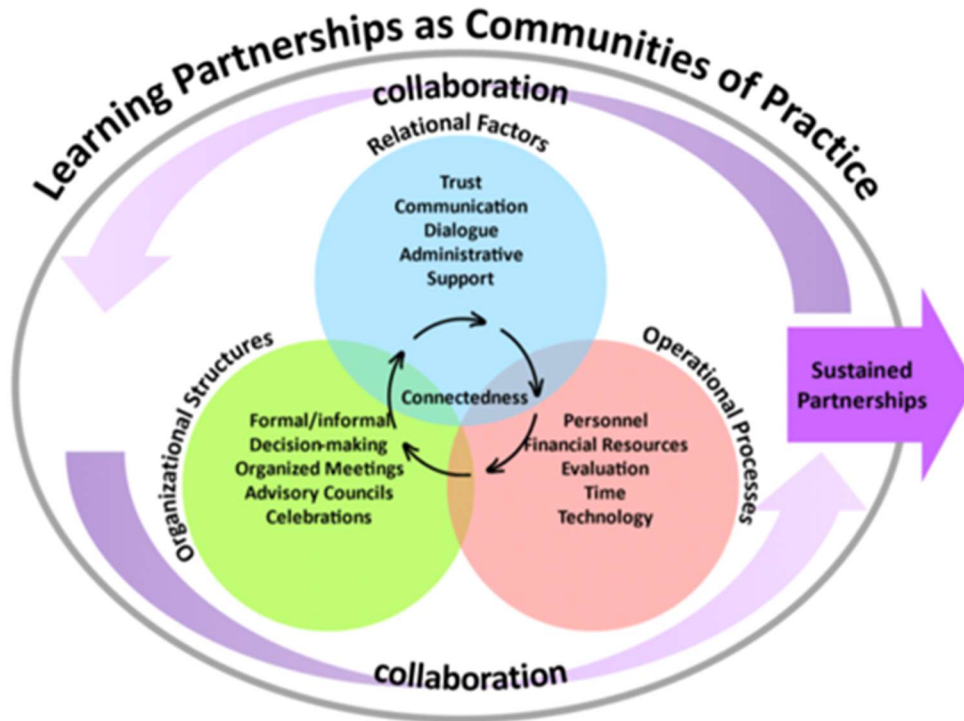
Research Question One: Alignment of the Reames & Kochan Model (2021)

The first research question examined the extent and manner that the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describes the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UAB) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS). The researcher assessed the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the characteristics outlined in this model. The researcher began with an analysis of the data.

The Reames and Kochan model (2021) was used as a conceptual framework for the study. The model “brings leadership preparation programs together with K-12 schools/districts and other educational agencies” (Reames & Kochan, 2021, p. 345). The figure below depicts the elements of the theoretical framework for learning partnerships as communities of practice. It contains three elements within a collaborative framework. These consist of relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes.

Figure 4

Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice



Note: From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Alignment: Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice

An examination of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UAB) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS) revealed themes that relate to the outer ring of the Reames & Kochan (2021) model, which depicts learning partnerships as communities of practice.

This case study has identified themes that reflect a learning partnership, including relationships, collaboration, trust, shared vision, a common goal of improving leaders and benefitting K-12 students, filling the knowledge gap, and balancing theory and practical application. These themes

were used to assess the alignment of partnership participants' perceptions with the Reames & Kochan (2021) model's outermost circle. Findings reveal that learning and collaboration not only exist but also bring mutual benefits to all partners, consistent with the model's outer ring. Learning and collaboration benefit each organization, and participants' responses convey the positive aspects and effectiveness of this partnership.

Alignment: Collaboration

Collaboration is an integral component improve schools and leadership preparation programs. Broad category themes were used to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the outermost and innermost circles of this model. The meta-themes, People & Relationships, Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals, Expectations & Actions, Continuous Improvement and External Factors and Constraints, revealed that learning and collaboration exist and are mutually beneficial to all partners that align with the outer ring of the model. The collaborative Collaboration on the Aspiring Leaders Academy led to partners working together in other realms and is the key to sustaining these partnerships.

Alignment: Relational Factors, Organizational Structures, Operational Processes

Data corresponded to the three inner circles of the model: the relational, organizational, and operational processes. According to the model, relational factors include trust, communication, and administrative support. The relational themes revealed through this study were relationships-people are the key, communication, collaboration, visionary/execution, networking, connected, work together in other realms, build capacity for leadership, trust, accountability, recruitment, participation is mutually beneficial (learn and network).

The Reames and Kochan model (2021) depicts examples of organizational structures such as formal agreements, decision making processes, advisory councils, celebrations, and

scheduled meetings. The researcher found the following themes shared vision, varied research priorities, common goal of improving leaders and benefitting K-12 students, ethics and belief system, motivated because heart is in it, mentoring to better the profession/help school leaders, share resources, administrative support, differences in requirements for professors, helping as many aspiring leaders as possible, same team-leave egos out, balance of power-pecking order, and state level professional development.

Operational processes outlined in the model include the evaluation and implementation of adequate resources for personnel, financial and technological needs that impact the organizations and partnership. The researcher found the following themes: continuous improvement, planning and implementation, feedback and evaluations, fill the gap in knowledge, balance theory and practical application, expertise and boots on the ground experience, clinical and tenured professors, requirements for outreach and service, number of participants, turnover, need administrative support to participate, build capacity for others to continue partnership, realistic expectations about schedule and capacity, legislation, time, funding and geographic location.

These themes were put into broader meta-themes: People & Relationships, Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals, Expectations & Actions, Continuous Improvement and External Factors and Constraints. The researcher then used these meta-themes to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the outermost and innermost circles of this model. These meta-themes revealed that learning and collaboration exist and are mutually beneficial to all partners which is consistent with the outer ring of the model. This collaboration led to the partners working together in other realms and is key to sustaining these partnerships. The innermost circle of the model depicts connectedness or an overlap of relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's Theory of

Connectedness implies that the most effective learning happens when partners interactively use resources to enhance cohesion within their own organizations and to strengthen connections with external partners (Jankowski, 2020). Meta-themes were found in the innermost circle of the Reames & Kochan model which revealed the connectedness described by participants during the interviews. In fact, there was very little that was not described in the partnership.

Table 4

Themes Leading to Broad Categories (Meta-Themes)

Relational Themes	Organizational Themes	Operational Themes	Broad Categories/ Meta-Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships- people are key • Networking • Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring to Better the Profession/Help School Leaders • State Level Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical and tenured professors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal-Build capacity for leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Vision • Ethics and Belief System • Motivated Because Heart Is in It • Common Goal of Improving Leaders and Benefitting K-12 Students • Helping as many Aspiring Leaders as Possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill the Gap in Knowledge • Balance Theory and Practical Application • Expertise and Boots on the Ground Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals Align
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Communication • Collaboration • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Resources • Same team-leave egos out • Balance of Power-pecking order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover • Requirements for Outreach and Service • Need Administrative Support to Participate • Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability & Structure

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visionary/Execution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Level Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous Improvement • Planning and Implementation • Feedback and Evaluations • Realistic Expectations about Schedule and Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support • Differences in Requirements for Professors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Time • Funding • Geographic Location • Number of Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Factors and Constraints

Relational Factors (Themes). “It's probably the relationship that we have with CLAS and the relationships that we have with Auburn, because I know that I can depend on them. They know that they can depend on me and those relationships are what keeps us going” (Dr. Violet Bates). Participants shared their perceptions of the partnership and themes from the relational component of the model emerged. Relationships and people were highlighted over and over in participants’ responses. A common thread was that the people involved in the partnership are what has enhanced the partnership. The opportunity for networking, building relationships with others in educational leadership, and building future leaders are motivating factors for the partners. The table below depicts relational themes, whether interviewees responses included the theme, and an example quote from each theme. The relational themes that were discussed in every interview are relationships, communication, and collaboration.

Table 5

Relational Factors (Themes)

Relational Factors (Themes)	Participant Responses	Example Quotes about each Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships- people are the key 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Park The relationship between Auburn and Alabama when it comes to Ed leadership is very harmonious. I mean, you would think it wouldn't be because of all the Auburn, Alabama, Crimson Tide, War Eagle stuff, but when it comes to the Aspiring Leaders Academy, it is very harmonious.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking 	1 2 3 5 6 7 9 10	Dr. Billy Baker I think one of the biggest benefits is we're networking. We're out there working with aspiring administrators who are going to become principals and they become a tool for us to aid, disseminate our research within the schools because just to do research and not have it implemented is worthless.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection 	1 2 3 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Sears I have made really close connections with the folks at Alabama and in my own institution.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal-Build capacity for leadership 	1 2 3 4 5 8 9 10	Dr. Betty Murphy We're two Research institutions who've partnered together to help build capacity in this group of potential leaders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust 	4 5 7 8 9 10	Dr. Violet Bates Honestly, it's probably the relationships that we have with everybody. It's probably the relationship that we have with CLAS and the relationships that we have with Auburn, because I know that I can depend on them. They know that they can depend on me and those relationships all what keeps us going.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Sears I also remember us generating ideas of what would be needed for these aspiring leaders. And a lot of that conversation on all members of Auburn faculty were there. So those who have been principals felt or shared really specific ideas of professional skills that were needed and professional supports.

• Collaboration	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Emily Sands It's more of a true collaboration.
• Accountability	4 7 8 9 10	Dr. Sears Any of us can just jump in at this point. Now, the trust is there, the respect is there. There's no questioning if we're committed, it's a solid core group of people that are doing this. I can say them by name, I can call them my friends. There's never, no one's going to shirk their duty and no one's going to look at the other person as if they're shirking their duties.
• Visionary/Execution	2 4 8 10	Dr. Sears You can be visionary all you want, but if you don't have people that can execute a really great idea or the model, then is it ever going to be fruitful?

The people involved in the partnership and the relationships of the partners have led to the overall success of the partnership.

In response to what has enhanced the partnership, Mr. Rick Williams shared:

Oh, just the whole collegial attitude from all parties. Auburn and Alabama and CLAS have worked very closely together to grow this Aspiring Administrators Academy, irrespective of where any of these people go, it's we're trying to grow the pool of applicants for our schools.

Dr. Allen Parks holds a similar view to Rick Williams. He stated:

The person who oversees it, Emily Sands, she does a fantastic job of overseeing it. Two of the lead professors that do well are Dr. Helen Hand from Auburn, and Dr. Betty Murphy at Alabama. I just think that the relationship between Auburn and Alabama when it comes to Ed leadership is very harmonious. I mean, you would think it wouldn't be

because of all the Auburn, Alabama, Crimson Tide, War Eagle stuff, but when it comes to the Aspiring Leaders Academy, it is very harmonious.

Participating in the partnerships also provides an opportunity for networking and recruiting aspiring administrators. It's mutually beneficial because it keeps the professors informed of current challenges in schools and informs their research. All ten participants' responses included positive sentiments about the people involved in the partnerships, the frequency of communication, and the collaboration between all partners. Participants are not self-serving or only looking out for their university or for themselves. This trusting relationship has led to collaboration in other realms.

Networking was highlighted by Dr. Billy Baker. He stated:

I think one of the biggest benefits is we're networking. We're out there working with aspiring administrators who are going to become principals, and they become a tool for us to aid, disseminate our research within the schools because just to do research and not have it implemented is worthless.

Dr. Betty Murphy, professor from the University of Alabama, explained the shared vision behind the partnership with a simple but strong statement. She said:

We're two research institutions who've partnered together to help build capacity in this group of potential leaders.

Trust was highlighted by six of the ten participants and accountability was mentioned five times.

Dr. Violet Bates stated:

Honestly, it's probably the relationships that we have with everybody. It's probably the relationship that we have with CLAS and the relationships that we have with Auburn,

because I know that I can depend on them. They know that they can depend on me and those relationships all what keeps us going

Dr. Sears mirrored that sentiment when she shared:

I have made really close connections with the folks at Alabama and in my own institution.

Dr. Helen Hand shared:

This partnership has led to other things. CLAS, Alabama and Auburn have tried to write grants together. We've done that a couple of times, two or three times now. And that is in part why Betty and I and Violet and Lisa Sears have been asked to write this new principal mentoring program. It is like this initial partnership, and it follows Mary Catherine. It's the trust, it's the building of the trusting relationships and all of that.

Dr. Sears feels that accountability and commitment are benefits of the partnership. She shared:

Any of us can just jump in at this point. Now, the trust is there, the respect is there. There's no questioning. If we're committed, it's a solid core group of people that are doing this. I can say them by name, I can call them my friends. There's never, no one's going to shirk their duty and no one's going to look at the other person as if they're shirking their duties.

Communication and collaboration are relational themes that are evident in the partnership.

Auburn University professor Dr. Sears shared:

I also remember us generating ideas of what would be needed for these aspiring leaders and in a lot of that conversation, all members of Auburn faculty were there. So those who have been principals felt or shared really specific ideas of professional skills that were needed and professional supports.

Dr. Emily Sands stated:

It's more of a true collaboration.

Dr. Sears emphasized having the right people involved makes the partnership a success. She shared:

You can be visionary all you want, but if you don't have people that can execute a really great idea or the model, then is it ever going to be fruitful?

Table 6

Organizational Structures (Themes)

Organizational Structures (Themes)	Participant Responses	Example Quotes about each Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring to Better the Profession/Help School Leaders 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Violet Bates So, number one, I teach leadership at University of Alabama. I'm a graduate of Auburn, so of course I have those relationships there anyway, but what we found is that, and mentoring is a very big part of what my research is and what I believe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Level Professional Development 	1 2 4 5 7 8 9 10	Dr. Helen Hand For me, the motivation behind the development of what is now known as the Aspiring Leaders Academy was several things. It was, I think it's important that college professors do outreach. I think it's important that we are involved in initiatives with agencies like CLAS, with the state department, with other educational groups. That's part of what I believe in. It's what I write about. It's strengthening ED leadership preparation programs. It makes us a better program when we have things like this when we develop these kinds of activities. So, there's all of that. And on a very practical level, it is a great way to recruit. But it's mainly because I think it's the right thing to do. It's what I'm tied to. It's part of my core values.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Vision 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Violet Bates So number one, I teach leadership at University of Alabama. I'm a graduate of Auburn, so of course I have those relationships there anyway, but what we found is that, and mentoring is a very big part of what my research is and what I believe.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics and Belief System 	1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Emily Sands We just wanted to try to offer a way to make sure that there was a pipeline to leadership, I guess to say, that was our main motivation. I've always had an interest in working with aspiring administrators because they really don't know what they don't know. And I felt that it could just be beneficial for them to learn those kinds of things going into administration that they might not know instead of waiting until they get on the job training on it. And still knowing that, a lot of what we do is very broad, and districts will still have to do training, but at least they walk in with a knowledge base of special ed, data-driven instruction, and ethics. At least they walk in now with those kinds of knowledge and working with a mentor as well.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated Because Heart Is in It 	1 2 4 5 6 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Sears I think what enhanced the partnership is this shared vision and shared mission among the three institutions. I think what's enhanced the partnership is we all sat or mostly sat in the principal's office. The majority of us sat in the principal's office and as the principal, what's the old adage, everything rises and falls with the principal. And so, when you hold the keys to the school, I just think, I don't want to say your souls are connected, but your hearts are connected. There is a deep understanding of what you've lived through, what you've led. And so very few people who walk the earth know that you know that. And so, I think there is a quiet connection, and it has to do with we all had the keys to the school in our pocket at one time, and it's really special.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Goal of Improving Leaders and Benefitting K-12 Students 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Allen Parks I think it's two things. Number one, and this goes to everybody. It's our professionalism, the desire to help improve our profession. Okay. Alright. That's one. The profession of school of instructional leadership. Okay. Secondly, any instructional leader who has, and I'm sure we all have been classroom teachers, we know what these people are going into. And the better we can prepare them, the better the kid's going to be served.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping as many Aspiring Leaders as Possible 	1 4 5 7 8 10	<p>Dr. Billy Baker I think all the educators that are involved and it's all the university professors have the same focus, and that's doing what's best for our students. When I was a principal, I used to preach</p>

		that what is best for our students is what we're going to do. And I preached that to my students now and I live that for my students. So the philosophies align with what I think is important, which is do the best we can for our students so that they can do the best they can for their students. I think that's just the best way to say it.
• Share Resources	5 7 8 9 10	Dr. Betty Murphy Of course, partnering with Auburn lets us share ideas and lets us share sometimes research. We partner sometimes on research and presentations. So, it's a way for us to share at a higher ed level that we wouldn't have probably otherwise.
• Same team-leave egos out	1 2 3 5 6 8 9 10	Dr. Black I really feel like we're all working collaboratively together to do what's best. And we're also research-based practices. We're not just Willy-nilly out there. We prepare for it. Its research based, but it's also for the benefit of build Our local agents says one of the missions said, mission said to do what's right for kids, so we'll be better off in the long term. So no, I think it definitely aligns. It's good. I don't think anyone is like, oh gosh, what's the word I'm looking for? Not cocky, but arrogant maybe. I think everybody humbly goes into this knowing that we work together, we're better or stronger.
• Balance of Power-pecking order	2 4 5 9 10	Dr. Emily Sands It's a lot of collaboration on the front end and throughout the whole year. For example, when we have our first kickoff session, although we've planned it, we will still come back and finalize everything together to make sure that everybody is still on board. UA knows what they got to do, Auburn knows what they have to do, they work together to make sure that the agenda comes together, and we all just show up. If we're not able to show up, we're all aware of that and we just kind of pitch in where we need to. So, I think that's really what has worked. It's not, like I said, it's not like an Emily show. It's more of a true collaboration.
• State Level Professional Development	1 2 4 5 7 8 9 10	Dr. John Brant I think for the partnership, it was truly that mentoring aspect of it. We have two flagship universities providing that professional development so that this organization CLAS doesn't have to go outside the state, let's keep those resources. I mean, there's not a financial gain for

		any of us to do this. So, when I say resources, it is truly the knowledge that each of us brings because of our expertise, but then our experiences that I think have really helped move the program forward.
• Administrative Support	1 6 8 9 10	Dr. Betty Murphy I think we've been able to keep some key core people involved, and that's helped a lot. So as each of us as we've had new people come in, we try to bring them into the fold so that we get them going and build capacity and it can't die down. If I hadn't done that with the new people coming in and Ellen hadn't done that, it would be just the two of us trying to pull that together. And we can't do it. It's too much for two people to do. So, sustaining it is meant, making sure it's sustained, making sure that you've put the right people into place.
• Differences in Requirements for Professors	1 2 3 5 7 8 9 10	Dr. Sears I'm tenure track. I'm a rare bird. If you look across all of Ed leadership, it's extremely rare for a practitioner to be in a tenure track job. They just don't have the work you and I do. They're more traditional scholars. And so, one thing that's interesting, from The University of Alabama, none of their tenure track faculty members are involved in this partnership. I don't know if that's been brought to light. So nonetheless, even though two of the four tenure track professors at Auburn, were school leaders, I guess that's what I'm just saying is look at the mix. I find the mix interesting. So, the motivation is the same whether tenure track, well for some tenure track at Auburn and all the clinicals at Alabama.

Organizational Structures (Themes). “I think one of the biggest benefits is we're networking. We're out there working with aspiring administrators who are going to become principals and they become a tool for us to aid and disseminate our research within the schools because just to do research and not have it implemented is worthless” (Dr. Billy Baker). The following organizational themes were common threads found in all ten interviews: mentoring to better the profession and help school leaders, a shared vision, and a common goal of improving

leaders and benefitting K-12 students. Outreach and helping with state level professional development were also themes that were found.

Dr. Violet Bates shared:

So, number one, I teach leadership at University of Alabama. I'm a graduate of Auburn, so of course I have those relationships there anyway, but what we found is that, and mentoring is a very big part of what my research is and what I believe.

Dr. Helen Hand expresses a similar view. She reported:

For me, the motivation behind the development of what is now known as the Aspiring Leaders Academy was several things. It was, I think it's important that college professors do outreach. I think it's important that we are involved in initiatives with agencies like CLAS, with the state department, with other educational groups. That's part of what I believe in. It's what I write about. It's strengthening ED leadership preparation programs. It makes us a better program when we have things like this when we develop these kinds of activities. So, there's all of that. And on a very practical level, it is a great way to recruit. But it's mainly because I think it's the right thing to do. It's what I'm tied to. It's part of my core values.

Dr. Violet Bates pointed out her beliefs as motivation for participation. She stated:

So number one, I teach leadership at University of Alabama. I'm a graduate of Auburn, so of course I have those relationships there anyway, but what we found is that, and mentoring is a very big part of what my research is and what I believe.

Nine of the ten participants mentioned that they are motivated by their ethics or belief systems. Mentoring is part of who they are and what they value. Recruitment was initially a perceived benefit, which motivated some. The selfless nature of participants was evident in responses that

revealed that their heart is in it, that they share resources, and that egos are put aside. Eight out of ten participants referred to partners from all three organizations being on the same team. Partners found that participating in the Aspiring Leaders Academy is mutually beneficial because of the opportunity to network and learn from those in the field.

Dr. Emily Sands replied:

We just wanted to try to offer a way to make sure that there was a pipeline to leadership, I guess to say, that was our main motivation. I've always had an interest in working with aspiring administrators because they really don't know what they don't know. And I felt that it could just be beneficial for them to learn those kinds of things going into administration that they might not know instead of waiting until they get on the job training on it. And still knowing that, a lot of what we do is very broad, and districts will still have to do training, but at least they walk in with a knowledge base of special ed, data-driven instruction, and ethics. At least they walk in now with those kinds of knowledge and working with a mentor as well.

When asked what has enhanced the partnership, Dr. Sears shared:

I think what enhanced the partnership is this shared vision and shared mission among the three institutions. I think what's enhanced the partnership is we all sat or mostly sat in the principal's office. The majority of us sat in the principal's office and as the principal, what's the old adage, everything rises and falls with the principal. And so, when you hold the keys to the school, I just think, I don't want to say your souls are connected, but your hearts are connected. There is a deep understanding of what you've lived through, what you've led. And so very few people who walk the earth know that you know that. And so,

I think there is a quiet connection, and it has to do with we all had the keys to the school in our pocket at one time, and it's really special.

