Inaugural UCEA International Summit at the 2012 Convention

On Sunday, November 18, 2012, following the 2012 UCEA Convention, the inaugural International Summit was held at the Morgridge College of Education on the University of Denver campus. The planning committee (Michelle Young, Cindy Reed, Susan Korach, Tom Alsbury, Meredith Mountford, and Bruce Barnett) developed sessions to allow participants to share diverse perspectives on leadership preparation and development, examine existing international research collaboratives, and identify critical issues for future international research. Participants attended from many regions of the world, including Africa (Kenya), Australia, Central America (Costa Rica), Europe (Finland, Sweden), the Middle East (Saudi Arabia), New Zealand, and the United States. Highlights of the day included the following:

• Mika Risku, assistant director of the Institute of Educational Leadership at the University of Jyvaskyla (Finland), gave the keynote address, “USA–Finland and the Almost Trans-Atlantic Connection in Education.” The presentation was simulcast to University of Jyvaskyla, allowing for interaction between participants in Denver and Finland. Mika compared the ways in which Finland and the United States deal with PISA results, equity, the mission of education, education and society, evaluation, and school culture.

• Roundtable discussions were conducted by colleagues involved in three international research projects (International Successful School Principal Project, International Study of the Preparation of Principals, and International School Leadership Development Network). They shared their experiences managing and sustaining international research projects, understanding different cultural contexts and concepts, designing studies to obtain comparable data, and examining the realities of leadership in high-need schools.

• Meredith Mountford and Tom Alsbury facilitated a discussion about sustaining international research projects. They shared their views and solicited reactions on how international research can alter our perspectives, the importance of funding, and the importance of accommodating the needs of different team members.

Participants acknowledged important insights they gained about the complexities of engaging in international research and development projects. In particular, they mentioned the importance of understanding the assumptions, vocabulary, structures, and policies of countries involved in international research; the need for funding to support multinational research; and the value of
having common goals, activities, and distributed leadership across the team. Comments from participants illustrate these insights:

• “International research should become a common way of researching.”

• “The benefit of international research is the richness of differences in cultures and practices which continues to challenge our beliefs and practices.”

• “International research is hard, difficult, negotiated work.”

• “International research rewards those who participate in it and stimulates new ways of thinking, being, and acting that can enrich researchers for life.”

• “International research projects, no matter what the topic, require patience, cooperation, flexibility, and synthesis.” Based on the success of this initial experience, participants enthusiastically endorsed holding another International Summit following the 2013 UCEA Convention in Indianapolis. President Cindy Reed and Executive Director Michelle Young have agreed that the next International Summit will be Sunday, November 10, 2013. More information about this event will be distributed as the details are known. If you have questions or suggestions for the summit, please contact Bruce Barnett, UCEA Associate Director of International Affairs (bruce.barnett@utsa.edu), at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

2013 International Summit: Sunday, November 10