

A MODEL OF MENTORING EXCELLENCE

HIGHLIGHTING A GOLD ACCREDITATION PROGRAM AWARDEE

*Carol Riley, IMA Executive Board Member
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*Learn about the process and benefits of the International Mentoring Association
Accreditation!*

The International Mentoring Association has recognized an outstanding organization for its contributions to the field of mentoring in the K-12 community through awarding Gold Accreditation status. The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) was formed by a group of trailblazers at Kansas State University to meet the needs of new school principals and other school administrators through an initiative that supports, guides, and develops school leadership. KELI has received the highest accreditation level through its efficient management, program development, and evaluation processes. Through achieving the IMA standards, presenting clear objectives, and achieving results, KELI serves as a model of excellence. Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, at Kansas State University shares her thoughts and experiences in the following interview.

KELI has recently been awarded the IMA Gold Accreditation for its work in mentoring program development, implementation, and assessment. What encouraged you to become engaged in the IMA accreditation process?

I have been attending the UNM Mentoring Conference for several years and have had the opportunity to meet professionals in the field of mentoring and presented on KELI's mentoring program. I also had the opportunity to attend the IMA conference at Auburn University Spring 2016 and attended a breakout session on the accreditation process. As I listened, I felt our program was meeting many of the goals and objectives outlined for accreditation. I was pretty excited and when I returned to my university, I shared the information with our current executive director and department chair. They were equally interested and we began discussion about the possibility of applying with the support of the College of Education Dean, KELI staff, and our district level mentors. All were very interested and felt that this achievement would benefit KELI in many ways. That fall, our new KELI executive director and myself secured approval from the College of Education and our Department Chair to begin work towards applying for accreditation.

Approximately how long did it take KELI to complete the application from the initial discussion to the final submission?

We started discussion in April 2016. We continued that dialogue in the fall of 2016. The actual compilation of the application packet began in late fall and we submitted our application packet end of May 2017. The initial phase of collecting and reviewing documents took approximately 4 months.... working on/off on the project during that time. The writing of the narrative took approximately 1 month... again working on/off. The review and organization of the packet took about 2 months. Organizing our extensive files in a way that would be meaningful and aligned to the application requirements was probably the most time consuming.

Who did you involve in collecting evidence and writing the application?

I involved our KELI staff (3 others) in collecting evidence. These individuals had been involved with the program the longest and understood the history. I involved the current and founding executive directors (2) and department chair in providing feedback to the written narrative.

Please share a brief overview of your program.

The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) is a mentoring and induction program for new educational leaders in Kansas. It is the product of extensive collaborative planning across state professional educational organizations and agencies looking for a way to make the quality of mentoring described in research and best practice available to educators as they become building and district level leaders in Kansas's schools. KELI's mission is *to collaborate and share resources to support professional growth of educational leaders needed in Kansas schools for the 21st Century*. The mission is further divided into two strands: the mentoring and induction of new Kansas leaders (i.e., superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, assistant principals, special education directors and assistant directors/coordinators) and ongoing professional learning opportunities for *all* Kansas school and district leaders and leadership teams. The program's five-year plans place a high priority on each strand of the mission statement. A hallmark of KELI is collaboration with partner organizations. Partner representation includes the Kansas State University College of Education (KSU COE), Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), United School Administrators of Kansas (USA-KS), Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), and Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA). KELI is governed by a partner-based steering committee and an advisory council comprised of field-based practitioners.

What is the purpose of the KELI program?

The purpose of KELI is to provide mentoring and induction to first year district and building educational leaders in Kansas and to offer high quality professional learning for all Kansas leaders. These program goals are designed to build leadership capacity in new school and district leaders through on-site, face-to-face mentoring by carefully selected mentors and outlined networking requirements to increase professional growth and learning. Mentors offer support on initial practice issues facing new school and district

leaders as well as build understanding of the impact of decision making in the local setting, while respecting the mentee's individual leadership style.

How have you used the IMA Gold Accreditation designation to enhance your program mission and/or what plans do you have for the future?

With the upcoming school year, we plan to highly publicize KELI's accomplishments statewide. New leaders do have a choice in the selection of their mentoring program so this will definitely acknowledge the quality of KELI's program structure along with the experienced and trained mentors serving new leaders in the state. The College of Education has done an initial press release, as KELI is included in the Kansas State University 2025 strategic plan. We will include this in our state/national presentations and share with our state partner organizations. We will use the feedback provided in the written report to further target and improve our program based on IMA's expert recommendations.

What did you gain from this process and were the recommendations relevant to your work?

I think it was valuable in process and outcome. As we reviewed program documentation and our procedures, we were able to see where meaningful change or improvement might be needed to further enhance our delivery and mentoring to new leaders based on IMA mentoring standards. There are areas where we are purposeful about the way we do things but continued reflection is critical to any program improvement initiatives. It was validating to know where our program has strengths and where these can continue to build in further service.

I would like to share that the IMA review team was responsive and willing to work with our program in shaping our accreditation proposal to fit both the expectations of program review as well as how to best share our documentation in a meaningful format. They were great to work with...offering opportunities for change in interview schedules and format with program participants and being available to answer questions. It made the process very easy to work through and the turn around time was outstanding.

Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw can be contacted at Kansas State University at donna5@ksu.edu with questions about the KELI program.

For additional information on the IMA Accreditation Program, visit the IMA website at www.mentoringassociation.org