Dr. Barry Black spoke about the benefits of participating in the Academy. He said:

I think for us, from the university side, it keeps us up to date and current since we've been out of the classrooms. I've only been out for a year, but the other ones have been out for over three years, I guess, from three to ten years. So, I really think it helps keep us current. We have to talk about issues that are going on now. We have to prepare the administrators or aspiring administrators for those issues, and that helps us out. So, we're kind of both ways. We also get to collaborate a lot. And then one of our goals is to be a resource. So, we don't want them to be administrators and us, never talk to them again. Hopefully they'll see us as a resource and we can continue to work together in the future, whether it's Alabama, Auburn, whoever, that doesn't matter to us, as long as we can do what's right for the kids in the future.

Dr. Allen Park also spoke about the mutual benefits of participating in the Aspiring Leaders Academy. He stated:

I think the benefit of Auburn is, from what I've seen, Auburn goes out of their way to hire professors who have experience as educational leaders, and it serves a dual purpose also. I think this is one point a lot of people miss its feedback to us. When we work with the class aspiring leaders, it also informs us as to how we can best develop and deliver our instruction.

Statements or phrases relating to mentoring, having a shared vision, and improving leaders were found in responses from all interviewees. Partners have a shared passion for helping aspiring leaders and impacting students in k-12 schools. Outreach is part of who they are.

Dr. John Brant shared:

I think for the partnership, it was truly that mentoring aspect of it. We have two flagship universities providing that professional development so that this organization CLAS doesn't have to go outside the state, let's keep those resources. I mean, there's not a financial gain for any of us to do this. So when I say resources, it is truly the knowledge that each of us brings because of our expertise, but then our experiences that I think have really helped move the program forward.

When asked about the motivation behind the development of the partnership, Dr. Helen Hand stated:

For me, the motivation behind the development of what is now known as the Aspiring Leaders Academy was several things. It was, I think it's important that college professors do outreach. I think it's important that we are involved in initiatives with agencies like CLAS, with the state department, with other educational groups. That's part of what I believe in. It's what I write about. It's strengthens ED leadership preparation programs. It makes us a better program when we have things like this when we develop these kinds of activities. So, there's all of that. And on a very practical level, it is a great way to recruit. But it's mainly because I think it's the right thing to do. It's what I'm tied to. It's part of my core values.

Dr. Violet Bates's has ties to both universities. She shared the following about her motivation to participate:

So, number one, I teach leadership at the University of Alabama. I'm a graduate of Auburn, so of course I have those relationships there anyway, but what we found is that, and mentoring is a very big part of what my research is and what I believe.

Dr. Emily Sands shared:

The main motivation is because we felt that we needed to offer districts a way and a pipeline to have people that they're working with in their districts that would be able to go on to be administrators and if not for their districts, but because of the need for, we see every year how many principals and assistant principals are leaving the field, be it because of the many mandates they have, the many initiatives they have. And we just wanted to try to offer a way to make sure that there was a pipeline to leadership, I guess to say. So that's why we actually, that was my main motivation, and I've always had an interest in working with aspiring administrators because they really don't know what they don't know. And I felt that it could just be really beneficial for them to learn those kinds of things going into administration that they might not know instead of waiting until they get, I guess I want to say on the job training on it. And still knowing that, we still know that a lot of what we do is very broad and that those districts that they might go in still have to do some kind of training, but at least they walk in with a knowledge base now of special ed data-driven instruction ethics. At least they walk in now with those kinds of knowledge and also working with a mentor as well.

Dr. Billy Baker stated:

I think all the educators that are involved and it's all the university professors have the same focus, and that's doing what's best for our students. When I was a principal, I used to preach that what is best for our students is what we're going to do. And I preached that to my students now and I live that for my students. So the philosophies align with what I think is important, which is do the best we can for our students so that they can do the best they can for their students. I think that's just the best way to say it.

The collaboration and collective efforts put into planning and implementation were noted. Partners are willing to share resources. They are on the same team and all leave egos out of the partnership.

Dr. Betty Murphy replied:

Of course, partnering with Auburn lets us share ideas and lets us share sometimes research. We partner sometimes on research and presentations. So, it's a way for us to share at a higher level that we wouldn't have probably otherwise.

Dr. Black stated:

And I really feel like we're all working collaboratively together to do what's best. And we're also research-based practices. We're not just Willy-nilly out there. We prepare for it. It's research based, but it's also for the benefit of build Our local agents says one of the mission said, mission said to do what's right for kids, so we'll be better off in the long term. So no, I think it definitely aligns. It's good. I don't think anyone is like, oh gosh, what's the word I'm looking for? Not cocky, but arrogant maybe. I think everybody humbly goes into this knowing that when we work together, we're better or stronger.

Dr. Sears was not involved in the initial development of the partnership but shared the following thoughts:

Well, I can only tell you second or third hand because I was not in the initial talks. I believe the motivation was, and what was explained to me is that Alabama and Auburn decided to rather be allies instead of adversaries for school leaders. The only time we were going to be adversaries is in the football stadium, as Dr. Mendola said. And so the two of them joined forces, interestingly enough, Dr. Mendola being clinical and Dr. Hand being tenure track, but nonetheless, they joined forces. I believe they approached Rick

Williams and the CLAS officials. And without hesitation, I don't remember any hesitation from CLAS. And I don't recall any hesitation from the Auburn faculty except the two who ended up self-selecting out because their concerns were related to existing outreach that they already had going or they just didn't. I find it interesting that Dr. Hand being a tenure track professor, still demonstrates this deep commitment to being a scholar practitioner, a deep commitment to her outreach.

Dr. Sears continued:

Yes, I'm tenure track. I'm a rare bird. If you look across all of Ed leadership, it's extremely rare for a practitioner to be in a tenure track job like Andy and Lyla. They're really just don't have the work you and I do. They're more traditional scholars. And so one thing that's interesting, I think about what Auburn took see at Alabama, what I'm pointing out is none of their tenure track faculty members are involved in this partnership. I don't know if that's been brought to light. So nonetheless, even though two of the four tenure track professors at Auburn, well Weaver school leaders, I guess that's what I'm just saying is look at the mix. I find the mix interesting. So, the motivation is the same whether tenure track, well for some tenure track at Auburn and all the clinicals at Alabama.

Dr. Betty Murphy discussed the benefits of participating. She said:

That's probably a good question, and I think sometimes we've asked ourselves that, what are we benefiting? And we of course have a lot of contact with people out in the field. So it's a good way to build and keep relationships and networks. And I would say that's probably the greatest advantage is just developing a strong leadership network. Of course, partnering with Auburn lets us share ideas and let's us share sometimes research. We

partner sometimes on research and presentations. So it's a way for us to share at a higher ed level that we wouldn't have probably otherwise. We would like to say it probably helps us with recruitment down the road for other programs and may, I don't know that we have the evidence to show that it's done that. So, I wouldn't say that it's to build our programs because I don't think that we've really focused on that. In fact, we don't even really recruit at those events other than saying we're from the University of Alabama and they say they're from Auburn. We don't really use those events as a oh, and here's our pamphlet and here's how you sign up with us and come over to our table. We don't do that because we're really trying to say we're two higher ed institutions. We're two Research institutions who've partnered together to help build capacity in this group of potential leaders.

Dr. Billy Baker's response emphasizes a common focus of doing what's best for students. He shared:

I think all the educators that are involved and it's all the university professors have the same focus, and that's doing what's best for our students. When I was a principal, I used to preach that what is best for our students is what we're going to do. And I preached that to my students now and I live that for my students. So, the philosophies align with what I think is important, which is do the best we can for our students so that they can do the best they can for their students. I think that's just the best way to say it.

Dr. Emily Sands draws attention to the collaboration. She stated:

It's a lot of collaboration on the front end and throughout the whole year. For example, when we have our first kickoff session, although we've planned it, we will still come back and finalize everything together to make sure that everybody is still on board. UA knows

what they got to do, Auburn knows what they have to do, they work together to make sure that the agenda comes together, and we all just show up. If we're not able to show up, we're all aware of that and we just kind of pitch in where we need to. So, I think that's really what has worked. It's not, like I said, it's not like an Emily show. It's more of a true collaboration.

Dr. John Brant's explanation focuses on the expertise that everyone brings to the table. He explained:

I think for the partnership, it was truly that mentoring aspect of it. We have two flagship universities providing that professional development so that this organization CLAS doesn't have to go outside the state, let's keep those resources. I mean, there's not a financial gain for any of us to do this. So, when I say resources, it is truly the knowledge that each of us brings because of our expertise, but then our experiences that I think have really helped move the program forward.

The consistency of those involved was stressed by Dr. Betty Murphy. She said:

I think we've been able to keep some key core people involved, and that's helped a lot. So as each of us as we've had new people come in, we try to bring them into the fold so that we get them going and build capacity and it can't die down. If I hadn't done that with the new people coming in and Ellen hadn't done that, it would be just the two of us trying to pull that together. And we can't do it. It's too much for two people to do. So, sustaining it is meant, making sure it's sustained, making sure that you've put the right people into place.

Requirements of tenured professors versus clinical professors and differences in the roles of professors from each university were noted by six of the ten participants. Dr. Sears shared:

I'm tenure track. I'm a rare bird. If you look across all of Ed leadership, it's extremely rare for a practitioner to be in a tenure track job. They just don't have the work you and I do. They're more traditional scholars. And so, one thing that's interesting, from The University of Alabama, none of their tenure track faculty members are involved in this partnership. I don't know if that's been brought to light. So nonetheless, even though two of the four tenure track professors at Auburn, were school leaders, I guess that's what I'm just saying is look at the mix. I find the mix interesting. So, the motivation is the same whether tenure track, well for some tenure track at Auburn and all the clinicals at Alabama.

Table 7

Operational Processes (Themes)

Operational Processes (Themes)	Participant Responses	Example Quotes about each Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel-Clinical and tenured professors 	1 2 5 7 8 10	Dr. Sears It didn't start out that way. We had a tenure track professor who had only been a classroom teacher, and we had a tenure track professor of full rank who was not a school leader. And over time they self-selected out. They chose to do their outreach and service in other areas, but those who had been school leaders, either campus or central office, continued to stay involved, both clinical and tenure track who have been school leaders. So, I think that's kind of interesting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill the Gap in Knowledge 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Murphy But it was really, mainly to fill a gap in professional development for those people who were certified but not yet hired.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance Theory and Practical Application 	1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Mr. Rick Williams Well, we try to be as immersive as we possibly can and give them stuff that you're going to give a lot of theory in your graduate programs, but we try to make sure you're getting the theory and the practicality and the application. When I look at Auburn and Alabama, and I'm sure many of the Sanford I know does this as well, they have a really good balance of people on their staff who are researchers and truly understand what they're talking about and people who are practitioners who have seen it in practice on the boots on the ground type stuff. It's important that you have a good balance of that. And that's what our universities are doing. When you go back to Amy, she's a great researcher, but she's also been a principal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise and Boots on the Ground Experience 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Dr. Barry Black I think it actually works two ways. I feel like one thing I've learned being in higher ed is that the clinical faculty, we've all been administrators, the teachers, administrators, and then superintendents, some of the superintendents. And I feel like we have a wealth of knowledge and a wealth of expertise. I think that I know that we don't have all the answers, but I do know that our experiences are valuable. We've done a lot of things right. We've done a lot of things wrong, and so it gives us a chance to impart some of that knowledge on upcoming administrators, helps them think about things they may not have thought about, just gives them a point of view that they don't really have yet. So, it allows us to kind of gives them ideas to think about things that they may face and hopefully equips them with more tools in their toolbox.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover 	1 2 4 7 8 9	Dr. Emily Sands Nothing has really hindered the partnership. Of course, maybe some turnover. I know some of the people that we started with, they either decided to at either UA or Auburn, they're no longer working with us, but we've had new people that have come aboard.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements for Outreach and Service 	1 2 3 4 5 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Betty Murphy I think so. And I don't know that we really looked at that when we were doing this at all. I mean, I don't ever remember pulling out College of Education's vision or mission or goals or anything to say, does this align? We do have teaching, research, and service. I mean, over and over. That's drilled into us that that's what our mission is in the state is teaching research and service. Now for some of us, like those of us working with the aspiring group, we have a heavy emphasis on the teaching and service and not so much on the research because Dr. Baker, Dr. Bates, Dr. Black, and I are all clinical faculty. So, we don't have a very large research piece, I guess in our merit system and in our FTEs. Ours is a very large service portion in teaching. So, this fits highly into our service load because it's something way above and beyond what's required of us.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need Administrative Support to Participate 	1 4 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Emily Sands I think one of the other challenges or hindrances or barriers is that our veteran administrators really got to look into the importance of being those mentors for the aspiring administrators. And we really got to do better by allowing them to get out of the building to be able to participate in professional learning. So, I guess those would be the hinders hindrances or the barriers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership 	5 8	<p>Dr. Betty Murphy We're two Research institutions who've partnered together to help build capacity in this group of potential leaders.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous Improvement 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. John Brant So that one is hard to answer just because Emily who's over this at CLAS, each time that they do an evaluation, they make changes. So, I think it really goes back to the needs of the participants and ensuring that what they're anticipating, what they're looking for, we're able to meet that expectation by the end of the year. So as far as the improvement part, I think they've been very intentional to respond to the feedback and make changes as needed</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Implementation 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Violet Bates We take notes from the field, for example, on things. Things that we have experienced personally that we feel that we don't cover well or enough in our program because we can get somebody that can graduate the leadership program semester, there's no way that they're going to get enough leadership content. We're giving them just the basics. So, we've had the opportunity to suggest what presentations that we feel that people need from the field. And then CLAS has been able to tell us that, hey, we feel like new administrators need more experience than this. So, when we set the agenda, it definitely is a collaboration between all three of us as to what we're going to present for the next year and what topics think we want to cover.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and Evaluations 	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<p>Mr. Rick Williams We are constantly looking at that. One of the things that we do is survey data. We talk to people, and we reflect, and we are constantly looking at the emerging trends that are happening. We look at the new rules, the new laws, new current best practices. We're constantly looking at things. So, when we look at our Aspiring Administrators Academy, kind of like a river, it's the same river, but you can never step into the same river twice. So, when they come back, something has probably been tweaked not to tweak for the sake of tweaking. And if it's doing well and it's still applicable, we're not going to change it. But we want to constantly grow. And the thing we're looking for is how do we make it real meaningful for our members? We've added, we add stuff based on feedback and we'll look at it. We don't just say, alright, this is the weekend we're going to meet. Here it is. Do it. We're constantly looking at ways to make it better.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic Expectations about Schedule and Capacity 	1 2 4 5 7 8 9 10	<p>Dr. Betty Murphy I would say time as much as anything, working this into schedules. And if you look at, you've got faculty members from two different universities who are on different types of schedules. Some of us work 12 months, some of us work nine months. Dr. Hand for example, is on, she's a tenured faculty member where we're clinical. So, expectations are a little bit different, but just I think time because you're trying to work, even we had a doodle poll this week to try to set up a planning meeting for next year. And just getting that many people to find common dates that we could all meet can be difficult just because we're not on the same schedules and we have different priorities for our work time. So, I would say just like any organization where you're trying to work with a large group of people that time it can be an issue.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation 	<p>1 2 3 4 7 8</p>	<p>Dr. Violet Bates Well, with this new mentoring act that has come out in a couple of years, they're going have a principal's leadership academy. And that Principal Leadership Academy is going to encompass the mentoring piece that we're working on. And it's going to encompass all the other pieces that was in that state legislative state legislative bill, for example, professional development hours, making sure they do observations, a lot of other different components. What I would like to see is that they do something like that for the aps, the assistant principals, because we still are missing, still are missing that group. So far everything we have is for first year principals, but we still need something for first year ap. So, if I could write a grant, I would write a grant for an assistant principal academy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time 	<p>1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>	<p>Dr. John Brant The barrier that we all face is the time factor.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding 	<p>1 3 4 5 6 7 8</p>	<p>Mr. Rick Williams Look, the only barriers we've faced is the lack of budgets at times that the universities can give to their departments. And we work with, if somebody comes and they need to, we've got an overnight stay. Sometimes those universities don't have in their budget to pay for that. So, we have to work around that. We work with partnerships. That's where the grants come in. There's a lot of things that can come in to help us mitigate that, but we didn't let it in the past, people would say, I don't have money to do that. Well, we got to figure out how to do it. If it's important, let's not let that be the barrier. So, we've kind of just broken that down because my mindset is, don't worry about money. We'll figure that out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic Location 	<p>1 3 4 5 6 8 10</p>	<p>Mr. Rick Williams I think it needs to go to the other corners. I don't think it just needs to be I would love to have a presence in Troy. Matter of fact, I'd love to just go back to our 11 in-service centers and see if we can do it that way. Or at least those regions. I know they don't have the capacity to do that and that's not part of their deal. And I wouldn't ever want to put something on somebody. But I would like to use that geographic area as kind of the template so that we could grow as firing and let people in those areas know, hey, you're looking for an assistant principal in Washington County. Well, you got a teacher right here that's ready to be an assistant principal.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Participants 	1 2 3 4 5 10	Dr. Black Any ways it can improve? I think that sometimes attendance can be inconsistent. From what I've gathered, we don't always, like this past time, there were not a lot of people there at the last meeting. So maybe having some kind of commitment from school districts, they're going to do this, that we, and I hate to say enforce it because I'm not legalistic and I know things come up, but sometimes you got to say, look, if you're signing up for this, then you've got to be here for all these sessions. So, I think that would be one thing I'd like to see it improved on.
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Operational Processes (Themes). “We needed to provide aspiring administrators, more practical hands-on type of experiences with the running a school because the programs provide a good foundation, but there are things that go on when you run a school that don't come up in the programs” (Dr. Billy Baker). Operational themes that were referenced by all ten participants include the need to fill the gap in knowledge, the expertise, and boots on the ground experience of the partners, and the continuous improvement for planning, implementation, feedback, and evaluations. Two themes also noted frequently are the personnel involved in the partnership and outreach requirements. The difference in clinical versus tenured professors was mentioned by six of the ten participants and differing requirements for outreach and service was mentioned by eight of the ten participants.

Dr. Sears shared:

It didn't start out that way. We had a tenure track professor who had only been a classroom teacher, and we had a tenure track professor of full rank who was not a school leader. And over time they self-selected out. They chose to do their outreach and service in other areas, but those who had been school leaders, either campus or central office, continued to stay involved, both clinical and tenure track who have been school leaders. So, I think that's kind of interesting.

The need to fill the gap in knowledge and provide professional development was mentioned by all ten participants.

Dr. Murphy stated:

It was really mainly to fill a gap in professional development for those people who were certified but not yet hired.

Dr. Billy Baker explained:

We needed to provide aspiring administrators, more practical hands-on type of experiences with the running a school because the programs provide a good foundation, but there are things that go on when you run a school that don't come up in the programs.

The need for professional development for aspiring leaders was reiterated by Dr. Allen Park. He shared:

There is a need to have aspiring leaders ready to hit the ground running. Once they get the job of assistant principal or even principal, it takes three to five years for an aspiring leader to really find their feet to know what they're doing. Given today's everchanging environment, legal environment and our vast cultural differences, that time to proficiency can be reduced by participating in the Class Aspiring Leaders Academy.

Dr. Barry Black's input on the need for preparation focused on practical aspects of school leadership. He explained:

We've found that a lot of administrators will move straight from school and go out into the field, but before they even get that job, it's a couple years before they actually get AP job. So, we were trying to offer something that will help them be prepared and get ready for their interview, help them know what professionalism means when it comes to dressing for an interview, questions and stuff. We ask for the interview. So really it's

more about mentoring them and trying to help them prepare so that they are eligible or able to get those jobs.

Dr. John Brant shared:

So, the alignment and was truly how can we strengthen the work of these aspiring leaders? They are not in current true leadership roles. They serve leadership roles in their school systems, but many of 'em wanting that next step. So, it was an opportunity for us to really look at our areas of expertise, those of us who've been in Alabama in K 12, serving as leaders and providing that level of support. So that mentoring was a huge piece from this because I know several of the participants over the years, whether it's faculty from Alabama or Auburn, have kept in touch with folks, especially those that are in the respective programs to say, okay, how can I get to the next level? And that's what a lot of the participants, how can I really work this to get into an administrative position? Because so many of 'em have had their certification for a couple years and just haven't been able to get that first AP or even principal's position if they're in elementary.

Dr. Betty Murphy explained more about the gaps in training. She stated:

I mean, you think about there are gaps in training. So, you have people who have not even entered a program yet, and then you have people maybe in a program, and then you have the people who graduated, but they're not yet hired. Then the people hired and then are they an ap, progressing to a principal? And then what do you do for central office? And then we do superintendent academy for aspiring superintendents. So, you can look and figure out is there a pathway that's pretty clear to build capacity all along the way. So, we were looking at where are those gaps? Like with Tuscaloosa City Schools, that's another partnership we have. And we have an aspiring leader academy with them. For

people who are considering going into the principalship and they don't have to be certified, they can just be sort of interested. What is that like? And it's competitive to get in their academy, and we help them with that. So we started it about the time we started working with CLAS.

Dr. Emily Sands shared:

I do feel that our vision for the program does align with both of those universities, vision and mission and those standards that they're working towards. I do feel that it's also aligned with our vision because again, we like to work with all administrations, all administrators from aspiring all the way up to retired. And so that's just one of the ways that we're able to also give back through that is to make sure that we're touching every part of our membership. And I don't think that we were doing that before they had the one-day conference, but I don't truly think that we were really tapping into the aspiring administrators like we are now.

A balance of theory and practical application is offered at the Aspiring Leaders Academy. The intentionality behind this was shared by the Director of CLAS, Mr. Rick Williams. He explained:

Well, we try to be as immersive as we possibly can and give them stuff that you're going to give a lot of theory in your graduate programs, but we try to make sure you're getting the theory and the practicality and the application. When I look at Auburn and Alabama, and I'm sure many of the Sanford I know does this as well, they have a really good balance of people on their staff who are researchers and truly understand what they're talking about and people who are practitioners who have seen it in practice on the boots on the ground type stuff. It's important that you have a good balance of that. And that's

what our universities are doing. When you go back to Alice, she's a great researcher, but she's also been a principal.

Dr. Sears also shared:

I also remember us generating ideas of what would be needed for these aspiring leaders. And a lot of that conversation on all members of Auburn faculty were there. So those who have been principals felt or shared really specific ideas of professional skills that were needed and professional supports.

Dr. Billy Baker shares that the gap is filled by providing practical knowledge. He stated:

I think it has, it's giving 'em a more realistic view. Like the interview process we go through, we have a simulation that we do basically on how to handle situations. It's a computer aided simulation, so they get that experience. I mean, no one likes to be blindsided by a complaint or an event without having some knowledge of what to do. So those kinds of things. Like I said, one of the things we spend about four hours on is difficult conversations. How do you call a teacher or a staff member in and tell 'em what's going on and how to improve and not let it get out of control? So those kinds of things. Things. I just think we're providing them some practical experiences that aren't available through our programs.

Dr. Barry Black's response emphasizes the expertise and experience they provide. He shared:

I think it actually works two ways. I feel like one thing I've learned being in higher ed is that the clinical faculty, we've all been administrators, the teachers, administrators, and then superintendents, some of the superintendents. And I feel like we have a wealth of knowledge and a wealth of expertise. I think that I know that we don't have all the answers, but I do know that our experiences are valuable. We've done a lot of things

right. We've done a lot of things wrong, and so it gives us a chance to impart some of that knowledge on upcoming administrators, helps them think about things they may not have thought about, just gives them a point of view that they don't really have yet. So, it allows us to kind of gives them ideas to think about things that they may face and hopefully equips them with more tools in their toolbox.

Dr. Sears also feels like their experiences as principals has enhanced the partnership. She explained:

I think what enhanced the partnership is this shared vision and shared mission among the three institutions. I think what's enhanced the partnership is we all sat or mostly sat in the principal's office. The majority of us sat in the principal's office. Six of us had the experience of everything rising and falling. As the principal, that's the old adage, everything rises and falls with the principal. And so when you hold the keys to the school, I just think, I don't want to say your souls are connected, but your hearts are connected. There is a deep understanding of what you've lived through, what you've led. And so very few people who walk the earth know that you know that. And so I think there is a quiet connection and it has to do with we all had the keys to the school in our pocket at one time, and it's really special. I don't know that we don't talk about it all that much. Interestingly enough, I mean, at least we just really talk about how we want to help them and how we want to grow. And maybe we should going forward, share our expertise or our experiences more.

Turnover was mentioned by six of the participants. Some participants viewed turnover as facilitating the partnership, while others viewed it as hindering the partnership.

Dr. Emily Sands stated:

Nothing has really hindered the partnership. Of course, maybe some turnover. I know some of the people that we started with, they either decided to at either UA or Auburn, they're no longer working with us, but we've had new people that have come aboard.

Requirements for outreach and service was mentioned by eight of ten participants. Some viewed this theme as a facilitator, and others as a hindrance to the partnership.

Dr. Betty Murphy shared:

I think so. And I don't know that we really looked at that when we were doing this at all. I mean, I don't ever remember pulling out College of Education's vision or mission or goals or anything to say, does this align? We do have teaching, research, and service. I mean, over and over. That's drilled into us that that's what our mission is in the state is teaching research and service. Now for some of us, like those of us working with the aspiring group, we have a heavy emphasis on the teaching and service and not so much on the research because Dr. Baker, Dr. Bates, Dr. Black, and I are all clinical faculty. So, we don't have a very large research piece in our merit system and in our FTEs. Ours is a very large service portion in teaching. So, this fits highly into our service load because it's something way above and beyond what's required of us.

Dr. Allen Park stated:

I consider that as part of my outreach duties at Auburn, where we participate in workshops PLU, to help further the development of aspiring leaders.

Dr. Sears on outreach:

As a land grant institution, we do have an obligation for outreach. And if you look at the outreach website, what we're doing is absolutely in line with the definition of outreach and the mission and vision for Auburn's Outreach.

The need for administrative support was mentioned by seven participants, while the need to build capacity in others to continue the partnership was only mentioned twice.

Dr. Emily Sands stated:

I think one of the other challenges or hindrances or barriers is that our veteran administrators really got to look into the importance of being those mentors for the aspiring administrators. And we really got to do better by allowing them to get out of the building to be able to participate in professional learning. So, I guess those would be the hinders hindrances or the barriers.

Dr. Betty Murphy shared:

We're two Research institutions who've partnered together to help build capacity in this group of potential leaders.

The theme of continuous improvement emerged in all ten interviews. Participants highlighted how they reflect, revise, collaborate, talk, and use feedback to plan for the next session.

Dr. John Brant shared about the intentional response to feedback. He said:

So as far as the improvement part, I think they've been very intentional to respond to the feedback and make changes as needed.

Dr. Park shared:

Professional evaluations, especially at Auburn, are highly valued. The students that we both teach in the class and the students that we serve at the Aspiring Leaders Academy, who eventually take our classes, they get to evaluate us near the end of each semester as to whether they think our instruction is effective, whether they think what we're delivering to them is effective and current and practical. It is a continual cycle of improvement.

Dr. Violet Bates shared the same thought about continuously improving. She stated:

I think that we make changes as we go when we realize that something is not quite working, but I don't think there's anything right now that needs improvement.

Dr. Violet Bates responded:

We take notes from the field, for example, on things. Things that we have experienced personally that we feel that we don't cover well or enough in our program because we can get somebody that can graduate the leadership program semester, there's no way that they're going to get enough leadership content. We're giving them just the basics. So, we've had the opportunity to suggest what presentations that we feel that people need from the field. And then CLAS has been able to tell us that, hey, we feel like new administrators need more experience than this. So, when we set the agenda, it definitely is a collaboration between all three of us as to what we're going to present for the next year and what topics think we want to cover.

Mr. Rick Williams commented about feedback and reflection. He replied:

We are constantly looking at that. One of the things that we do is survey data. We talk to people, and we reflect, and we are constantly looking at the emerging trends that are happening. We look at the new rules, the new laws, new current best practices. We're constantly looking at things. So, when we look at our Aspiring Administrators Academy, kind of like a river, it's the same river, but you can never step into the same river twice. So, when they come back, something has probably been tweaked not to tweak for the sake of tweaking. And if it's doing well and it's still applicable, we're not going to change it. But we want to constantly grow. And the thing we're looking for is how do we make it real meaningful for our members? We've added, we add stuff based on feedback and we'll

look at it. We don't just say, alright, this is the weekend we're going to meet. Here it is. Do it. We're constantly looking at ways to make it better.

Dr. John Brant also stated that the partnership is continually evolving based on feedback. He shared:

So that one is hard to answer just because Emily who's over this at CLAS, each time that they do an evaluation, they make changes. So, I think it really goes back to the needs of the participants and ensuring that what they're anticipating, what they're looking for, we're able to meet that expectation by the end of the year. So as far as the improvement part, I think they've been very intentional to respond to the feedback and make changes as needed. And that's really true when you think about, again, the first year, 2019, it was two sessions all day long, this is great, this is wonderful. And then over the next couple of years, it turned into a true academy style where book study, because of the PLU that can be involved. And so, there's more opportunities for the participants to engage with multiple stakeholder groups instead of just faculty from Alabama or faculty from Auburn.

Realistic expectations about schedules and capacity for the work were mentioned by eight of ten participants. Legislation was mentioned by half of the participants. Some viewed these themes as facilitators, and others as hindrances to the partnership.

Dr. Betty Murphy

I would say time as much as anything, working this into schedules. And if you look at, you've got faculty members from two different universities who are on different types of schedules. Some of us work 12 months, some of us work nine months. Dr. Hand for example, is on, she's a tenured faculty member where we're clinical. So, expectations are a little bit different, but just I think time because you're trying to work, even we had a

doodle poll this week to try to set up a planning meeting for next year. And just getting that many people to find common dates that we could all meet can be difficult just because we're not on the same schedules and we have different priorities for our work time. So, I would say just like any organization where you're trying to work with a large group of people that time it can be an issue.

Dr. Violet Bates shared:

Well, with this new mentoring act that has come out in a couple of years, they're going to have a principal's leadership academy. And that Principal Leadership Academy is going to encompass the mentoring piece that we're working on. And it's going to encompass all the other pieces that was in that state legislative state legislative bill, for example, professional development hours, making sure they do observations, a lot of other different components. What I would like to see is that they do something like that for the ap's, the assistant principals, because we still are missing, still are missing that group. So far everything we have is for first year principals, but we still need something for first year ap. So, if I could write a grant, I would write a grant for an assistant principal academy.

Operational themes referenced as factors hindering the partnership are time, funding, geographic location, and number of participants. Time was mentioned by nine out of ten participants as a hindrance to the partnership. However, funding, geographic location, and the number of participants were viewed by some as facilitators.

Dr. John Brant simply stated:

The barrier that we all face is the time factor.

Mr. Rick Williams shared:

Look, the only barriers we've faced is the lack of budgets at times that the universities can give to their departments. And we work with, if somebody comes and they need to, we've got an overnight stay. Sometimes those universities don't have in their budget to pay for that. So, we have to work around that. We work with partnerships. That's where the grants come in. There's a lot of things that can come in to help us mitigate that, but we didn't let it in the past, people would say, I don't have money to do that. Well, we got to figure out how to do it. If it's important, let's not let that be the barrier. So, we've kind of just broken that down because my mindset is, don't worry about money. We'll figure that out.

Mr. Rick Williams shared his thoughts about expanding the geographic location of the Academy.

He shared:

I think it needs to go to the other corners. I don't think it just needs to be I would love to have a presence in Troy. Matter of fact, I'd love to just go back to our 11 in-service centers and see if we can do it that way. Or at least those regions. I know they don't have the capacity to do that and that's not part of their deal. And I wouldn't ever want to put something on somebody. But I would like to use that geographic area as kind of the template so that we could grow as firing and let people in those areas know, hey, you're looking for an assistant principal in Washington County. Well, you got a teacher right here that's ready to be an assistant principal.

Dr. Black shared his thoughts on ways the partnership can improve. He stated:

I think that sometimes attendance can be inconsistent. From what I've gathered, we don't always, like this past time, there were not a lot of people there at the last meeting. So maybe having some kind of commitment from school districts, they're going to do this, that we, and I hate to say

enforce it because I'm not legalistic and I know things come up, but sometimes you got to say, look, if you're signing up for this, then you've got to be here for all these sessions. So, I think that would be one thing I'd like to see it improved on.

Alignment: Connectedness

“I think there is a quiet connection, and it has to do with we all had the keys to the school in our pocket at one time, and it's really special” (Dr. Sears). The innermost circle of the model depicts connectedness or an overlap of relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's Theory of Connectedness implies that the most effective learning happens when partners interactively use resources to enhance cohesion within their own organizations and to strengthen connections with external partners (Jankowski, 2020). Themes were found in the innermost circle of the Reames & Kochan model which revealed the connectedness described by participants during the interviews. In fact, there was very little that wasn't described in the partnership. Dr. Sears feels like their experiences as principal has enhanced the partnership. She explained:

I think what enhanced the partnership is this shared vision and shared mission among the three institutions. I think what's enhanced the partnership is we all sat or mostly sat in the principal's office. The majority of us sat in the principal's office. Six of us had the experience of everything rising and falling. As the principal, that's the old adage, everything rises and falls with the principal. And so when you hold the keys to the school, I just think, I don't want to say your souls are connected, but your hearts are connected. There is a deep understanding of what you've lived through, what you've led. And so very few people who walk the earth know that you know that.

Research Question Two: Facilitating Factors of the Partnership’s Success

The second research question explored factors that partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS). The researcher analyzed the data from responses to the following survey questions that correlate to research question two:

An interesting find is that all the themes that were revealed are contributing factors to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS).

Table 8

Factors That Facilitate and Contribute to the Partnership’s Success

Relational Factors (Themes)	Operational Processes (Themes)	Organizational Structures (Themes)	Broad Categories/ Meta-Themes
Relationships-people are the key Networking Connected		Mentoring to Better the Profession/Help School Leaders State Level Professional Development	People & Relationships
Goal-Build capacity for leadership	Fill the Gap in Knowledge Balance Theory and Practical Application Expertise and Boots on the Ground Experience	Shared Vision Ethics and Belief System Motivated Because Heart Is in It Common Goal of Improving Leaders and Benefitting K-12 Students	Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals Align

		Helping as many Aspiring Leaders as Possible	
Trust Communication Collaboration Accountability	Turnover Requirements for Outreach and Service Need Administrative Support to Participate Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership	Share Resources Same team-leave egos out Balance of Power-pecking order	Expectations & Actions of Partners and Stability & Structure
Visionary/Execution	Continuous Improvement Planning and Implementation Feedback and Evaluations Realistic Expectations about Schedule and Capacity	State Level Professional Development	Continuous Improvement
	Legislation Time Funding Geographic Location Number of Participants	Administrative Support Differences in Requirements for Professors	External Factors and Constraints

Interview data indicated that the broader categories of themes were perceived as facilitators of the partnership. The overarching themes of Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals Align, Expectations & Actions of Partners, Stability & Structure, and Continuous Improvement, will be used to answer research question two.

Meta-Theme: People and Relationships

The people involved and their relationships led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS). These relationships were revealed in responses to survey question one which asked participants to describe their involvement in the partnership; including their role, the history of the partnership and how long they have been involved.

Dr. Helen Hand shared

Well, okay, number one, it's the people I work with. Okay. It's Betty Murphy, Violet Bates and Billy Baker who all three; I adore them and they're wonderful to work with. So that's always, that's enhanced it. Working with Rick Williams and Emily Sands at CLAS has always been a joy. And our relationship just keeps getting stronger with these other projects that we do. I we're actually, I don't know if Emily can handle any more ideas from us, but there's a couple of things we've been talking about that maybe in a year or two we might try to do for assistant principals, maybe some mentoring, take some of the mentoring stuff we're doing for new principals and try maybe through CLAS to start providing some of that for 'em. So, we may do that, but any way we can try to enhance our relationships with these school districts from around the state I think is important. And I think that's what we've been doing. When you consistently get a hundred people to 150 people to come to do this, I think that's pretty good every year. But it's mainly the people and the relationships. And now we've gotten stronger.

Mr. Rick Williams, Director of CLAS, shared:

Well, I've been involved since its inception. Okay. And my role is, I guess kind of the co-founder of it. We had an aspiring, now, not the aspiring administrators, we had aspiring administrators when I got hired in 2017. But it was something we just did a one-off every year. We did an aspiring leaders' program and there was no cohesiveness to it. So, then we started working and partnering with Auburn and Alabama. Okay. And Dr. Emily Sands is the one who's in charge of it and grew it. Okay. From CLAS's side. Okay. And then the academy piece is really her. She's the one that I said, look, I want to grow this. This is doing something. And she said, here's how we can do it. And she did it. She went with Dr. Murphy, Dr. Brant, anybody that was in Alabama, and Auburn and Alice Sears, Helen Hand, those players, Violet Bates. They were the ones that really grew it. I just happened to be the one that just said, yeah, let's do it. After they came up with the idea, they're the ones that did all of the work, put it together, made it happen, so to speak. That's what, there's two different things here. When I look at my leadership style, for all intents and purposes, the vision guy, I'm the vision. I'm the guy that has the idea, but I can't land any of the planes. I don't know how to do that. If you wait for me to do it, we'll just fly around while we're trying to build the plane because I don't know how to build it and I don't know how to make it come to fruition. Well, that's why it's essential for someone like Dr. Sands to be there. Hey, I got this idea. Let's make this beneficial win-win for Auburn, Alabama and CLAS. But I don't know how to do it. So if I'm given any credit, it's just the credit for saying, Hey, let's do this. And then at people that I know that can do it and say, can we do this? And then them saying, yeah. And then at the end of the day, I've got to be figured out how to fund it. I got to figure out how to work to make sure

that we have the capacity to do it and all that kind of stuff. But they're the ones that did all the work.

Rick's leadership style facilitated the creation and implementation of this program, from getting key players involved from both universities that had the capacity to get the work done to making sure resources are there and removing barriers. Dr. Betty Murphy, University of Alabama professor, shared a similar sentiment about the creation of the program and the collaboration between those involved.

Dr. Betty Murphy exclaimed,

Oh gosh, I can't remember what year that started, to tell you the truth. We're probably in the maybe fifth cohort, I'm not sure. So, I've been involved from the beginning, I guess I was the one who started out working with CLAS. We had proposed to have a principal academy and had talked with Rick Williams about that. I mean, he and I can remember sitting in a coffee shop in Tuscaloosa saying, 'Hey, we want to do this Principal Academy. We can't do it without some outside help because we just don't have the capacity with the current faculty. We have to add that on.' Our dean had also talked with him about some partnership. So, we had written this whole Principal Academy proposal. Well then CLAS was also getting some money from the State Department for some professional development. So, the Principal Academy kind of more something that then CLAS was going to take 'em. So once CLAS said, okay, we're going to do this Aspiring Leader conference, and reached out to me, I said, sure. But again, we don't have the capacity to do it on our own. Let's see if we can partner with Auburn. I had partnered with Helen previously on a grant that we had, and I knew some of their areas of expertise would kind of mesh well with some of ours. And that was, we started, and then we all

met, I believe, in Montgomery at the CLAS office and started to work out what that would look like, at least for the first Aspiring Leader conference, which started out to be one day in the fall and one day in the spring, and now it's become a yearlong aspiring leader training. We created the original agenda collectively. We all said, well, what do you think they need? What are we missing? What do they need? What do you hear from principals who are trying to hire? What do you hear from superintendents? What do you hear from new principals that they wish they had had? That kind of thing.

Participants shared about the motivation behind the development of what is now known as the Aspiring Leaders Academy. Their responses also revealed that the people involved and the relationships they have that led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership. All the partnership participants share a passion for mentoring to better the profession and help school leaders. Participating in the partnership provided an opportunity for the Higher Education Institutes to be involved in a state level professional development.

Professor Dr. John Brant from Auburn University shared:

I think the motivation was how can the two flagship universities get more involved with CLAS being a large organization and having a huge footprint as far as their networking, and they had professional development that they were providing. So this was an opportunity for us as practitioners to come in and say, Hey, instead of pulling outside, and I won't say they're always been K 12 when they've done professional development, but let's bring in the experts, those who've been in the schools in Alabama between Auburn and the University of Alabama to really provide that support network. And then an indirect motivation, I think from all of us too, was the potential to recruit students for our various programs. But I think as we started, especially that first year, everyone

coming in has that class A certification. So, for the master's reduced hour, but it was an opportunity for anybody that didn't have their EDS or PhD as a recruiting. But the recruiting was I think, low level fruit forest. But I think it was truly with Auburn being a land grant institution, outreach being very important to what we do and Ed leadership, how can we get involved? How can we support a state organization that then had that footprint across all 67 counties and those city school systems?

Dr. Violet Bates also found merit in reaching students across the state. Bates shared the following:

Well, I think it was twofold. Number one, of course, we're out there recruiting, and when you have the top two institutions over in Alabama out there doing mentoring, people get to know the, they get to know us, and so they feel more comfortable coming to either one of us when it's time for them to enroll in the program. And then secondly, it's a benefit of just being able to be involved. When we say that we have CLAS, we have a state level partnership for us to be involved. That benefits our university because it puts us on a state level saying that we are, even though we prepared as future administrators in our program, we're also working with future administrators at the state level as well.

When asked about the motivation behind the partnership, Dr. Sears shared:

I think the golden thread, as I would call it, the golden thread, is all three institutions, organizations, whatever you want to call them, are committed to the whole state. They're committed to the outreach part of the mission and vision, and you really unpack those words. Like I said, I think that's the golden thread, whether explicitly or implied in those mission and visions. So, I don't think it's a coincidence. It's part of being land grant institutions and Rick being a practitioner before going to a statewide leadership role

understands that as well. And I don't think it hurts that he's been on staff at both Alabama and Auburn. So, he has an understanding of what we're trying to do on a day-to-day basis. I don't want to dismiss Emily in this whole process either, because she's been really instrumental was initially you had asked me how did it get started? I think Rick was initially in the first conversation and gave the go ahead. But the person really in the trenches and working elbow to elbow with us is Emily Sands, who was a superintendent, and she too as a PhD, I think is aligned with us and understands the motivation and the why. Rick's visionary. But it requires, and this may be something with the model, I'm not sure. You can be visionary all you want, but if you don't have people that can execute a really great idea or the model, then is it ever going to be fruitful?

And the right people, number one, who want to be involved, like I said, some people self-selected out, and I think it actually think we were strengthened when some people self-selected out, because you can't someone go to these events and be not fully in touch or not completely relatable to the people, the attendees. And so, I think that's vital.

Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals

One of the benefits of each organization being involved in this partnership is that they share similar beliefs, their vision, mission, and goals are aligned. This has helped sustain or motivate participants to remain personally invested in the partnership. They are motivated to improve aspiring leaders with an overarching goal of helping kids. The experience and expertise of all helps prepare the future leaders.

Mr. Rick Williams shared:

That goes back to growing leaders and one of my big, this is a construct that I'm very keen on in any organization, and that is the leader increasing the leadership capacity of

those under his or her care. Okay. Because what that does is it will allow you to flatten the hierarchy to the extent that you can leverage the great leadership capacity within the building. Some of its latent dormant, and they don't know it until they are given the freedom to try to do it if it makes any sense. And it just takes a few people going, Hey, why am I, you can do this. This is run up your alley, go do this. That's just my philosophy of leadership when I first got hired, people were like, alright, what do we do here? I'm not in charge of technology. You are. Your job is to tell me what we need. And then it is my job to say if we can afford it or not, give me options. And then what's your recommendation? And then if I can't do it, I'll tell you, but if I can, then we'll do it. But if I'm doing your work, then you're not necessary. And I've always been less hire good people, let them do their work, give 'em what they need, trust and verify. You got to verify the work's being done, but you don't micromanage 'em to the point of you're just basically doing it and they're doing it vicariously through you. Why this? Well, that goes back, the leadership capacity means this. I've got to be able to identify as a leader, I need to know what everybody under my care is doing, what their job is. I don't necessarily have to know how to do it per se, but I need to know what their job is and then I need to have plans for, if they came to me one day and said, I'm not going to be here. So I want to build leadership capacity so that someone else could either do that or I'm looking for aspiring people to do that. So, our goal, my goal when I got hired at CLAS was, okay, I want to help assistant principals become principals, and I want to help principals become central office and or superintendents. But if we don't have a ready pool of people ready to be assistant principals, then we're not starting at step one. So that's why the aspiring administrator, so it's a four-pronged thing. It's the aspiring administrator, the assistant

principal, the new principal and the veteran principal, and we're giving all four levels, all the professional learning they can be so that they're constantly reinventing themselves as necessary, working on their stuff, getting better at their craft, and essentially meeting the needs of their students through their faculty to make it as good a place to work as possible.

Dr. Helen Hand stated:

It's everything we've talked about already. My vision, my mission, what I believe in, what I write about and what I research. I really do believe in doing these partnerships. It's important.

Dr. John Brant shared:

So, for me, it goes back to our mission. We are land grant outreaches, 65% of my position now. So truly wanting to give back as a former middle school, high school principal, a high school assistant principal, I know how important that support is. And being able to hear from people in the field is much more valuable than reading what somebody may have researched, who's never been in the school. So, it gives me an opportunity to truly give back across the state in the position that I serve or work with.

Dr. Allen Parks reiterated this belief in improving the profession. He shared:

I think it's two things. Number one, and this goes to everybody. It's our professional, its professionalism, the desire to help improve our profession. Okay. Alright. That's one. The profession of school of instructional leadership. Okay. Secondly, any instructional leader who has, and I'm sure we all have been classroom teachers, we know what these people are going into. And the better we can prepare them, the better the kid's going to be served.

Dr. Billy Baker shared similar notions of motivating factors including relationships, feedback that informs his research which in turn will benefit schools. He stated:

I think it's important that we get aspiring administrators ready for their first job interviews and for their first jobs. And again, it also helps me because in listening to the students and talking with them, we pick up ideas of things that are shifting within the K-12 administrative world and it allows us to adjust our research agendas to meet the needs of our schools. This is one of my favorite quotes I picked up from someone. I was actually interviewing them. My research needs to benefit not only me and the academy, it also needs to benefit the schools that I'm going into to do the research. So, I think that's really what motivates me is that I can do research that benefits the schools that are allowing me to work with and we build those relationships and things like the Aspiring Administrators Academy.

Intrinsic motivation is a driving force for Dr. Sears. Dr. Sears shared:

Well, it's really aligned to what I believe. And so, I not only like the work, it's aligned to what I believe. I mean, it is joyful work. I like the people I'm working with. There are some real internal motivators. It aligns with my values and the people that I admire and respect. I would feel like I was missing out on my purpose and my calling if I was not involved, because my work at Auburn just isn't nine to five, just my Auburn people. It is if I'm truly mentoring school leaders, it's all school leaders. Wherever. It doesn't matter where you were groomed or who you have an affinity for, you're still a school leader. And like I said, that's my purpose to mentor and help aspiring school leaders, sitting school leaders.

Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure

Other facilitating factors that led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership include stability and structure. The relationships that they have developed and the trust they have in each other is beneficial to all, including those who participate in the Aspiring Leaders Academy. The collaborative effort that goes into planning, reflecting, and revising and the collective input, expertise, and experience that each person brings can only benefit aspiring leaders. Another motivating factor is the consistency in people involved and the intentionality of building capacity in others, so it continues. All of the partners want to help sustain the partnership. They are researchers and practitioners. They are selfless, willing to share resources, and are all key players in the field of educational leadership.

Dr. Violet Bates responded:

Honestly, it's probably the relationships that we have with everybody. It's probably the relationship that we have with CLAS and the relationships that we have with Auburn, because I know that I can depend on them. They know that they can depend on me and those relationships all what keeps us going.

Dr. Betty Murphy shared:

I think we've been able to keep some key core people involved, and that's helped a lot. Helen and I have been in it since the beginning, so we kind of started out in it together. I had another colleague who since retired, so he was pretty key originally. Same has been true about Dr. Bryant at Auburn, he's kind of been there beginning, even though his role has changed. And then as new people came on, like Dr. Sears came in, well then, we had Dr. Bates come in and then Dr. Bergeron. So as each of us has had new people come in, we try to bring them into the fold so that we get them going and build capacity and it

can't die down. If I hadn't done that with the new people coming in and Helen hadn't done that, it would be just the two of us trying to pull that together. And we can't do it. It's too much for two people to do. So, sustaining it is meant, making sure it's sustained, making sure that you've put the right people into place. We have a couple of practitioners in Tuscaloosa who've been involved for a long time, and they are determined to continue. So, because we have Ms. Branch and we have Ms. Mays, some really key professionals in the field who also feel it's worthwhile, then it makes us want to continue.

Dr. Black is motivated by the collaboration and giving back. He stated:

So, I think it's coming from the administration side, being in schools. I think that we've lived through so many things that these administrators are, they're going to be faced with. And I think just the desire to see them succeed. I truly want them to succeed because I know when they succeed that these kids are going to succeed. And I just have a strong belief that, I mean, this is our future, these kids and the world's not a great place sometimes, but I really think that we have a chance to change that in how we interact with them and how much we pour into them. So also know it's taxing. So sometimes you just want to be there to kind of uplift the expiring administrators and let 'em know that, hey, it's not always going to be good, but you just want them to keep their bucket filled. That, I guess that's what drives me is I love the collaboration. I love being a resource. If I can help somebody out in any way, I want to give them the knowledge I have so it's not wasted so they can succeed.

Collaboration and consistency have strengthened the partnership. The partners work together and tap into each other's strengths.

Dr. Violet Bates shared:

The professors who are working with us in Auburn are research faculty, Helen, Sears and Andy Pends. Those are research faculty. Whereas the faculty that are working with us from Alabama are clinical faculty, which means that we do more service and teaching than we do research. So that was like a win-win for both of us because we could each build upon our strengths that we brought through the program and that we were able to share with the participants. We've also been consistent. There may be one year where somebody does not do a presentation because no, originally, we set it up where we had the duplicate presentations. Auburn would do one set of presentations, and then Bama would do the exact same presentation. So even if somebody, say for example, Auburn wants to present this particular topic and that person is not able to attend for whatever reason, then somebody from Alabama could step in and say, Hey, we can do it, because we had somebody who's done it before. So yeah, it's worked out pretty good because with us combining it together, it gives us so many different people that can teach different topics or that can present different topics

Dr. Betty Murphy's response was similar. She stated:

I think sharing resources as much as anything. Maybe someone develops a presentation and then the next year maybe UA is going to do that presentation. Well, we don't hesitate to say, well, here's what I used last year. You can use it. You can tweak it. I know Dr. Sears and I; we've done a lot of presentations together and we might do a Zoom session and share and say, okay, who wants to do what? Here are the questions I've thought of. You look at 'em and see what you're thinking. Mark any off you don't like. So we do a lot of going back and forth with materials and just talking about those and sharing.

Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement was a facilitating factor that led to the partnership's creation, development, implementation, and sustainability. There is a shared notion that each participant has high expectations for themselves and the partnership. They continually revise and reflect, are accountable to the partners, and prioritize the partnership. They want the partnership to continue and have created stability and structure through communication, collaboration, planning, and continuous improvement. Planning and implementation are successful because of the collaborative efforts of all. Field notes help the organizations revise and plan the agenda for the Aspiring Leaders Academy a year in advance. Feedback from attendees at the Aspiring Leaders Academy is used to plan, reflect, and revise the plan for the next session.

Dr. Billy Black responded:

We also have good evaluations at the end of the sessions, which makes you think, well, okay, that is worthwhile. They've had some years where participants didn't have to pay a fee and then some years where they did. And that's been interesting too, to see will it continue even if someone has to pay a fee. So anytime that CLAS says to us, we don't think it's, we are losing interest by the participants or it's not getting good evaluations, then that would be a time for us to sit back and say, well, has it run its course? And we're not going to do this anymore. And if we're not, what are we going to do? And I think we're always looking at reflection and that continuous improvement.

Dr. Violet Bates shared:

We take notes from the field, for example, on things. Things that we have experienced personally that we feel that we don't cover well or enough in our program because we can get somebody that can graduate the leadership program semester, there's no way that

they're going to get enough leadership content. We're giving them just the basics. So we've had the opportunity to suggest what presentations that we feel that people need from the field. And then CLAS has been able to tell us that, Hey, we feel like new administrators need more experience than this. So when we set the agenda, it definitely is a collaboration between all three of us as to what we're going to present for the next year and what topics think we want to cover.

Dr. Betty Murphy shared that they collaborate often, use their expertise to benefit group, and continually revise and reflect. She stated:

I can't think of major conflict about the content or who's going to do what. We pretty much all work together and volunteer. We say, well, I'll do that, or That didn't work so well the last time. How can we make it different? How can we improve it? We do a lot of advising and reflecting. They do a follow-up survey at the end and they share that with us. And we always look at what are the comments and concerns, and can we address them? Is it one person or it several people? Sometimes one person has a complaint and if you fix it for that one person, you mess it up for the other 99. Yes. So, you always have to weigh out, well, is this just one person who experienced this and everyone else was fine? We always do look at those evaluations to see what we need to change and what seemed to go well and what didn't.

Research Question Three: Factors that Hinder the Partnership

Research question three explored factors that partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UAB) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS).

Table 9*Factors That Hinder Partnership Success*

Relational Factors (Themes)	Operational Processes (Themes)	Organizational Structures (Themes)	Broad Categories/ Meta-Themes
	Turnover Requirements for Outreach and Service Need Administrative Support to Participate Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership	Balance of Power-pecking order	Stability & Structure
	Legislation Time Funding Geographic Location Number of Participants	Administrative Support Differences in Requirements for Professors	External Factors and Constraints

Factors that were perceived as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership were found in two of the broad categories: external factors and constraints and stability and structure. External factors and constraints include operational and organizational themes. Stability and structure include operational themes and one organizational theme. Operational themes include turnover, requirements for outreach and service, the need for administrative support to participate, which some participants perceived as hindrances. The organizational theme that relates to the broad category or meta-theme of stability and structure is balance of power-pecking order.

Meta-Theme: External Factors and Constraints

Operational themes that were referenced as factors that hindered the partnership are legislation, time, funding, geographic location, and number of participants. Legislation was mentioned by half of the participants. Time was mentioned by nine out of ten participants as a hindrance to the partnership. However, funding, geographic location, and number of participants were viewed by some as facilitators. Organizational themes were administrative support and differences in requirements for professors.

Legislation. Dr. Betty Murphy wondered if current legislation would impact the future of the partnership. She shared:

I'm curious about the new Principal Leadership and Mentoring Act, if there is a principal academy that will come into play for all principals down the road. I'm wondering if that will shift somewhat the content of this, and it might depend on whether CLAS takes that project on. I think there are just a lot of things that are unknowns for the future based on what's happening at the state level.

Funding. Dr. Billy Baker said,

There could be more resources available to fund some of the activities that we do. I think that's an area that is lacking.

However, Mr. Rick Williams feels that funding should not be a barrier. He shared:

Look, the only barriers we've faced is the lack of budgets at times that the universities are able to give to their departments. And we work with, if somebody comes and they need to, we've got an overnight stay. Sometimes those universities don't have in their budget to pay for that. So we have to work around that. We work with partnerships. That's where the grants come in. There's a lot of things that can come in to help us mitigate that, but we

didn't let it in the past, people would say, I don't have money to do that. Well, we got to figure out how to do it. If it's important, let's not let that be the barrier. So, we've kind of just broken that down because my mindset is, don't worry about money. We'll figure that out.

Time. Dr. Helen Hand shared:

No, there is another barrier. I've thought about this. It's the amount of time I have. I only have so much time in a day in a week, and I'm pulled in a lot of different directions. And it is not the physical energy, it's the mental energy and having the mental capacity.

Time and Lack of administrative support could be a barriers. Dr. Violet Bates shared:

One barrier is time. Of course, it's very hard to get all of us together for time's sake in order to agree upon a date or a time that we can all meet. We have a new dean, and so our new dean, she's only been there since January, and so she's coming in implementing her vision. And right now we don't know. We do know that she wants to align. Her vision is to incorporate more state partnerships. So we'll see that maybe it'd be more beneficial for our partnership with CLAS since she's coming into that. Besides time, I would say that's probably the only barrier. We all really work well together. Besides this project, we've been at several conferences. We're all part of a state organization for professors that teach leaders. We're all a member of our regional organization for teaching for professors that teach leadership. So this is just another realm that we work together. We work together quite often, a lot of other projects.

Geographic Location. The geographic location of the Aspiring Leaders Academy was viewed as a hindrance to both the partners and to the aspiring leaders.

Dr. Sears shared:

I think sometimes the physical location can be a barrier because we can't be at all the places, and we want to be accessible to the participants. And how do you do that? And without making it a full-time job, because this is in our case, an outreach part of our job. It's only one little slice of our job, but it's a big carry.

Dr. Allen Park stated:

I just think that that some aspiring leaders don't attend because of the sheer distance they would have to travel.

Number of Participants. Attendance of participants at the Aspiring Leaders Academy is inconsistent.

Dr. Black shared:

I think that sometimes attendance can be inconsistent. From what I've gathered, there were not a lot of people there at the last meeting. So maybe having some kind of commitment from school districts that they're going to do this, and that we, and I hate to say enforce it because I'm not legalistic. I know things come up, but sometimes you've got to say, look, if you're signing up for this, then you've got to be here for all these sessions.

Dr. Sears echoed Dr. Black's concerns about the participants. She stated:

I think another barrier is for the participants, the attendees. They can't always attend. It's hard for them to get substitutes, or it's challenging for them to take a day off. If there's a misalignment in their district, they may not get approved to take a day out of campus to attend. So that weighs on my heart also. Are we really reaching everybody? It's not foolproof, per se.

Mr. Rick Williams' opinion on the number of participants differed from Dr. Sears and Dr. Black. He viewed the number of participants as an external factor that facilitates the Partnership's success. He indicated:

This one's growing like crazy. This Academy keeps growing and we've already had to change the venue. I remember the first time we had it in our building in class, one of the two meetings, and we had, I don't know, 50 people in there. Well, the next year we had to have two different locations. And the one that was in our building, even after splitting it was at 70 people. And I looked at the meeting and I said, we can't harvest it here anymore. So now we use Troy University, Montgomery, and they have a much bigger space, and yet we're getting close to having too much for that space, which is great.

Differences in Requirements for Professors. Organizational themes that were perceived as hindrances were administrative support and differences in requirements for professors. The need for administrative support to participate was mentioned by seven participants. Other perceived barriers are the differences in personnel involved in the partnership and their requirements. The difference in clinical versus tenured professors was mentioned by six of the ten participants and differing requirements for outreach and service was mentioned by eight of the ten participants. The requirements of clinical and tenured faculty are different. Dr. Helen Hand explained:

At almost every university in the country, a professor is measured on three categories, teaching, research, and service. At Auburn, we're measured on teaching, research, service, and outreach. They separate outreach away from service at Auburn because we're a land grant institution. It's because the university, years ago, wanted to have significant attention to outreach in the community, so they separated theirs out. I haven't run into

another university in the country that does this, but I was taught, I was mentored that outreach was significant at Auburn. So that's another part of the reason that I believe in doing this kind of work. This is outreach. Alabama's main personnel has not changed. There is a difference in the way we operate. The only people from Alabama's faculty that are involved in this project since the beginning, since the one-day events back in 2016, were the clinical faculty. And their role is different. Usually in a university from tenure track, their role is to teach and do a lot of outreach and service. They don't have the research component in their distribution, their allocation of what their workload is. Okay. Now I'm a tenure track, so I have a research component. So, what I've tried to do over the years is fix it where I write about what I do. So that's why, for example, that has to do with developing the partnership model was because I was doing a lot of outreach. The only way I was going to get credit for that was to write about these partnerships that I was trying to develop. So, there was a real impetus there for me to do that.

Dr. Betty Murphy noted that differing schedules for clinical vs tenured faculty are barriers. She explained:

I would say time as much as anything and working this into schedules. And if you look at, you've got faculty members from two different universities who are on different types of schedules. Some of us work 12 months, some of us work nine months. Dr. Hand for example, is on, she's a tenured faculty member where we're clinical. So, expectations are a little bit different, but just I think time because you're trying to work, even we had a doodle poll this week to try to set up a planning meeting for next year. And just getting that many people to find common dates that we could all meet can be difficult just

because we're not on the same schedules and we have different priorities for our work time.

Administrative Support. Dr. Black shared:

I think sometimes schedules are a barrier because even though we're all willing to work together, sometimes it's hard to get together. We have a new dean and at the last minute, I was the only one who could represent us all. I'm also the newest to the team. Somebody on the Auburn team got sick. So, all of a sudden it was a lot of schedules didn't mesh. We couldn't meet beforehand to really go over it. So, Jason and I, we got to meet the day before on Zoom, and that was the only time we could meet, even though we knew a month out that this was a possibility. I think scheduling can be a factor, but I don't think it's a big barrier.

Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure

Stability and structure are the broad category that includes operational themes like turnover, requirements for outreach and service, the need for administrative support to participate, and building capacity for others to continue the partnership which some participants perceived as hindrances.

Turnover. Turnover was mentioned by six of the participants. Some participants viewed these themes as facilitating the partnership, while others viewed it as hindering the partnership.

Dr. Emily Sands stated:

Nothing has really hindered the partnership. Of course, maybe some turnover. I know some of the people that we started with, they either decided to at either UA or Auburn, they're no longer working with us, but we've had new people that have come aboard.

Requirements for Outreach and Service. Dr. Helen Hand shared,

One of the barriers would be the type of faculty maybe that are involved. In other words, your tenure track would have a barrier to doing this because they don't have to do very much outreach. So, for them to do that, it's a pretty sizable commitment. A clinical faculty member, it's supposed to be a given that they do this kind of work. For Dr. Sears, Dr. Andy Pends, Dr. Lyla Kenzie and I, it's a sacrifice or they've got to figure out a way to make it work in what they do. And I was able to do that. So, I've never gone away from CLAS. I've always done this since the day it started. I have other faculty members who no longer participate in it, like Dr. Pends doesn't do it and Dr. Kenzie doesn't participate anymore in it. But they did for, I don't know, two, three years at the very beginning they did participate in it. So, Dr. Sears continues to participate in it, and our two clinical faculty participate in it. Dr. Bryant and Dr. Parks.

Need Administrative Support to Participate. Dr. Betty Murphy noted:

Sometimes we've had things like this year, I didn't get to go in the spring. It's the first time I've missed, but we have a new dean, and our new dean came in and said, we're going to have a faculty retreat all day that day. So that took all of us that normally would be there to go to the faculty retreat, and we sent the dean a message and said, hey, we committed to this a year back. We do our planning. We're planning right now for next year. It didn't matter. She was new and that was her priority, and this was above and beyond. So, we just had to say to the rest of the team, we can't be there who can fill in and take our places. So, we all have to be flexible, I guess, realize that we're going to be pulled in different directions and we have to kind of respect that with each other and help each other out.

Dr. Black agrees with Dr. Murphy and fears that the new Dean's vision may not align. He fears that it will affect the partnership and claimed:

My only fear would be, for instance, our college per se, they're not, we're doing this as a service. It's a service that we're doing, and we want to do it. But my fear is that with the new Dean, she took three of our people away one day, and it wasn't that big of a deal. And I feel like it needs to be a bigger deal for the actual college too. The University of Alabama needs to understand this is a big deal. This is the commitment. We're going to honor this. We're improving Alabama by doing this. Now they're not attending Alabama, but that's okay. We are representing Alabama. This has got to be a big deal.

Build Capacity for Others to Continue Partnership. Dr. Betty Murphy noted, I guess just making sure that people stay engaged with it and devoted to it because it's really easy to come up with reasons why you can't make the meeting or you can't present or you're not going to be there, and yet you want to have your name connected that you did it. There's that connection of not only is my name on the line that I helped with it, I really did help with it and my heart was in it. So it's just making sure that everyone involved really stays involved and engaged aged.

Dr. White replied:

My only fear is that the university to take it seriously. I hope that as we get new staff on, we can get people that are just as inspired to help out and work with the CLAS as the current professors are.

Balance of Power/Pecking Order. Dr. Sears shared, I never feel that there's competition among any, whether tenure, track or clinical. It's not that I feel like we're not all here to help one another. I've never been told I couldn't do

something. An awkwardness maybe occurs where many of us study mentoring. So, I don't know if this has come up. And so, I tend to, as a junior faculty member, and this probably is important to your research, so as a junior faculty member, I get quiet. I let the more senior faculty members do like the wellbeing. Many of us have wellbeing. I tend to get quiet and let that senior faculty member. So, we do have a lot of overlap in our research and in what is important to us. I don't know how to, but I think the fact that we are just kind to one another, and no one's really overly aggressive about it, and again, this probably should be added somewhere, is when your junior faculty member, the rank and order still comes into play. That really is so it's like It's paradoxical because, right, so the clinical faculty show up, and it doesn't matter if you're clinical or your tenure track. We're even. and maybe I'm the most junior, so maybe I'm the only one who has felt that about the rank and order. At least that's how, I mean it's going to come out that I'm the only one who's junior. But nonetheless, I think it's something for others who are going to replicate. The model to think about is how do you address rank and order balance of power, and it doesn't even need to be addressed if you have the right people on the team. I never made an issue out of it. I was just like, okay, easy. Go. Do you want to do wellbeing this time? Okay, I'll be sad for a second, but I'm over it. I have varied interests, and so I guess that's something to think about. Does your team have varied interests or are they all excited about the very same topic?

Dr. Black shared:

I think sometimes schedules are a barrier because even though we're all willing to work together, sometimes it's hard to get together. We have a new dean and at the last minute, I was the only one who could represent us all. I'm also the newest to the team. Somebody

on the Auburn team got sick. So, all of a sudden it was a lot of schedules didn't mesh. We couldn't meet beforehand to really go over it. So, Jason and I, we got to meet the day before on Zoom, and that was the only time we could meet, even though we knew a month out that this was a possibility.

Dr. John Brant's perception on the barriers of time and adding mentors limited the involvement of the professors. He stated:

The barrier that we all face is the time factor. When we originally started the Aspiring Leaders, it was more of a one day sit and get, but based on the feedback, it's like, Hey, is there an opportunity to have more time with faculty. This is great. So, responding to the feedback is what led to the redevelopment reiteration of, Hey, let's make this a year long process for the participants. And then those of us from the university, we come in as needed. So, whereas we were there from beginning to end in the very early onset of the program, now many of us are just there for that one day for our part, and then we're not as involved in the others. And some of that is because CLAS, they have their own instructional leader mentors, and so they wanted to tap into, Hey, we have these folks who've gone through our training, we want to use them as mentors. So that kind of put the faculty for some of us we're not needed as much. So that's probably been the one thing that has changed. I won't say it hindered the partnership, but it definitely, as the growth was there, CLAS had to rethink the mentoring aspect of it. What so many people wanted more of instead of a professional development opportunity was how can we make this into a yearlong experience?

Dr. Emily Sands also thought the additional mentors were a hindrance. She shared:

I think one of the other challenges or hindrances or barriers is that our veteran administrators really got to look into the importance of being those mentors for the aspiring administrators. We've really got to do better by allowing them to get out of the building to be able to participate in professional learning.

In conclusion, factors that partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UAB) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS) were found in two of the broad categories or meta-themes: external factors and constraints and stability and structure. External factors and constraints include operational and organizational themes. Stability and structure include operational themes and one organizational theme. Operational themes include turnover, requirements for outreach and service, and the need for administrative support to participate, which some participants perceived as hindrances. The organizational theme related to the broad category or meta-theme of stability and structure is balance of power-pecking order.

Summary

The Reames and Kochan model (2021) was the conceptual framework used for this study. The model “brings leadership preparation programs together with K-12 schools/districts and other educational agencies” (Reames & Kochan, 2021, p. 345). After examining the partnership between two educational leadership programs, Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS), I found that this partnership aligns with Reames and Kochan’s model (2021).

Elements of the theoretical framework for learning partnerships as communities of practice were found in the partnership. Collaboration is the critical element after connectedness

and the level of overlap of the three inner circles (relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes). Understanding the benefits of connectedness and working together are beliefs that lead to successful partnerships (Butcher et al., 2010; Dhillon, 2009; Frick & Frick, 2010). Collective efforts of the professors from educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) and the directors from The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) are beneficial and have enhanced the partnership.

Understanding partnerships and exploring case studies helps leaders build knowledge and apply their ethics to the framework. Leaders are responsible for viewing their organization through the lens of more than one frame at a time. In Chapter 5, I discuss the themes that emerged in my study, after which I describe the relation to the model and the extent to which the partnership reflects the Reames Kochan model (2021). Next, I will describe the overlap found when viewing this model through the lens of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames. I share findings that could be added to the model. I conclude with a suggestion for partnership participants to teach and model partnership development using the insight gained from this case study and the partnership framework provided in the Reames Kochan model (2021).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of the Study

Research on partnerships between university educational leadership programs and professional associations and their impact on developing school leaders is limited. The primary purpose of this case study was to gain insights into a partnership between universities and a professional association, which originated from the State's mandate to revamp aspiring leaders' preparation programs.

Through the voices of those represented in the partnership from the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program, this study highlights their perception of developing and sustaining the partnership and elements they perceived as barriers and facilitators of the partnership. The partnership between CLAS, Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program began with the creation of an aspiring leaders' program. All three organizations share the goal of educating aspiring leaders and have mutual interests in enhancing educational leadership across the State of Alabama. The participants in this study have been partners for seven years. The length of the partnership should provide adequate qualitative data for studying the implementation and sustainability processes (Fullan, 2008).

Multiple data sources were examined to illuminate factors that facilitated or hindered the development and operation of the partnership. The Reames and Kochan model (2021) was the conceptual framework used for this study. The perceptions of the partnership align with the Reames Kochan model (2021).

Elements of the theoretical framework for learning partnerships as communities of practice were found in the partnership. Collaboration, connectedness and overlap of the three inner circles (relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes) were factors that have enhanced the partnership. Very little of the framework wasn't described in the partnership.

The study provides insights to others seeking to create similar partnerships with professional associations and other educational leadership programs or for anyone seeking to create similar partnerships in other fields. It will also provide insights into the validity of the Reames Kochan Partnership Framework (2021) and aid individuals, groups and institutions seeking to form partnership as well as adding to the literature on this topic.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. In what manner if any, does the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describe the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
2. What factors do partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?
3. What factors do partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)?

Review of Methodology

The qualitative method employed was a case study, as they provide a real-world approach with rich descriptions and insight into how and why things happen in a specific context. (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Case study fits the goals and purposes of this study as it provides a rich description of the partnership between Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) Educational Leadership programs, and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) and an analysis of outcomes based on the “hows” and “whys” of this partnership endeavor.

In-depth interviews were conducted, and data were collected from multiple participants. The participants for the study included eight people from educational leadership departments at two universities in Alabama and two directors from CLAS. The use of open-ended questions during the one-on-one interviews, along with asking follow-up questions as the interview progressed, allowed the researcher to gain insights into each participant’s perspective of the partnership, which allowed for more open dialogue. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. To protect the identity of participants, only audio recordings were used, and their responses were transcribed using REV.com. Documents provided by participants regarding the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy were reviewed, used to corroborate data, and provided additional insight into the partnership (Creswell, 2013).

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection process which allowed the researcher to bind the research and adhere to an objective process (Creswell, 2007). The researcher scripted reflective notes and identified themes, patterns and inaccuracies as qualitative data were collected. The researcher created coding boards for a visual representation of themes.

Each partnership participant was assigned a color and their responses were recorded under each theme with colored post it notes. The different colors allowed the researcher to see connections and patterns across the data. Pseudonyms were assigned for each participant to protect their identity.

Significance of the Study

School leaders have a powerful influence on school and student success (Southern Regional Education Board, 2006; The Wallace Foundation, 2009). There is a body of evidence that school/university partnerships can influence the quality of educational leaders' preparation and development (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Levin et al., 2020; Peel et al., 1998; Ungarean et al., 2023; Wenger et al., 2002). Although professional organizations have a role to play in the preparation and development of school leaders (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Peel et al., 1998), there is scant research on partnerships between educational leadership preparation programs and these professional organizations. This research study, which sought to gain insights into the workings of a partnership between CLAS and AU and UA Leadership Programs sought to aid in filling in that research gap. The participants in this study have been partners for seven years. The length of the partnership should provide adequate qualitative data for studying the implementation, impact and sustainability processes of this partnership, which are all of importance when examining the value of educational partnerships (Fullan, 2008).

As the demands placed on school leaders increase and expectations seem insurmountable, partnerships between professional associations and universities may become more valuable and necessary for equipping school leaders to face the challenges of the principalship. This case

study adds to the literature on this topic, adds to the body of research for the educational leadership field, and is of interest to anyone seeking to create similar partnerships in other fields.

The perceptions of the partnership were checked for alignment against the Reames Kochan model (2021). Testing the value and validity of this model should be of value to researchers seeking to foster high quality educational leadership development programs and add value to the body of research in this area of study as a whole.

Delimitations

Factors that narrow the scope of this study include:

1. This case study only investigated the partnership of one professional organization and its partnership with two university educational leadership programs.
2. I am a student in one of the educational leadership programs, so subjectivity or bias could be a limitation.
3. I used the experiences of two professors and a professional association from one state so the findings may not be generalized to all states.

Assumptions

I made the following assumptions regarding this study:

1. Each participant is or was an active member of the partnership process.
2. Participants provided answers that were truthful and gave accurate depictions of their perceptions of the partnership.
3. Participants were not pressured to provide sensitive information relative to partnership development at their university or organization.

Major Findings Related to Literature and Interpretations

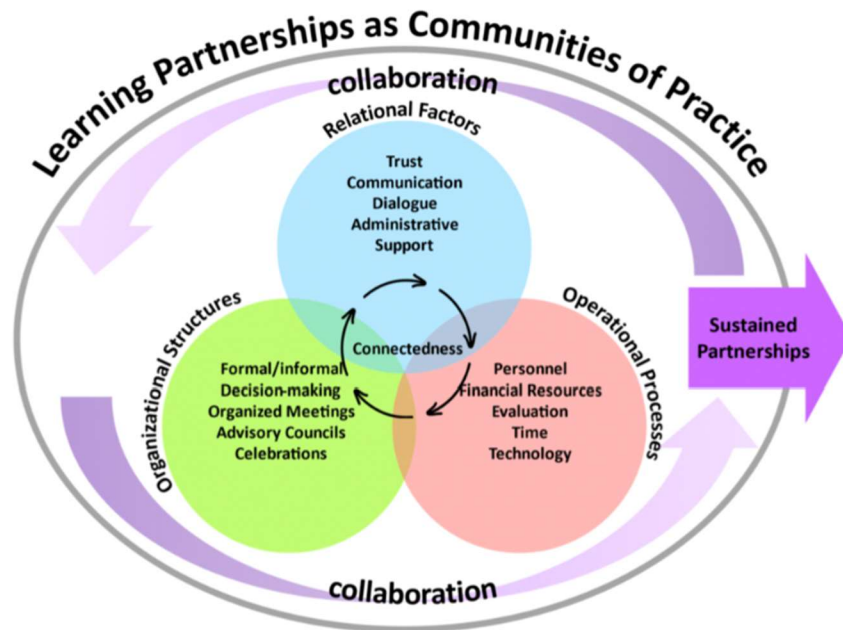
Investigations of partnerships between professional associations and educational leadership programs are limited. Most studies are based on a partnership between two entities, universities and k-12 school districts. However, existing studies reveal that the need for better preparation of new administrators is often the springboard for developing partnerships. (Peel, et al., 1998, Ungarean et al., 2023, DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, Levin et al., 2020). The partnership between CLAS, Auburn University's Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program and began with the creation of an aspiring leaders' program. All three organizations share the goal of educating aspiring leaders and have mutual interests in enhancing educational leadership across the State of Alabama.

Alignment of the Reames & Kochan Model (2021)

Research question one focused on describing the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and whether it is reflective of the Reames and Kochan model (2021). This case study found that the partnership between the educational leadership programs and the professional organization closely aligns with the partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). Elements of the theoretical framework for learning partnerships as communities of practice were found in the partnership. Collaboration, connectedness and overlap of the three inner circles (relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes) were factors that have enhanced the partnership. Very little of the framework was not described in the partnership which provides insights into the validity of the Reames Kochan Partnership Framework (2021).

Figure 5

Reames Kochan Partnership Framework (2021)



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

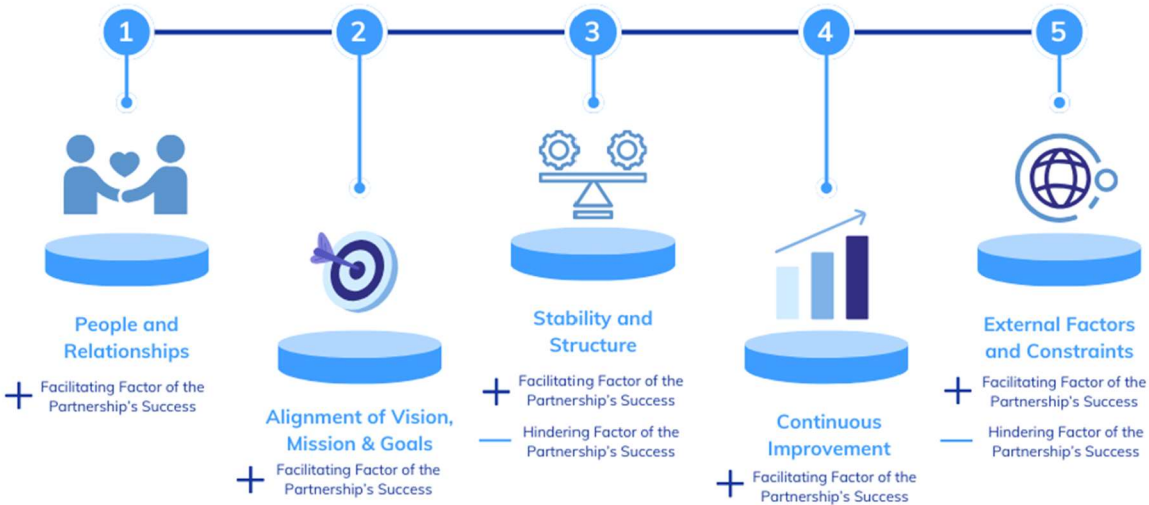
After examining the partnership participants’ responses and other data sources, themes emerged that correspond with the relational factors, operational processes, and organizational structures which are the primary elements of the Reames & Kochan model (2021). Themes were then grouped into five broad categories or meta-themes: People & Relationships, Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals, Stability and Structure, Continuous Improvement and External Factors and Constraints. Factors from these overarching themes were found to facilitate the development and operation of the partnership. Limited factors from two themes, stability and structure theme and external factors and constraints, were found as possible hindrances to the partnership.

Figure 6

Meta-Themes that Facilitate or Hinder the Partnership

Meta-Themes Found in the Partnership

Meta-themes found in the partnership between the educational leadership programs Auburn University (AU), the University of Alabama (UA), and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) facilitate the partnership's development and operation. The researcher found limited factors from two meta-themes, stability and structure, and external factors and constraints, that hindered the partnership.



Alignment: Learning Partnerships as Communities of Practice

The purpose of this section is to illuminate themes that emerged and their relation to the framework of the Reames & Kochan model (2021). An examination of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UAB) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS) began with the outer ring of the Reames & Kochan (2021) model, which depicts learning partnerships as communities of practice.

Research on learning partnerships reveals that goals and purpose influence the dynamics of it (Wenger, 2009; Barnett et al., 2010; Kochan et al., 2021). Themes found through this case study that are reflective of a learning partnership are relationships, collaboration, trust, shared vision, common goal of improving leaders and benefitting K-12 students, fill the gap in knowledge, and balance theory and practical application. These themes were used to assess the

alignment of partnership participants' perceptions with the Reames & Kochan (2021) model's outermost circle. These themes revealed that learning and collaboration exist and are mutually beneficial to all partners, consistent with the model's outer ring.

Alignment: Collaboration

Collaboration amongst educational organizations is integral to efforts to improve schools and leadership preparation programs. Broad category themes were used to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the outermost and innermost circles of this model. The following themes, People & Relationships, Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals, Expectations & Actions, Continuous Improvement and External Factors and Constraints, revealed that learning and collaboration exist and are mutually beneficial to all partners which is consistent with the outer ring of the model. This partnership and collaboration on the Aspiring Leaders Academy led to partners working together in other realms and is the key to sustaining these partnerships.

Alignment: Relational Factors, Organizational Structures, Operational Processes

Data from interviewees' responses corresponds to the three inner circles of the model: the relational, organizational, and operational processes.

Relational Factors (Themes). As participants shared their perceptions of the partnership, themes from the relational component of the model emerged. Relationships and people were highlighted over and over in participants' responses. A common thread was that the people involved are what has enhanced the partnership.

The relational themes revealed through this study were relationships-people are the key, communication, collaboration, visionary/execution, networking, connected, work together in other realms, build capacity for leadership, trust, accountability, recruitment, participation is

mutually beneficial (learn and network). Data was consistent with the relational factors of trust, communication, and administrative support that are featured in the model.

The most prevalent themes highlighted by every participant were relationships, communication, and collaboration. The opportunity for networking, building relationships with others in educational leadership, and helping aspiring leaders were motivation for partners to participate in the Aspiring Leaders Academy. Participation also provided an opportunity for networking and recruiting aspiring administrators. It was found to be mutually beneficial because it keeps the professors informed of current challenges in schools and informs their research. All ten participants' responses included positive sentiments about the people involved in the partnerships, the frequency of communication, and the collaboration between all partners. Participants are not self-serving or only looking out for their university or for themselves. This trusting relationship has led to collaboration in other realms.

Organizational Structures (Themes). The following organizational themes were common threads found in all ten interviews; Mentoring to Better the Profession and Help School Leaders, a Shared Vision, and a Common Goal of Improving Leaders and Benefitting K-12 Students. The researcher found the following organizational themes shared vision, varied research priorities, common goal of improving leaders and benefitting K-12 students, ethics and belief system, motivated because heart is in it, mentoring to better the profession-help school leaders, share resources, administrative support, differences in requirements for professors, helping as many aspiring leaders as possible, same team-leave egos out, balance of power-pecking order, and state level professional development.

The selfless nature of participants was evident in responses. The data revealed that their heart is in it, that they share resources, and that egos are put aside. "Alabama and Auburn

decided to rather be allies instead of adversaries for school leaders. The only time we were going to be adversaries is in the football stadium.” (Dr Sears) Eight out ten participants referred to partners from all three organizations being on the same team. The team of partners rally around their shared passion for helping aspiring leaders and impacting students in k-12 schools. Outreach is part of who they are and what they believe. The collaboration and collective efforts put into planning and implementation were noted. Partners are willing to share resources.

The Reames and Kochan model (2021) depicts examples of organizational structures as formal agreements, decision making processes, advisory councils, celebrations, and scheduled meetings. Examples from the model that arose in participants’ responses were formal agreements, decision making processes and scheduled meetings. An advisory council and celebrations did not emerge as topics during the interviews. Statements or phrases relating to mentoring, having a shared vision, and improving leaders were found in responses from all interviewees. Partners found that participating in the Aspiring Leaders Academy is mutually beneficial because of the opportunity to network and learn from those in the field. The opportunity to help with state level professional development was a theme that emerged. Nine of the ten participants mentioned that they are motivated by their ethics or belief systems. Mentoring is part of who they are and what they value. Recruitment was initially a motivator for some.

Operational Processes (Themes). Operational themes that emerged in the data are continuous improvement, planning and implementation, feedback and evaluations, fill the gap in knowledge, balance theory and practical application, expertise and boots on the ground experience, clinical and tenure professors, requirements for outreach and service, number of participants, turnover, need administrative support to participate, build capacity for others to

continue partnership, realistic expectations about schedule and capacity, legislation, time, funding and geographic location.

Operational processes outlined in the Reames Kochan model (2021) include the evaluation and implementation of adequate resources for personnel, financial and technological needs that impact the organizations and partnership. The researcher found that each of the operational process examples provided by the model were reflected in participants' responses. Operational themes that were referenced by all ten participants include the need to fill the gap in knowledge, the expertise, and boots on the ground experience of the partners, and the continuous improvement for planning, implementation, feedback, and evaluations. Participant "Rick Williams" described the educational leadership programs at Auburn and Alabama as having "a really good balance of people on their staff who are researchers and truly understand what they're talking about and people who are practitioners who have seen it in practice, in the boots on the ground type stuff."

Two operational themes that were frequently noted are the personnel involved in the partnership and outreach requirements. The difference in clinical versus tenured professors was mentioned by six of the ten participants and differing requirements for outreach and service was mentioned by eight of the ten participants. The need to fill the gap in knowledge and provide professional development was mentioned by all ten participants. "There is a need to have aspiring leaders ready to hit the ground running." (Dr. Allen Park) The need for professional development for aspiring leaders was reiterated by all participants.

Essentially, the data revealed that the partnership reflects the three inner circles of the model: the relational, organizational, and operational processes. Those three elements must be reciprocal and the strength of connectedness between organizations and the overlap of those

elements determine whether partnerships flourish or flounder. In the following sections, connectedness and its relation to the Reames & Kochan model (2021) will be discussed.

Alignment: Connectedness

Understanding the benefits of connectedness and working together are beliefs that lead to successful partnerships. (Dhillon, 2009; Butcher et al., 2010; Frick & Frick, 2010) The innermost circle of the model depicts connectedness or an overlap of relational factors, organizational structures, and operational processes. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's Theory of Connectedness implies that the most effective learning happens when partners interactively use resources to enhance cohesion within their own organizations and to strengthen connections with external partners (Jankowski, 2020).

Themes were found in the innermost circle of the Reames & Kochan model which revealed the connectedness described by participants during the interviews. Collective efforts of the professors from educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) and the University of Alabama (UA) and the directors from The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) were found to enhance the partnership and positively impact school leaders in Alabama.

Facilitating Factors of the Partnership's Success

Research question two focused on factors that partnership participants perceived as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS). Data revealed that the broader categories of themes were perceived as facilitators of the partnership. The overarching themes of Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals Align, Expectations & Actions of Partners, Stability &

Structure, and Continuous Improvement, and External Factors and Constraints will be used to answer research question two.

Meta-Theme: People and Relationships Are Facilitators

The people involved and their relationships led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS). All the partnership participants share a passion for mentoring to better the profession and help school leaders. Participating in the partnership provided an opportunity for the Higher Education Institutes to be involved in a state level professional development.

Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission, and Goals are Facilitators

One of the benefits of each organization being involved in this partnership is that they share similar beliefs, their vision, mission, and goals are aligned. This has helped sustain or motivate participants to remain personally invested in the partnership. They are motivated to improve aspiring leaders with an overarching goal of helping kids. The experience and expertise of all helps prepare the future leaders.

Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure Are Facilitators

Other facilitating factors that led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership include stability and structure. The relationships that they have developed and the trust they have in each other is beneficial to all, including those who participate in the Aspiring Leaders Academy. The collaborative effort that goes into planning, reflecting, and revising and the collective input, expertise, and experience that each person brings can only benefit aspiring leaders. Another motivating factor is the consistency in people involved and the intentionality of building capacity in others, so it continues. All of the partners

want to help sustain the partnership. They are researchers and practitioners. They are selfless, willing to share resources, and are all key players in the field of educational leadership.

Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement Is a Facilitator

Continuous improvement was found to be a key indicator of why this partnership works. Dr. Sears shared, “Every single time we come together, it's always in the spirit of continuous improvement.” Partnership participants have high expectations for themselves and the partnership. They revise and reflect when planning and implementing this state level professional development. The Aspiring Leaders Academy and contributions to it are prioritized by partners when creating their schedules. Feedback and evaluations from aspiring leaders that attend the Aspiring Leaders Academy are used to revise, reflect and improve the professional development. A suggestion would be to add a diamond shape to the outer ring of the Reames & Kochan model (2021) to account for continuous improvement as a facilitating factor for improving partnerships.

Figure: 7

Model with the Addition of Continuous Improvement



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

◆ Continuous Improvement

Factors that Hinder the Partnership

Research Question three explored factors that partnership participants perceived as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS).

Factors that were perceived as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership were found in two of the broad categories: external factors and constraints and stability and structure. External factors and constraints include operational and organizational themes. Stability and structure include operational themes and one organizational theme. Operational themes include turnover, requirements for outreach and service, the need for administrative support to participate, which some participants perceived as hindrances. The organizational theme that relates to the broad category of stability and structure is balance of power-pecking order.

Meta-Theme: External Factors and Constraints Hinder Partnership Success

Operational themes that were referenced as factors that hindered the partnership are legislation, time, funding, geographic location, and number of participants. Legislation was mentioned by half of the participants. Time was mentioned by nine out of ten participants and was viewed as the biggest barrier to the partnership. However, funding, geographic location, and number of participants were viewed as hindrances and facilitators. Organizational themes were administrative support and differences in requirements for professors. The need for administrative support to participate was mentioned by seven participants. Other perceived barriers are the differences in personnel involved in the partnership and their requirements. The

difference in clinical versus tenured professors was mentioned by six of the ten participants and differing requirements for outreach and service was mentioned by eight of the ten participants.

Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure Hinder Partnership Success

Stability and structure is the broad category or meta-theme that includes operational themes like turnover, requirements for outreach and service, the need for administrative support to participate, and building capacity for others to continue the partnership which some participants perceived as hindrances. Turnover was mentioned by six of the participants. Some participants viewed these themes as facilitating the partnership, while others viewed it as hindering the partnership. The need for administrative support to participate was referenced by Alabama professors. A new Dean at the University of Alabama planned a retreat for the same day as the May 2024 Aspiring Leaders Academy so only one professor from the University of Alabama was able to participate. One of the partnership participants stated, “The University of Alabama needs to understand this is a big deal. This is the commitment. We're going to honor this. We're improving Alabama by doing this.”

Professors want the partnership to continue and have been intentional about building capacity for others to continue the partnership. Dr. Betty Murphy reiterated this sentiment when she said, “There's that connection of not only is my name on the line that I helped with it, but I really did help with it and my heart was in it.” The balance of power and pecking order was another theme that emerged. The context was always a positive one, with participants emphasizing the collaborative relationship. However, like Dr. Sears mentioned, if the right people weren't involved in the partnership, it could be a barrier. She shared, “I think it's something, for others who are going to replicate the model, to think about. How do you address

rank and order and balance of power? It doesn't even need to be addressed if you have the right people on the team.”

Data revealed that the biggest barriers were time, administrative support and differences in requirements for professors. However, these factors have not hindered the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS). External factors and constraints could be a hindrance to partnership sustainability. However, it did not hinder it because partnership participants expect external factors to arise and collaborate with others to work around constraints. The evidence seems to indicate that the people involved in the partnership, and their collaboration and connections circumvent any barriers that could impact the partnership. Dr. Sears shared, “I can tell you there's a spirit of continuous improvement, and ...a level of excellence that everybody's striving for.” Their attitude and acceptance of external factors allows for planning, accountability, flexibility, and working together. Their experience, expertise, selfless nature, and continuous improvement positively impact aspiring leaders. A suggestion would be to add an arrow to the Reames & Kochan model to account for external factors and constraints that way they do not become barriers to partnerships.

Figure 8

Model with the Addition of External Factors and Constraints



Note. From "A Model for Future Practice and Research," by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

 External Factors and Constraints

Frameworks for Partnership Development

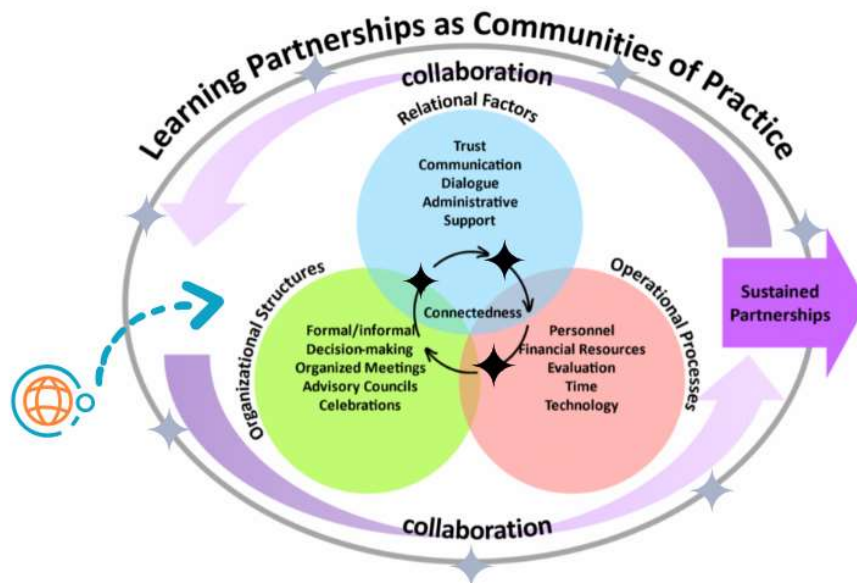
Educational reform initiatives require Alabama Educational Leadership Programs to develop partnerships with school systems as a part of revamping their educational leadership preparation programs. Limited frameworks for developing partnerships exist, and there is also a small body of research on educational leadership preparation and development programs partnering with professional associations to enhance leadership preparation, training and development. The partnership between The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program provides a model for partnership success.

The three models discussed in the literature review include Amey et al.'s partnership development model (2007), Barnett et al.'s typology of partnership model (1999), and the

Reames & Kochan (2015) communities of practice model. A common theme found in all three models is that all partnerships are different and ever evolving. “Because there is not one way to form an interagency partnership, the “one size fits all” approach does not apply” (Barnett et al., 1999, p.493). Adding components to the Reames & Kochan model (2021) to account for continuous improvement and external factors and constraints may provide more details to the framework for partnerships.

Figure 9

Addition of Two Components to the Model



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

◆ Continuous Improvement

🌐 External Factors and Constraints

Understanding partnerships and exploring case studies helps leaders build knowledge and apply their ethics to the framework. Leaders are responsible for viewing their organization through the lens of more than one frame at a time. In this next section, meta-themes that

emerged in the study overlap the Reames Kochan model (2021) and when viewing the partnership through the lens of Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames. Findings could be added to the model. A final suggestion is made for partnership participants to teach and model partnership development using the insight gained from this case study and the partnership framework provided in the Reames Kochan model (2021).

Overlap of Reames and Kochan Model with Bolman and Deal’s

The relational, organizational, and operational factors of partnerships foster or hinder collaboration. The researcher wove theory found in the Reames and Kochan (2021) model into Bolman and Deal’s (2019) four frames. Bolman and Deal’s (2019) four frames that school leaders use to view organizations include Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic. The Structural Frame focuses on policies, goals and clearly defined roles. The Human Resource frame highlights the needs and motivations of the people in the organization. The Political Frame explores the drawbacks of limited resources, power struggles and change initiatives. The Symbolic Frame is geared towards beliefs, vision, and culture. The researcher found threads of the four frames interwoven into the inner circles of the Reames and Kochan framework (2021).

Table 10

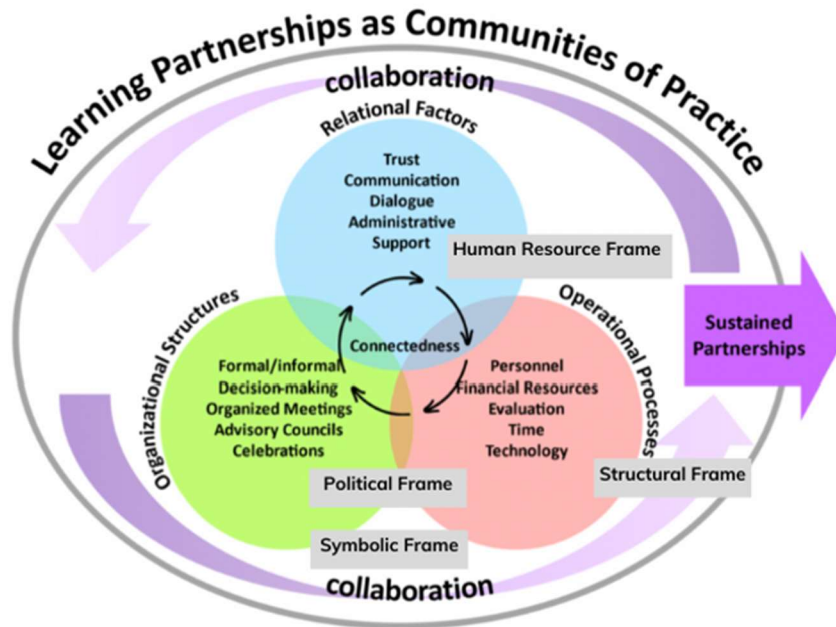
Areas of Overlap in Meta-Themes, Reames and Kochan's Model (2021) and Bolman and Deal's Four Frames

Broad Categories/ Meta-Themes	Reames and Kochan’s Model (2021)	Bolman & Deal’s Four Frames	Overlap
People & Relationships	Relational Factors Connectedness- overlaps all 3 circles	Human Resource Frame	Reames & Kochan’s model Relational Factors Bolman & Deal’s Four Frames Human Resource Frame
Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals Align	Organizational Structures	Symbolic Frame	Reames & Kochan’s model Organizational Structures

			Bolman & Deal's Four Frames Symbolic Frame
Stability & Structure	Operational Processes	Structural Frame	Reames & Kochan's model Operational Processes Bolman & Deal's Four Frames Structural Frame
Continuous Improvement	*Add indicator for continuous improvement	HR Frame Symbolic Political Frame Structural Frame	Reames & Kochan's model Relational Factors Operational Processes Organizational Structures Bolman & Deal's Four Frames HR Frame Symbolic Frame Political Frame Structural Frame
External Factors and Constraints	*Add arrow Relational Factors Operational Processes Organizational Structures	HR Frame Symbolic Political Frame Structural Frame	Reames & Kochan's model Relational Factors Operational Processes Organizational Structures Bolman & Deal's Four Frames HR Frame Symbolic Frame Political Frame Structural Frame

Figure 10

Model with the Overlap of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Meta-Theme: People and Relationships

Reames and Kochan’s (2021) framework emphasizes the human and relational components of partnerships; “These aspects deal with how the individuals within the partnership relate to each other individually and to the group collectively and how they all might be inter-related” (p. 58). The Human Resource Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019) aligns with the relational processes from Reames and Kochan’s framework (2021). Bolman and Deal’s Human Resource Frame focuses on the people. Operational processes from Reames and Kochan’s model (2021) focus on trust, communication, and support from upper-level administrators.

The importance of relationships should be built into the culture of partnerships and organizations. Authors, Kochan et al. (2021) shared this perspective, “And as you know,

relationships in anything are important. People buy-in to the leader before they buy-in to the vision (p. 59).” Rebores (2014) stressed that a leader’s success depends on his/her ability to communicate effectively. “Human beings develop their humanity only within relationships with other humans. Communication is the vehicle for establishing such relationships” (Rebores, 2014).

Other facilitating factors that led to the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership include the expectations and actions of the partners. The relationships that they have developed and the trust they have in each other is beneficial to all, including those who participate in the Aspiring Leaders Academy. The collaborative effort that goes into planning, reflecting, and revising and the collective input, expertise, and experience that each person brings can only benefit aspiring leaders. Another motivating factor is the consistency in people involved and the intentionality of building capacity in others, so it continues. All of the partners want to help sustain the partnership. They are researchers and practitioners. They are selfless, willing to share resources, and are all key players in the field of educational leadership. Dr. Betty Murphy shared, “I think we've been able to keep some key core people involved, and that's helped a lot.” The theme of people and relationships that emerged aligns with the Human Resource Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019), and the relational factors from Reames & Kochan’s model (2021) and all three emphasize the importance of relationships, collaboration and trust.

Meta-Theme: Alignment of Vision, Mission. and Goals

The theme of Alignment of Vision, Mission & Goals links the Political and Symbolic frames (Bolman & Deal, 2019) with Reames and Kochan’s (2021) organizational structures. Reames and Kochan’s (2021) organizational structures include formal decision making,

organized meetings, advisory councils, and celebrations. “The interplay of different interests and scarce resources inevitably leads to conflict” (Bolman & Deal, 2019, p. 63). Conflict was not evident in the partnership because the organizations share similar beliefs, and their vision, mission, and goals are aligned. Auburn University’s Administration of Elementary and Secondary Education program “prepares engaged, collaborative, and effective administrators by integrating theory, reflection, and applied leadership” (Auburn University, 2024, Educational Leadership section). The University of Alabama’s educational leadership program’s mission is to “to prepare ethical and reflective practitioners, researchers, and scholars for work in K-12, higher education, and other educational settings” (University of Alabama, 2024, Educational Leadership section). “Since 1969, CLAS has focused on children by providing school administrators with the professional learning and resources needed to advance public education in Alabama” (CLAS, 2024). Although the missions of each organization were never formally discussed during the development of the partnership, it is apparent that their alignment contributed to the success of the partnership and has helped sustain and motivate participants to remain personally invested in the partnership. They strive to improve aspiring leaders with an overarching goal of positively impacting students. Dr. Black emphasized the expertise and experience partners provide and the motivation behind helping aspiring leaders. He shared, “It allows us to kind of gives them ideas to think about things that they may face and hopefully equips them with more tools in their toolbox.” The experience and expertise of all helps prepare the future leaders.

Meta-Theme: Stability and Structure

Organizations have defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations of people. The meta-theme of Stability and Structure correlate with the Structural Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2019) and with Reames and Kochan’s (2021) operational processes. Bolman and Deal’s Structural Frame

focuses on the logistics, procedures, and the systems in place. Reames and Kochan's (2019) operational processes focus on personnel, financial resources, evaluation, time and technology.

Meta-Theme: Continuous Improvement

The theme of Continuous Improvement links all four frames (Bolman & Deal, 2019) with Reames and Kochan's (2021) model. Bolman and Deal's (2019) four frames provide a lens for leaders to view organizations. The Structural Frame focuses on policies, goals and clearly defined roles. The Human Resource frame highlights the needs and motivations of the people in the organization. The Political Frame explores the drawbacks of limited resources, power struggles and change initiatives. The Symbolic Frame is geared towards beliefs, vision, and culture. The researcher found continuous improvement woven into the partnership when viewed through the lens of each of the four frames and the relational, organizational, and operational circles of the Reames and Kochan framework (2021).

When external factors arise, the collaboration among the partners allows for planning, accountability, flexibility, and working together. This has strengthened the partnership. Bolman and Deal's (2019) four frames provide a lens for leaders to view organizations. The Structural Frame focuses on policies, goals and clearly defined roles. The Human Resource frame highlights the needs and motivations of the people in the organization. The Political Frame explores the drawbacks of limited resources, power struggles and change initiatives. The Symbolic Frame is geared towards beliefs, vision, and culture. The researcher found threads of the four frames including Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic interwoven into the relational, organizational, and operational circles of the Reames and Kochan framework (2021). "If we're not able to show up, we're all aware of that and we just kind of pitch in where we need to," shared Dr. Emily Sands. Butcher et al. (2010) shared that "all personnel involved in

a partnership need to be open to change. Given that initiatives are often implemented to create new knowledge and new growth, it should be expected that those involved will develop and grow (p.38).”

The image below summarizes the findings from this study. It shows the overlap of meta-themes that emerged from perceptions of the partnership, integrates the additions of continuous improvement and external factors and constraints, and highlights the significance of connectedness with a heart, and shows the overlap of Bolman and Deal’s four frames with the relational, organizational, and operational circles of the Reames and Kochan framework (2021).

Figure 11

Overlap of Findings



Note. From “A Model for Future Practice and Research,” by E. H. Reames and F. Kochan, 2021, in F. Kochan, E. H. Reames, and D. M. Griggs (Eds.), *Partnerships for Leadership Preparation and Development: Facilitators, Barriers and Models for Change* (p. 247). Copyright 2021 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

- Bolman & Deal's Four Frames
- Meta-themes
- Connectedness
- External Factors and Constraints
- Continuous Improvement

Implications for Future Research and Application

Literature pertaining to the creation, development, and implementation of partnerships in Educational Leadership Preparation and Development Programs and the factors which influence their success or failure is limited. As noted in earlier chapters, Alabama's reform efforts came with a directive to overhaul Alabama's educational leadership programs in 2005. New instructional leadership standards guided colleges and universities through revamping their leadership preparation programs and creating partnerships. Wang et. al (2018) found it noteworthy when "programs assembled a coherent course of study aligned to national and/or state professional standards, as well as district needs, that integrates theory and practice through active learning and input from faculty with experience in school administration (p. 49)." The State of Alabama aligned standards with a focus on student learning to develop a unified vision for preparing school leaders. The Aspiring Leaders Program "is designed with content to support aspiring school leaders in attaining the essential skills and practice needed to advance to the next level of leadership and is composed of 2 in-person and 4 virtual meetings held October 2023 to May 2024" (CLAS, 2024, Aspiring Leaders Section). The partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and their Aspiring Leaders Academy should provide insight into the benefits of partnering with a professional organization. This success of this partnership can be seen through its alignment with the partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) demonstrates the role that professional organizations play between universities and k-12 schools to provide support for school leaders across Alabama. They can play a key role in advancing the principalship (Manna & Jordan, 2022).

As the scope of preparing future school leaders continues to evolve, incorporating a demand for professional development opportunities through authentic learning experiences will be necessary. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Dodson, 2015; Donmoyer et al., 2012; Reames, 2010; Reed & Kensler, 2010). The Aspiring School Leaders Academy serves as an example of how to support aspiring school leaders through practice and theory.

Research has demonstrated that such partnerships are beneficial, but research on how to build these partnerships successfully is scarce and only a few frameworks for engaging in successful collaborative endeavors (for example, Appley & Winder, 1977; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Reames & Kochan, 2015; Scribner, 2013). This partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and their Aspiring Leaders Academy should provide insight into the benefits of partnering with a professional organization. The partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021) could be used in future studies to test its alignment with other partnerships in education.

Final Thoughts and Conclusion

This case study on the partnership between the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and Educational Leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) and University of Alabama (UA) revealed factors that facilitated the creation, development, implementation, and sustainability of the partnership. The partnership reflects the components of the partnership framework created by Reames & Kochan (2021). In fact, there were very few aspects that did not align.

The people involved in the partnership are what make it work. Their relationships and connection to a larger group of school leaders provides networking opportunities that continue to

sustain the partnership. Partnership participants are connected through similar beliefs and values and their hearts are invested in it and in each other. The mission and visions of the organizations are aligned as well. They believe in preparing future school leaders through a balance of theory and practicality. The partners are selfless and share similar expertise and experiences that mutually benefit all. This group of school leaders have high expectations for themselves which have led to success in their careers. Continuous improvement was found to be a key indicator of why this partnership works. They revise and reflect when planning and implementing this state level professional development. The Aspiring Leaders Academy and contributions to it are prioritized by partners when creating their schedules. Feedback and evaluations from aspiring leaders that attend the Aspiring Leaders Academy are used to revise, reflect, and improve the professional development. External factors and constraints emerged as a meta- theme and could be a hindrance to partnership sustainability. However, it did not hinder the partnership between CLAS and AU and AL because partnership participants expect external factors to arise and collaborate with others to work around constraints. Their attitude and acceptance of external factors allows for planning, accountability, flexibility, and working together. Their communication, collaboration, sharing of resources, humbleness, trust, and accountability are why this partnership works. The success of this partnership should serve as a model for higher ed institutions and professional organizations.

As the demands placed on school leaders increase and expectations seem insurmountable, partnerships between professional associations and universities may become more valuable for equipping school leaders to face challenges. This case study could serve as an example of a model that could be replicated in other states or may provide a foundation for the development and study of similar partnerships in the future. Future exploration of partnerships between

professional associations and educational leadership programs could be conducted using the Reames and Kochan's (2021) model.

I suggest that the partnership participants share about their experience and involvement in the partnership and use the partnership framework created by Reames & Kochan (2021) to teach others about partnership development. This could be included in a session at the Aspiring Leaders Academy but would also be beneficial professional development for current principals. The partnership between educational leadership programs and professional organizations could be replicated in other states. Adding additional features to the model to encourage continuous improvement and accommodate external factors and constraints may make the Reames and Kochan's (2021) model a more effective framework for building and maintaining successful partnerships.

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Appendix A

Revised 07/12/2022

1

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

PROTOCOL REVIEW FORM FULL BOARD or EXPEDITED REVIEW

For assistance, contact: **The Office of Research Compliance (ORC)**

Phone: **334-844-5966** E-Mail: IRBAdmin@auburn.edu Web Address: <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs>

Submit completed form and supporting materials as one PDF through the [IRB Submission Page](#)

Handwritten forms are not accepted. Where links are found hold down the control button (Ctrl) then click the link.

1. Proposed Start Date of Study: 4/1/2024 Today's Date: **December 9, 2023**
Submission Status (Check One): New Revisions (to address IRB Review Comments)
Proposed Review Category (Check One): Full Board (greater than minimal risk) Expedited
If Expedited, Indicate Category(ies) ([Link to Expedited Category Review Sheet](#)) *Click or tap to enter category.*

2. Project Title: Partnerships in Education: A Case Study of CLAS, Auburn, and Alabama Ed Leadership Programs

3. Principal Investigator (PI): Mary Catherine Law Degree(s): Doctoral Candidate
Rank/Title: Graduate Student Department/School: EFLT-College of Ed
Role/responsibilities in this project: Principal Researcher and Auburn Graduate Student responsible for conducting this study; obtaining informed consent; completing interviews and analyzing data.
Preferred Phone Number: 251-458-7145 AU Email: mcc0117@auburn.edu

Faculty Advisor Principal Investigator (if applicable): **Dr. Ellen Hahn**
Rank/Title: Professor Department/School: EFLT-College of Ed
Role/responsibilities in this project: Major Professor/Doctoral Chair-Dissertation Supervisor and advisor. Will provide feedback on dissertation with required revisions to be made
Preferred Phone Number: 334-844-3064 AU Email: reameseh@auburn.edu

Department Head: Dr. William Murrah Department/School: EFLT-College of Ed
Preferred Phone Number: **(334) 844-4460** AU Email: wmm0017@auburn.edu
Role/responsibilities in this project: N/A

4. Funding Support: N/A Internal External Agency: *Click or tap here to enter text.* Pending Received
For federal funding, list funding agency and grant number (if available): *Click or tap here to enter text.*

5. a) List any contractors, sub-contractors, and other entities associated with this project: N/A
b) List any other AU IRB approved protocols associated with this study and describe the association: N/A
c) List any other institutions associated with this study and submit a copy of their IRB approval(s): N/A

Protocol Packet Checklist

Check all applicable boxes. A completed checklist is required.

- Protocol Review Form** (All required signatures included and all sections completed)
(Examples of appended documents are found on the website: <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/sampledocs>)
- CITI Training Certificates** for key personnel
- Consent Form or Information Letter** and any releases (audio, video or photo) that participants will review and/or sign
- Appendix A** "Reference List"
- Appendix B** if e-mails, flyers, advertisements, social media posts, generalized announcements or scripts, etc., will be used to recruit participants.

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
Document for use from
05/06/2024 to -----
Protocol # 24-767 EX 2405

Revised 07/12/2022

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appendix C if data collection sheets, surveys, tests, other recording instruments, interview scripts, etc. will be used for data collection. Attach documents in the order they are listed in item 13c. Continued on Page 2
<input type="checkbox"/> Appendix D if they study will use a debriefing form or will include emergency plans/ procedures and medical referral lists. (A referral list may be attached to the consent document.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Appendix E if research is being conducted at sites other than Auburn University or in cooperation with other entities. A permission letter from the site/ program director must be included indicating their cooperation or involvement in the project. NOTE: If the proposed research is a multi-site project, involving investigators or participants at other academic institutions, hospitals or private research organizations, a letter of IRB approval from each entity is required prior to initiating the project.
<input type="checkbox"/> Appendix F Written evidence of approval by the host country, local IRB or institutions if research is conducted outside the United States

6. General Research Project Characteristics

6A. Research Methodology	
Check all descriptions that best apply to the research methodology.	
Data Source(s): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Data <input type="checkbox"/> Existing Data	Will recorded data directly or indirectly identify participants? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Data collection will involve the use of:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Tests (cognitive diagnostic, aptitude, etc.) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Locations or Tracking Measures <input type="checkbox"/> Physical / Physiological Measures or Specimens <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys / Questionnaires <input type="checkbox"/> Other: artifacts/websites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet / Electronic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> Photos <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Images <input type="checkbox"/> Private records or files
6B. Participant Information	6C. Risks to Participants
Check all descriptors that apply to the TARGET population. (link to definition of target population) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Males <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Females <input type="checkbox"/> AU students Vulnerable Populations <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant Women/Fetuses <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners <input type="checkbox"/> Institutionalized <input type="checkbox"/> Children and / or Adolescents (under age 18 in AL; if minor participants, at least 2 adults must be present during all research procedures that include the minors) Persons with: <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Disadvantages <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Disadvantages <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Disabilities Will participants be compensated? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Identify all risks participants might encounter in this research. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Breach of Confidentiality* <input type="checkbox"/> Coercion <input type="checkbox"/> Deception <input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Psychological <input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (COVID-19, other medical): Click or tap here to enter text. *Note that if the investigator is using or accessing confidential or identifiable data, reach of confidentiality is always a risk.
6D. Corresponding Approval/ Oversight	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the study include participant exposure to radiation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes indicate: <input type="checkbox"/> DEXA <input type="checkbox"/> PQCT <input type="checkbox"/> Other • Is IBC Approval required for this study? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, BUA # Click or tap here to enter text. Expiration Date Click or tap to enter a date. • Is IACUC Approval required for this study? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, PRN # Click or tap here to enter text. Expiration Date Click or tap to enter a date. 	

Revised 07/12/2022

- Does this study involve the Auburn University MRI Center?
 Yes No

Which MRI(s) will be used for this project? (Check all that apply)

- 3T 7T

Does any portion of this project require review by the MRI Safety Advisory Council?

- Yes No

Continued on Page 3

Signature of one MRI Center Representative: _____

Required for all projects involving the AU MRI Center

Appropriate MRI Center Representatives:

- Dr. Thomas S. Denney, Director AU MRI Center
- Dr. Ron Beyers, MR Safety Officer

7. Project Assurances

7A. Principal Investigator's Assurances

1. I certify that all information provided in this application is complete and correct.
2. I understand that, as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of this study, the ethical performance this project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, and strict adherence to any stipulations imposed by the Auburn University IRB.
3. I certify that all individuals involved with the conduct of this project are qualified to carry out their specified roles and responsibilities and are in compliance with Auburn University policies regarding the collection and analysis of the research data.
4. I agree to comply with all Auburn policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects, including, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Conducting the project by qualified personnel according to the approved protocol
 - b. Implementing no changes in the approved protocol or consent form without prior approval from the Office of Research Compliance
 - c. Obtaining the legally effective informed consent from each participant or their legally responsible representative prior to their participation in this project using only the currently approved, stamped consent form
 - d. Promptly reporting significant adverse events and / or effects to the Office of Research Compliance in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
5. If I will be unavailable to direct this research personally, I will arrange for a co-investigator to assume direct responsibility in my absence. This person has not been named as co-investigator in this application, or I will advise ORC, by letter, in advance of such arrangements.
6. I agree to conduct this study only during the period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
7. I will prepare and submit a renewal request and supply all supporting documents to the Office of Research Compliance before the approval period has expired if it is necessary to continue the research project beyond the time period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
8. I will prepare and submit a final report upon completion of this research project.

My signature indicates I have read, understand and agree to conduct this research project in accordance with the assurances listed above.



Mary Catherine Law

Principal Investigator Name

Principal Investigator Signature

12.9.23

Date

7B. Faculty Advisor / Sponsor's Assurances

1. I have read the protocol submitted for this project for content, clarity, and methodology.
2. By my signature as faculty advisor / sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol.
3. I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress. Should problems arise during the course of the study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving them.
4. I assure that the investigator will promptly report significant incidents and / or adverse events and / or effects to the ORC in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.

Revised 07/12/2022

- Does this study involve the Auburn University MRI Center?
 Yes No

Which MRI(s) will be used for this project? (Check all that apply)
 3T 7T

Does any portion of this project require review by the MRI Safety Advisory Council?
 Yes No

Continued on Page 3

Signature of one MRI Center Representative: _____

Required for all projects involving the AU MRI Center

Appropriate MRI Center Representatives:

Dr. Thomas S. Denney, Director AU MRI Center
 Dr. Ron Beyers, MR Safety Officer

7. Project Assurances

7A. Principal Investigator's Assurances

1. I certify that all information provided in this application is complete and correct.
2. I understand that, as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of this study, the ethical performance this project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, and strict adherence to any stipulations imposed by the Auburn University IRB.
3. I certify that all individuals involved with the conduct of this project are qualified to carry out their specified roles and responsibilities and are in compliance with Auburn University policies regarding the collection and analysis of the research data.
4. I agree to comply with all Auburn policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects, including, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Conducting the project by qualified personnel according to the approved protocol
 - b. Implementing no changes in the approved protocol or consent form without prior approval from the Office of Research Compliance
 - c. Obtaining the legally effective informed consent from each participant or their legally responsible representative prior to their participation in this project using only the currently approved, stamped consent form
 - d. Promptly reporting significant adverse events and / or effects to the Office of Research Compliance in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
5. If I will be unavailable to direct this research personally, I will arrange for a co-investigator to assume direct responsibility in my absence. This person has not been named as co-investigator in this application, or I will advise ORC, by letter, in advance of such arrangements.
6. I agree to conduct this study only during the period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
7. I will prepare and submit a renewal request and supply all supporting documents to the Office of Research Compliance before the approval period has expired if it is necessary to continue the research project beyond the time period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
8. I will prepare and submit a final report upon completion of this research project.

My signature indicates I have read, understand and agree to conduct this research project in accordance with the assurances listed above.

Mary Catherine Law

Principal Investigator Name



Principal Investigator Signature

12.9.23

Date

7B. Faculty Advisor / Sponsor's Assurances

1. I have read the protocol submitted for this project for content, clarity, and methodology.
2. By my signature as faculty advisor / sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol.
3. I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress. Should problems arise during the course of the study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving them.
4. I assure that the investigator will promptly report significant incidents and / or adverse events and / or effects to the ORC in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.

Revised 07/12/2022

5. If I will be unavailable, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence, and I will advise the ORC by letter of such arrangements. If the investigator is unable to fulfill requirements for submission of renewals, modifications or the final report, I will assume that responsibility.

Ellen Hahn		
Faculty Advisor / Sponsor Name	Faculty Advisor Signature	Date

Continued on Page 4

7C. Department Head's Assurance

By my signature as department head, I certify that I will cooperate with the administration in the application and enforcement of all Auburn University policies and procedures, as well as all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection and ethical treatment of human participants by researchers in my department

William Murrah		
Department Head Name	Department Head Signature	Date

8. Project Overview:

8A. A summary of relevant research findings leading to this research proposal:

(Cite source; include a "Reference List" as [Appendix A.](#))

Professional standards for today's school leaders implicitly and explicitly state that partnerships and collaboration with internal and external entities are essential. Succession planning for leadership preparation programs is not effective without collaboration amongst partnerships. (Paul, 2022; Mendels, 2016; Anderson and Turnbull, 2019) Research has proven that partnerships are beneficial in preparing aspiring leaders, producing effective leaders, and building better leadership preparation programs (Anderson and Turnbull, 2019; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Hudson 2016; Manna & Jordan, 2022; Reames & Kochan, 2015; Wang, et al., 2018) There is research on how to build successful partnerships between educational entities, there are also some frameworks on building these relationships, that help identify elements that contribute to the success or failure of such partnerships. (Anderson and Turnbull, 2019; Barnett et al., 1999; Bullough et al., 2004; Hudson 2016; Manna & Jordan, 2022; Reames & Kochan, 2015, Wang, et al., 2018). "Succeeding will depend upon renewed efforts by states and local school districts, giving special attention to the state district nexus this report has highlighted, and further work to recruit into the effort other partners inside and outside government" (Anderson and Turnbull, 2019, p. 43). As indicated by the findings and citations above, research indicates that School/University partnerships in educational leadership are beneficial. However, there is not a strong body of research that guides those wishing to form and sustain partnerships between educational leadership programs in universities and professional organizations for principals, focused on enhancing and supporting educational leaders. This study seeks to add to the body of literature on this type of relationship and its value, by testing a research-based model for building a sustainable collaborative partnership between two universities and a state association of principals

8B. A brief summary/abstract of the study methodology, including design, population, and variables of interest.

(350 word maximum, in language understandable to someone who is not familiar with your area of study. Note this summary/abstract can be used to prepare the concise summary in the consent document.):

In an effort to add to the literature about partnership development in educational leadership, the researcher is investigating a partnership between two university educational leadership programs and a statewide principal association. The three organizations represented in the partnership are The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), Auburn University Educational Leadership Program, and the University of Alabama's Educational Leadership Program. Additionally, the study examined whether and in what manner if any, this partnership aligns with a partnership model created by Reames and Kochan (2021). Their model was designed to help educational organizations build and sustain lasting internal and external partnerships. The researcher aimed to assess the alignment of the perceptions of partnership participants with the characteristics

Revised 07/12/2022

outlined in this model. The intent was to provide insight into the AU/ UA and CLAS partnership and to identify the outcomes and benefits for the individuals and organizations involved. Since there is a gap in the literature on partnerships with associations and a need for frameworks on building and maintaining partnerships in education, the findings from this study will be used to develop or expound upon existing research. The researcher wants a thick, rich description of the partnership and perceptions of those involved in the partnership between CLAS Directors and Auburn and Alabama Educational Leadership faculty. Therefore, a qualitative case study methodology was selected to examine the perceived experiences of those that participated in the university/professional association partnership. This method was chosen because a case study is appropriate when "a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, p.13). For this case study in-depth interviews will be conducted. The participants for the study could include up to eleven people from educational leadership departments at two universities in Alabama and directors from CLAS. Participants must give consent before being interviewed. The interviews will be recorded on a cellular device that is password protected. The interviews will then be coded for themes that may occur during the interviews.

9. Purpose

9A. State the purpose of the study and all research questions or aims. (Include a sentence that begins, "The purpose of this study is...")

The purpose of this research is to add to the literature about partnership development in educational leadership by investigating a partnership between two university educational leadership programs and a statewide principal association. "Recent research on school leadership articulates what many educators already know too well: The school principal position is increasingly demanding, and most university-led training doesn't fully prepare candidates for all of the position's challenges" (Paul, 2022, p. 67). The researcher is interested in examining the elements that foster and hinder the success of this partnership. The research questions for this study are: What factors do partnership participants perceive as facilitating the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the directors of the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS)? What factors do partnership participants perceive as hindering the creation, development, implementation, and/or sustainability of the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the directors of the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS)? To what extent and in what manner does the Reames and Kochan model (2021) describe the partnership between educational leadership faculty from the universities of Alabama (UA) and Auburn (AU) and the directors of the Council for Leaders in Alabama School (CLAS)?

9B. Describe how results of this study will be used? (e.g., presentation? publication? thesis? dissertation?)

The results of this study will be used for a dissertation; and may also be used to create publications or presentations.

10. Key Personnel. Describe responsibilities as specifically as possible. Include information on research training or certifications related to this project. **To determine key personnel, see decision tree at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/training>. Submit a copy of CITI training documentation for all key personnel.** (For additional personnel, add lines as needed).

To determine Auburn University HIPAA – covered entities click link to [HIPAA Policy](#).

Revised 07/12/2022

If any key personnel have a formal association with institutions/entities involved in the study (for example is an employee or supervisor at the site research will occur), describe that affiliation. For all non-AU affiliated key personnel, submit a copy of their IRB approval.

Principal Investigator: Mary Catherine Law

Rank/Title: Graduate Student

Email Address: mcc0117@auburn.edu

Degree(s): Ph.D. Candidate

Dept / Affiliation: EFLT

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? **N/A**
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Responsible Conduct of Research-AU Basic RCR Training Feb 12, 2027; Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE Feb 12, 2027; Hot Topics Feb 12, 2027; Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects Feb 12, 2027; Cultural Competence in Research Feb 12, 2027; History and Ethical Principles - SBE Feb 12, 2027; Avoiding Group Harms - U.S. Research Perspectives Feb 12, 2027.

Individual: Ellen Hahn

Rank/Title: Full Professor

Email Address: reamsh@auburn.ed

Degree(s): Ed.D

Dept. / Affiliation: EFLT

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Responsible Conduct of Research 22-January 2026; History and Ethical Principals 28-Sept 2025; International Research 30-Sept-2025; Social and Behavioral Emphasis 29-Jan 2026; Workers as Vulnerable populations 30- Sept 2025; Research and Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 29-January 2025; Audio-Visual 29-Jan 2025; Research with Children 29-Jan 2025. [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

Individual: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rank/Title: [Choose Rank/Title](#)

Email Address: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Degree(s): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Dept. / Affiliation: [Choose Department/School](#)

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

Individual: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rank/Title: [Choose Rank/Title](#)

Email Address: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Degree(s): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Revised 07/12/2022

If any key personnel have a formal association with institutions/entities involved in the study (for example is an employee or supervisor at the site research will occur), describe that affiliation. For all non-AU affiliated key personnel, submit a copy of their IRB approval.

Principal Investigator: Mary Catherine Law

Rank/Title: Graduate Student

Email Address: mcc0117@auburn.edu

Degree(s): Ph.D. Candidate

Dept / Affiliation: EFLT

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? **N/A**
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Responsible Conduct of Research-AU Basic RCR Training Feb 12, 2027; Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE Feb 12, 2027; Hot Topics Feb 12, 2027; Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects Feb 12, 2027; Cultural Competence in Research Feb 12, 2027; History and Ethical Principles - SBE Feb 12, 2027; Avoiding Group Harms - U.S. Research Perspectives Feb 12, 2027.

Individual: Ellen Hahn

Rank/Title: Full Professor

Email Address: reamsh@auburn.edu

Degree(s): Ed.D

Dept. / Affiliation: EFLT

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Responsible Conduct of Research 22-January 2026; History and Ethical Principals 28-Sept 2025; International Research 30-Sept-2025; Social and Behavioral Emphasis 29-Jan 2026; Workers as Vulnerable populations 30- Sept 2025; Research and Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 29-January 2025; Audio-Visual 29-Jan 2025; Research with Children 29-Jan 2025. [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

Individual: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rank/Title: [Choose Rank/Title](#)

Email Address: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Degree(s): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Dept. / Affiliation: [Choose Department/School](#)

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

Individual: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rank/Title: [Choose Rank/Title](#)

Email Address: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Degree(s): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Revised 07/12/2022

Dept. / Affiliation: [Choose Department/School](#)

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)
[Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

Individual: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rank/Title: [Choose Rank/Title](#)

Email Address: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Degree(s): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Dept. / Affiliation: [Choose Department/School](#)

HIPAA Covered Entity? Yes No

Roles / Responsibilities: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- AU affiliated? Yes No If no, name of home institution: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? Yes No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- Completed required CITI training? Yes No If NO, complete the appropriate [CITI basic course](#) and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: [Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)
[Choose a course](#) [Expiration Date](#)

11. Location of research.

11A. List all locations where data collection will occur. If applicable, attach permission letters as Appendix

E. (School systems, organizations, businesses, buildings and room numbers, servers for web surveys, etc.) **Be as specific as possible.** (See sample letters at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/sampledocs>)
Data Collection will occur with directors of CLAS and faculty from educational leadership programs at Auburn University and the University of Alabama. Data Collection will occur on a password protected phone.

11B. Will study data be stored within a HIPAA covered facility? Yes No

If yes, which facility(ies) (To determine AU HIPAA covered entities, go to VII of the [HIPAA Hybrid Entity Policy](#)):
[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

12. Participants (If minor participants, at least 2 adults must be present during all research procedures that include the minors.)

12A. Describe the targeted/ intended participant population for the study. Include the anticipated number of participants and inclusion and exclusion criteria and the procedures to ensure more than 1 adult is present during all research procedures which include the minor.

Check here if existing data will be used and describe the population from whom data was collected including the number of data files.

Check here if permission to access existing data is required and submit a copy of the agreement to access.

Revised 07/12/2022

Participants of this qualitative study will be individuals serving in different roles at each organization (CLAS and faculty from educational leadership programs at Auburn University and the University of Alabama) that participated in partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. Participants will be contacted by email and will receive a letter of consent form as an attachment. If they agree to participate, I will receive written consent from each one before beginning to gather data. The researcher's recruitment script will include how the data will be used. Participants will be reminded to obtain a copy of the informed consent for their own records.

12B. Describe, step-by-step in lay language all procedures to recruit participants. Include in [Appendix B](#) a copy of all e-mails, flyers, advertisements, recruiting scripts, invitations, etc., that will be used to invite people to participate. (See sample documents at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/sampledocs>)

The researcher would like to state that I, Mary Catherine Law, do not have any formal relationships with any of the participants. Participant nominations for this study will come from individuals serving in different roles at each organization that participated in partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. Recommended participants will be contacted by the researcher via email to determine their willingness to participate in the study. Those that agree to participate will be sent an informed consent form to sign and return. Upon receipt of the informed consent form the researcher will contact participants by email and/or telephone to schedule an interview.

12C. Minimum number of participants required to validate the study? 4

Number of participants expected to enroll? 6

Provide the rationale for the number of participants. Six participants will be enough to provide greater context and data for data analysis.

Is there a limit to the number of participants that will be included in the study?

No Yes, the number is eleven people because that is the number of individuals serving in different roles at each organization that participated in partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy.

12D. Describe the process to compensate, amount and method of compensation and/or incentives for participants. [AU Procurement and Business Services \(PBS\) policies](#) (benefits to participants are NOT compensation)

If participants will not be compensated, check here:

Indicate the amount of compensation per procedure and in total: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Indicate the type of compensation: Monetary Incentives

Raffle or Drawing incentive (Include the chances of winning.)

Extra Credit (State the value)

Other

Describe how compensation will be distributed (USPS, email, etc.): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

13. Project Design & Methods

13A. Describe, step-by-step, all procedures and methods that will be used to consent participants. If a waiver is being requested, indicate the waiver, and describe how the study meets the criteria for the waiver. If minors will be enrolled describe the process to obtain parental/ legally authorized guardian permission.

Waiver of Consent (including using existing data)

Waiver of Documentation of Consent (use of Information Letter)

Waiver of Parental Permission (for college students 18 years or younger)

Revised 07/12/2022

All research activities include the use of participants' names, which will be changed to pseudonyms. I will obtain consent for each participant by explaining what the research study is about, what they will be asked to do, the length and time commitment, what the risks and benefits are, how the data will be used, how their privacy will be protected, and that their participation is voluntary. Before beginning the study, each participant will return a signed consent form by email. Participants will then be contacted to schedule a 45-minute interview.

13B. In lay language, understandable by someone not familiar with the area of study, describe the complete research design and methods that will be used to address the purpose. Include a clear description of who, when, where and how data will be collected. Include specific information about participants' time and effort.

The research design for this study is a qualitative case study focusing on interviews. Once an informed consent is received by the researcher, the participant will be contacted by phone or email to set up an interview. The 45-minute interview will take place and be recorded on a personal cellular device which is password protected. The interview will be transcribed for specific codes and themes related to partnerships. Any additional documents will be volunteered by the participants, and, therefore, do not require any additional permissions. The framework utilized in this study is the Reames Kochan Partnership model (2021).

13C. List all data collection instruments used in this project, in the order they appear in Appendix C. (e.g., surveys and questionnaires in the format that will be presented to participants, educational tests, data collection sheets, interview questions, audio/video taping methods etc.)

Data collection instrumentation includes: 1. The interview protocol. 2. Interview data will be collected on a cellular device using a voice recording app. These recordings will not be stored in the cloud to ensure the confidentiality of the information. The device is password protected.

13D. Data analysis: Describe how data will be analyzed. If a data collection form (DCF) will be used, submit a copy of the DCF.

Interview data will be analyzed to gather preliminary information regarding participants' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives related to partnerships. The interviews will be recorded, reviewed, transcribed, and evaluated. Upon completion of data analysis, interpretations and conclusions will be drawn.

13E. List any drugs, medications, supplements, or imaging agents that participants will ingest/ receive during participation in the study or indicate not applicable (N/A).

N/A

14. Risks & Discomforts: List and describe all the risks participants may encounter in this research including risks from item 6d of this form, in this research. If deception will be part of the study, provide the rationale for the deception, describe the debriefing process, and attach a copy of the debriefing form that will be used as Appendix D. (Examples of possible risks are in section #6C)

The risks and discomforts associated with this study are minimal. However, there is a chance of a breach of confidentiality. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in this study is not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered during daily life or everyday conversation. There could be some psychological risk of a participant experiences any discomfort with an interview question.

15. Precautions / Minimization of Risks

15A. Identify and describe all precautions that will be taken to eliminate or reduce risks listed in items 6.c. and 14. If participants can be classified as a "vulnerable" population, describe additional safeguards that will be used to assure the ethical treatment of vulnerable individuals. **If applicable, submit a copy of any emergency plans/procedures and medical referral lists in Appendix D. (Sample documents can be found online at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/sampledocs> precautions)**

The data from this study will be collected by the primary researcher and stored on a secure server in AU Box and confidentiality of information is maintained. The data will only be available to the researchers. Direct access to interviews will only be available to the primary researcher and the dissertation chair. To eliminate and reduce risks of breach of confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to replace participant names. The code list for real names will be kept in a separate location from the data files. To reduce risk of participant discomfort, participants will be reminded that they are not required to respond to any interview question that creates discomfort for them.

15B. If the internet, mobile apps, or other electronic means will be used to collect data, describe confidentiality and/or security precautions that will be used to protect (or not collect) identifiable data? Include protections used during collection of data, transfer of data, and storage of data. If participant data may be obtained and/or stored by apps during the study, describe.

The information collected will only be used for its intended purpose and will not be provided to any other organization or entity. The information will be stored on a secure server in AU Box. Audio recordings will be stored on the researcher's personal cellular device that is password protected. Audio results will not be stored in the cloud to minimize risk in a breach in confidentiality. Once transcription is complete, all audio recordings will be destroyed.

15C. Does this research include purchase(s) that involve technology hardware, software or online services?

YES NO

If YES:

- A. Provide the name of the product Click or tap here to enter text. and the manufacturer of the product Click or tap here to enter text.
- B. Briefly describe use of the product in the proposed human subject's research. Click or tap here to enter text.
- C. To ensure compliance with AU's Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Policy, contact AU IT Vendor Vetting team at vetting@auburn.edu to learn the vendor registration process (prior to completing the purchase).
- D. Include a copy of the documentation of the approval from AU Vetting with the revised submission.

15D. Additional Safeguards

Will DEXA, pQCT, or other devices which emit radiation be used? Yes No

If yes, the IRB will notify the Auburn Department of Risk Management and Safety, who will contact the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and secure approval. Research which includes device(s) which emit radiation may NOT be initiated NOR will IRB stamped consent documents be issued until the IRB is notified of ADPH approval.

Will a Certificate of Confidentiality (CoC) issued by NIH be obtained Yes No If yes, include CoC language in consent documents and include the documentation of CoC approval. Research which includes a CoC may not be initiated NOR will IRB stamped consent documents be issued until the IRB is notified of CoC approval. [AU Required CoC Language](#)

Is the study a [clinical trial](#)? Yes No

If yes, provide the National Clinical Trial (NCT) # Click or tap here to enter text. and include required clinical trial information in all consent documents. [AU Clinical Trial Information](#)

16. Benefits

15. Precautions / Minimization of Risks

- 15A.** Identify and describe all precautions that will be taken to eliminate or reduce risks listed in items 6.c. and 14. If participants can be classified as a “vulnerable” population, describe additional safeguards that will be used to assure the ethical treatment of vulnerable individuals. **If applicable, submit a copy of any emergency plans/procedures and medical referral lists in Appendix D. (Sample documents can be found online at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/sampledocs> precautions)**

The data from this study will be collected by the primary researcher and stored on a secure server in AU Box and confidentiality of information is maintained. The data will only be available to the researchers. Direct access to interviews will only be available to the primary researcher and the dissertation chair. To eliminate and reduce risks of breach of confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to replace participant names. The code list for real names will be kept in a separate location from the data files. To reduce risk of participant discomfort, participants will be reminded that they are not required to respond to any interview question that creates discomfort for them.

- 15B. If the internet, mobile apps, or other electronic means will be used to collect data, describe confidentiality and/or security precautions that will be used to protect (or not collect) identifiable data? Include protections used during collection of data, transfer of data, and storage of data. If participant data may be obtained and/or stored by apps during the study, describe.**

The information collected will only be used for its intended purpose and will not be provided to any other organization or entity. The information will be stored on a secure server in AU Box. Audio recordings will be stored on the researcher’s personal cellular device that is password protected. Audio results will not be stored in the cloud to minimize risk in a breach in confidentiality. Once transcription is complete, all audio recordings will be destroyed.

- 15C. Does this research include purchase(s) that involve technology hardware, software or online services?**

YES NO

If YES:

- A. Provide the name of the product Click or tap here to enter text.
and the manufacturer of the product Click or tap here to enter text.
- B. Briefly describe use of the product in the proposed human subject’s research.
Click or tap here to enter text.
- C. To ensure compliance with AU’s Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Policy, contact AU IT Vendor Vetting team at vetting@auburn.edu to learn the vendor registration process (prior to completing the purchase).
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Will a Certificate of Confidentiality (CoC) issued by NIH be obtained Yes No If yes, include CoC language in consent documents and include the documentation of CoC approval. Research which includes a CoC may not be initiated NOR will IRB stamped consent documents be issued until the IRB is notified of CoC approval. [AU Required CoC Language](#)

Is the study a [clinical trial](#)? Yes No

If yes, provide the National Clinical Trial (NCT) # Click or tap here to enter text. and include required clinical trial information in all consent documents. [AU Clinical Trial Information](#)

16. Benefits

Revised 07/12/2022

16A. List all realistic direct benefits participants can expect by participating in this study. (Compensation is not a benefit) If participants will not directly benefit check here.

Participants include those that were involved in the development and implementation of the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. The benefits of participation are deepening their knowledge and insight into the partnership between CLAS and AU and AL Educational Leadership Programs, which could enhance the existing relationship and Aspiring School Leaders Academy.

16B. List realistic benefits for the general population that may be generated from this study.

The study should provide insights to others seeking to create similar partnerships with professional associations and other educational leadership programs or for anyone seeking to create similar partnerships in other fields. It will also provide insights into the validity of the Reames Kochan Partnership Framework (2021) and aid individuals, groups and institutions seeking to form partnership as well as adding to the literature on this topic. As the demands placed on school leaders increase and expectations seem insurmountable, partnerships between professional associations and universities may become more valuable for equipping school leaders to face challenges. This case study will add to the literature on this topic and can provide a foundation for the development and study of similar partnerships in the future.

17. Protection of Data

17A. Data are collected:

- Anonymously with no direct or indirect coding, link, or awareness by key personnel of who participated in the study (skip to item E)
- Confidentially, but without a link to participant's data to any identifying information (collected as "confidential" but recorded and analyzed "anonymous") (Skip to item E).
- Confidentially with collection and protection of linkages to identifiable information.

17B. If data are collected with identifiers and coded or as coded or linked to identifying information, describe the identifiers and how identifiers are linked to participants' data.

The interviews will be confidential but will only occur with participants who agree to be interviewed. After the participant provides an email address, they will be contacted to schedule an interview. The interviews will not be linked to email addresses. Pseudonyms will be used for participants.

17C. Provide the rationale for need to code participants' data or link the data with identifying information.

Pseudonyms are needed so the researcher can keep participant data consistent.

17D. Describe how and where identifying data and/or code lists will be stored. (Building, room number, AU BOX?) **Describe how the location where data is stored will be secured. For electronic data, describe security measures. If applicable, describe where IRB-approved and participant signed consent documents will be kept on campus for 3 years after the study ends.**

Once the data has been collected, it will be stored on a secure, encrypted server (AU Box) to ensure security and confidentiality of information is maintained. The code list linking the participants to pseudonyms will be kept in a separate location from the data and will be destroyed after all data has been collected and names have been changed to pseudonyms. The secure server for data storage will be AU BOX.

Revised 07/12/2022

17E. Describe how and where data will be stored (e.g., hard copy, audio/ visual files, electronic data, etc.), and how the location where data is stored is separated from identifying data and will be secured. For electronic data, describe security. Note use of a flash drive or portable hard drive is not appropriate if identifiable data will be stored; rather, identifying participant data must be stored on secured servers.

All participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality. All identifying information will be coded and kept in a separate file. All identifiable data, code lists, etc will be kept in AU Box. Audio recordings will be stored on AU Box as well.

17F. List the names of all who will have access to participants' data? (If a student PI, the faculty advisor must have full access and be able to produce study data in the case of a federal or institutional audit.)

Mary Catherine Law, primary investigator, and Dr. Ellen Hahn, faculty advisor, will have access to the participants which will be coded with pseudonyms.

17G. When is the latest date that identifying information or links will be retained and how will that information or links be destroyed? (Check here if only anonymous data will be retained)

All identifying information and links (coding list) will be retained until all data from data sources referenced above have been collected and transcribed. Once interviews have been transcribed and accuracy verified, audio recordings and code lists will be destroyed, no later than March 15, 2025.

Version Date: 2/17/2024

Appendix B Recruitment Telephone Script

My name is Mary Catherine Law, and I am a Ph.D. candidate from the College of Education, Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting on partnerships. You have been chosen as a possible participant in the study because you are affiliated the educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU) or the University of Alabama (UA) or with The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) and these organizations participated in partnership for the Aspiring School Leaders Academy. We believe your knowledge and insight would add great value to research about partnership development in educational leadership. We are hoping you would be willing to consider participation in this research.

As a participant, you would be asked to schedule a time to conduct a forty-five-minute interview, where I would ask you a series of ten questions about your experiences with this partnership. The entire process should take no more than one hour.

(Briefly review information outlined in Informed Consent that might be influence the participants' interest in the study)

Risks: Breach of confidentiality is a minimal risk of the study, due to identifiable data being collected. However, pseudonyms will be used once data has been collected to minimize any associated risk.

Compensation/Benefits: There is no compensation and no direct benefits associated with participation. However, indirect benefits may include reflection on experiences that lead to enhancing or developing successful partnerships between educational entities. Additionally, information from this study may be used develop or expound upon existing frameworks on building and maintaining partnerships in education. However, I cannot promise that you will receive any or all the benefits I have described.

Cost: There is no cost associated with participation in this study.

Privacy: Any data obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. The researcher will use pseudonyms and will not use any identifiable data in the analysis or presentation of information. Findings of the study will be used to inform my dissertation.

If you would like to participate in this research study, I will send you via email the corresponding consent form. Once you sign and return it to me, I will contact you to schedule the interview.

Do you have any questions that I might be able to answer at this time? If so, please feel free to ask them now or you are welcome to email me, mcc0117@auburn.edu or Dr. Ellen Hahn at reamseh@auburn.edu

The researchers will provide a copy of the signed informed consent form to you for your records.

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
Document for use from
05/06/2024 to -----
Protocol # 24-767 EX 2405

RECRUITMENT EMAIL (sent following recruitment phone call)

My name is Mary Catherine Law. I am from the College of Education, Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting a study on "Partnerships in Education: A Case Study of CLAS, Auburn, & Alabama Ed Leadership Programs." I believe your perspective and insight would add great value to this body of research. I am hoping you would be willing to consider participation in this research.

As a participant, you will be asked to schedule a time to conduct a forty-five-minute interview, during which time you will be asked a series of ten questions about your experiences with this partnership. The entire process should take no more than one hour.

(Briefly review information outlined in Informed Consent that might be influence the participant's interest in the study)

Risks: Breach of confidentiality is a minimal risk of the study, due to identifiable data being collected. However, pseudonyms will be used once data has been collected to minimize any associated risk.

Compensation/Benefits: There is no compensation and no direct benefits associated with participation. However, indirect benefits may include reflection on experiences that lead to enhancing or developing successful partnerships between educational entities. Additionally, information from this study may be used develop or expound upon existing frameworks on building and maintaining partnerships in education. However, I cannot promise that you will receive any or all the benefits I have described.

Cost: There is no cost associated with participation in this study.

Privacy: Any data obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. The researchers will use pseudonyms and will not use any identifiable data in the analysis or presentation of information. Findings of the study will be used for presentations or publications.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please respond to this email by returning the attached informed consent document signed and dated. I will provide you with a copy of the document for your records. Upon receiving your informed consent document, you will be contacted to schedule the interview

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them by responding to this email Mary Catherine Law at mcc0117@auburn.edu or Dr. Ellen Hahn at reamseh@auburn.edu

ATTACHED:
Informed Consent Form

<p>The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this Document for use from <u>05/06/2024</u> to <u>-----</u> Protocol # <u>24-767 EX 2405</u></p>
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Appendix C
Interview Questions for Research Participants

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. I have us scheduled for an hour together. Does this still work for you? I want to honor our time constraints.

1. Describe your involvement in the partnership. Include your role, the history of the partnership and how long have you been involved.
2. What was the motivation behind the development of what is now known as the Aspiring Leaders Academy?
3. What was the benefit of your organization being involved in this partnership? Did your vision align with the other organizations?
4. What barriers have you faced? Has anything hindered the partnership?
5. What's worked? What have you found that has enhanced that partnership?
6. Are you still actively involved? If so, what has helped sustain or motivate you to remain personally invested in the partnership?
7. What are some ways that you feel the partnership needs to improve?
8. Do you feel the partnership has improved the preparation of school leaders in Alabama? How?
9. What do you see for the future of the partnership?
10. Are there plans to continue the Aspiring Leaders Academy? Do you see it evolving or being replicated by others?

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Protocol # 24-767 EX 2405



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled

“Partnerships in Education: A Case Study of CLAS, Auburn, & Alabama Ed Leadership Programs”

You are invited to participate in a research study to gain insights into the partnership between educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU), the University of Alabama (UA) and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS). The study is being conducted by Mary Catherine Law – PhD candidate, under the direction of Dr. Ellen Hahn, in the Auburn University College of Education. You were selected as a possible participant because you are affiliated with the partnership between educational leadership programs at Auburn University (AU), the University of Alabama (UA) and The Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools (CLAS) and are age 19 or older.

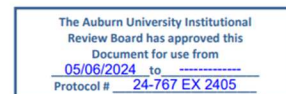
What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to engage in a 45-minute interview with the researcher that includes 10 questions. The interviews will be recorded through a voice recording application located on the researchers’ personal cellular phones. This data will be transcribed by the researchers and destroyed when the study is complete. Your total time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes, which includes the interview components.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risks associated with participating in this study are breach of confidentiality by someone gaining unapproved access to your data or the online data being hacked or intercepted, as occasionally occurs when information is provided via an online format. To minimize these risks, we will use a secure system to collect this data, store all data on a password protected computers, external drives, and cellular devices. However, these measures cannot completely eliminate the potential risk. We will use a pseudonym and all identifying information will be maintained separately from your research data, thus preventing the ability for the data to be linked to you should a breach occur. We will destroy any identifying information after the study has been completed.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to contribute to the data that could provide valuable knowledge and insight related to partnerships with professional associations and other educational leadership programs. This information might provide insights into the validity of the Reames Kochan Partnership Framework (2021) and aid individuals, groups and institutions seeking to form partnership as well as adding to the literature on this topic. We cannot promise you that you will receive any or all the benefits described.

Participants Initials_____

Page 1 of 2



4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

Will you receive compensation for participating? Participation in this study is voluntary and there is not an associated compensation.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, you will not incur any costs associated with participation in this study. Auburn University has not provided for any payment if you are harmed as a result of participating in this study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn if it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Education.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be stored securely on the researchers' computers which will be de-identified and will not include any of your personal contact information. If we quote you, we will use pseudonyms (fake names).

If you have questions about this study, please contact me, Mary Catherine Law at (251)458-7145 or by email at mcc0117@auburn.edu or Dr. Ellen Hahn at (334) 844-3067 or reamseh@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to for your records.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844- 5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's Signature Date

Printed Name

Investigator Obtaining Consent Date

Printed Name

Co-Investigator Date

Printed Name

Page 2 of 2

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this [Requirements Report](#) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Ellen Hahn (ID: 944893)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Auburn University (ID: 964)
- **Institution Email:** reamseh@auburn.edu
- **Institution Unit:** efit
- **Phone:** 7065737563

- **Curriculum Group:** Responsible Conduct of Research
- **Course Learner Group:** AU Basic RCR Training for ALL Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, and Students
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - RCR
- **Description:** This course is for investigators, staff and students with an interest or focus in **Biomedical Research**. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

- **Record ID:** 50319525
- **Completion Date:** 22-Jan-2023
- **Expiration Date:** 22-Jan-2026
- **Minimum Passing:** 90
- **Reported Score*:** 94

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Authorship (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16597)	01-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16598)	01-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16599)	22-Jan-2023	3/5 (60%)
Data Management (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16600)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Mentoring (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16602)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16603)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Research Misconduct (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16604)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Plagiarism (RCR-Basic) (ID: 15156)	22-Jan-2023	4/5 (80%)
Using Animal Subjects in Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 13301)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR-Basic) (ID: 13566)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k32efb3d7-be1c-41e0-ab33-c7c4d78b35a1-50319525

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
 Email: support@citiprogram.org
 Phone: 888-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this [Transcript Report](#) reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Ellen Hahn (ID: 944893)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Auburn University (ID: 964)
- **Institution Email:** reamseh@auburn.edu
- **Institution Unit:** efit
- **Phone:** 7065737563

- **Curriculum Group:** Responsible Conduct of Research
- **Course Learner Group:** AU Basic RCR Training for ALL Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, and Students
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - RCR
- **Description:** This course is for investigators, staff and students with an interest or focus in **Biomedical Research**. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

- **Record ID:** 50319525
- **Report Date:** 22-Jan-2023
- **Current Score**:** 94

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Using Animal Subjects in Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 13301)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR-Basic) (ID: 13566)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Plagiarism (RCR-Basic) (ID: 15156)	22-Jan-2023	4/5 (80%)
Authorship (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16597)	01-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16598)	01-Oct-2022	5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16599)	22-Jan-2023	3/5 (60%)
Data Management (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16600)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Mentoring (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16602)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16603)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)
Research Misconduct (RCR-Basic) (ID: 16604)	22-Jan-2023	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

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COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this [Requirements Report](#) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Ellen Hahn (ID: 944893)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Auburn University (ID: 964)
- **Institution Email:** reamseh@auburn.edu
- **Institution Unit:** efit
- **Phone:** 7065737563

- **Curriculum Group:** IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel - Basic/Refresher
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Key Personnel (including AU Faculty, Staff and Students) and Faculty Advisors involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

- **Record ID:** 48419823
- **Completion Date:** 30-Jan-2022
- **Expiration Date:** 29-Jan-2025
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 91

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	30-Jan-2022	3/3 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	30-Jan-2022	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	30-Jan-2022	3/5 (60%)
Students in Research (ID: 1321)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?ka761743c-52ab-4fd8-8a05-7b0469caabf2-48419823

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COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Ellen Hahn (ID: 944893)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Auburn University (ID: 964)
- **Institution Email:** reamseh@auburn.edu
- **Institution Unit:** eft
- **Phone:** 7065737563

- **Curriculum Group:** IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel - Basic/Refresher
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Key Personnel (including AU Faculty, Staff and Students) and Faculty Advisors involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

- **Record ID:** 48419823
- **Report Date:** 22-Jan-2023
- **Current Score**:** 91

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Students in Research (ID: 1321)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	30-Jan-2022	3/3 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	30-Jan-2022	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	30-Jan-2022	3/5 (60%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	30-Jan-2022	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

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 Phone: 888-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>



Completion Date 12-Feb-2024
Expiration Date 12-Feb-2027
Record ID 61219782

This is to certify that:

Mary Law

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Responsible Conduct of Research
(Curriculum Group)
AU Basic RCR Training for ALL Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, and Students
(Course Learner Group)
1 - RCR
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
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Completion Date 12-Feb-2024
Expiration Date 12-Feb-2027
Record ID 61219781

This is to certify that:

Mary Law

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

IRB Additional Modules
(Curriculum Group)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University



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Completion Date 27-Feb-2024
Expiration Date 27-Feb-2027
Record ID 61219775

This is to certify that:

Mary Law

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel - Basic/Refresher
(Curriculum Group)
IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University



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