

UCCS College of Education Leadership, Research, & Foundations
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS

P-12 E-Newsletter
Fall 2026
MA in Leadership and Advanced License Programs

Greetings from the Advanced License Faculty Director



We hope the first three months of the school year have been going well for you. This fall brings both celebrations and new beginnings. We congratulate Dr. Margaret Scott and Karin Reynolds on their transition to retirement, and we are grateful that they both continue to teach in the program. We are also delighted to introduce our new Assistant Teaching Professors, Dr. Colleen O'Neil and Dr. Misty Jaramillo. Both are alumni of our program who bring rich professional leadership experience to our students.

In this issue, you will find highlights of our students' and alumni's accomplishments. You will also find news about the launch of two new in-person principal licensure cohorts: one in partnership with Harrison School District Two and a new Regional Cohort. Finally, please save the date for our annual Mock Interviews on Saturday, January 23, 2027. We look forward to seeing you there!

Elizabeth Domangue, PhD
Faculty Director, Advanced Licensure Program

Mock Interviews

We have begun planning for our annual Mock Interviews event on **Saturday, January 23, 2027**. This professional opportunity is designed to prepare you for the spring hiring season. Thank you to those who have already signed up! Educational leaders from across the region serve on the interview panels. In addition to conducting the mock interview, panelists provide feedback on your résumé, philosophy statement, and interview performance. We will send event details to all candidates by December 1, 2026.

Spots are limited, so if you are interested, please complete this brief form as soon as possible: UCCS: Mock Interview Preparation (Interviewees).

If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Domangue at edomangu@uccs.edu.

Spring and Summer 2026 Graduates



Congratulations to our Principal Licensure + MA in Leadership graduates!

Christina Jennifer Boyer
Nan Hargett
Haley Johnson
Heather McGrath
Madylyn Otten
Chante Deje Rue
Justin Vollmuth
Eric Wester
Jessica Lynn Wilkinson
Courtney Hannah Yates

Instructor Spotlights – Two Alumni Come Home to Teach

Misty Jaramillo, PhD



Dr. Misty Jaramillo is an Instructional, Research, and Clinical Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations in the College of Education at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. She earned her PhD in Educational Research, Leadership, and Policy from UCCS; an MA in School Leadership from Adams State College; an MA in Curriculum Theory from Lesley University; and a BA in Child Psychology with a minor in Elementary Education from Colorado State University Pueblo. Dr. Jaramillo teaches courses in the K-12 Advanced Licensure Program.

Dr. Jaramillo has served in public education for 30 years: 14 years as an elementary school teacher and 16 years as an elementary school principal. In addition to her hands-on work in schools, she has served as an adjunct professor, inspiring future administrators with practical insights and research-driven strategies. Her school-based leadership experience offers valuable perspective on educational leadership and reform. In 2024, Dr. Jaramillo was honored as a finalist for Colorado Principal of the Year. Contact: mjaram11@uccs.edu

Colleen O'Neil, EdD



Dr. Colleen O'Neil brings 30 years of education leadership experience spanning the classroom as an English teacher, the school building as an assistant principal, the district office as a chief human resources officer, the state capitol as a policy advocate, and higher education as a graduate faculty member. As Colorado's Associate Commissioner of Educator Talent from 2013 to 2024, she led statewide strategy for educator preparation, licensing, effectiveness, and retention. During her tenure at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), she helped launch the TEACH Colorado recruitment initiative and the Principal Leadership Institute. She has taught graduate courses at the University of Virginia and the University of New Mexico. In addition to her role as an Assistant Teaching Professor at UCCS, she is the founder of CKID Consulting, an education strategy and advising firm.

Dr. O'Neil is honored to join UCCS, where she supports aspiring leaders in connecting theory to practice and policy while working to expand leadership pathways across Colorado. Contact: coneil3@uccs.edu

Spring 2026 MA in Leadership Outstanding Graduate



Haley Johnson, MA

Assistant Principal, Webster Elementary School, Widefield School District 3

Congratulations to Haley Johnson, who was recognized as the Outstanding Graduate Student of the Spring 2026 graduating class in the MA in Leadership and Principal Licensure Program. She said,

"During my time at UCCS, I participated in the Principal Licensure Program and ultimately graduated with my Master of Arts in Leadership. My experience in the program was truly one of the most meaningful and

rewarding times of my life. I had the opportunity to form relationships with colleagues from across the Pikes Peak region while learning from some of the most knowledgeable, experienced, and inspiring educational leaders in our community.

One of the program's most valuable aspects was learning alongside and from leaders representing many districts and educational settings across the region. These experiences broadened my perspective on leadership, challenged my thinking, and strengthened my understanding of what it means to lead with purpose, build meaningful relationships, and support both educators and students.

I genuinely cannot say enough positive things about my experience. The program was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that provided me with far more than I could have anticipated. I am incredibly grateful for the knowledge I gained and for the dedicated UCCS faculty and educational leaders who invested in my growth throughout the journey. As a result, I have been fortunate to take the next step in my career, transitioning from the classroom to my current role as an assistant principal at an elementary school in Widefield School District 3. I carry the lessons and experiences from my time at UCCS into my work each day, and I am excited to continue growing as a leader and making a positive impact on students, staff, and the school community."

New Leadership Positions for UCCS Students and Alumni

Congratulations to the following UCCS students and alumni on their new leadership positions!

- **Justin Abbott**, Dean, Rampart High School, Academy School District 20
- **Beth Allen**, Interim Principal, Keller Elementary School, Colorado Springs School District 11
- **Christina Boyer**, Assistant Principal, North High School, Colorado Springs School District 11
- **Haley Johnson**, Assistant Principal, Webster Elementary School, Widefield School District 3
- **Michael Landis**, Board Member, Widefield School District 3; Operations Manager, The MiLL
- **Heather McGrath**, Assistant Principal, Doherty High School, Colorado Springs School District 11
- **Amanda Wise**, Dean of Students, Sand Creek High School, Falcon School District 49

Amanda Wise will graduate in December 2026. She shared,

> *"This program has given me both the practical and the ethical foundation that my new role requires. The courses I have taken have taught me how to give feedback that will actually change practice, while also preparing me to make defensible decisions in the areas of student discipline, due process, and family communication—areas where a dean's judgment carries the most weight. It has also pushed me to approach attendance patterns with curiosity about the systems in place, not just to question the individual. All in all, this program has prepared me to consistently support students and teachers in ways that are both legally sound and grounded in evidence."*



Amanda Wise
Dean of Students
Sand Creek High School



Christina Boyer
Assistant Principal
North High School



Heather McGrath
Assistant Principal
Doherty High School



Beth Allen
Interim Principal
Keller Elementary School

Welcoming New Principal Licensure Cohorts

UCCS welcomes two new cohorts this semester! The Regional and Harrison School District Two (D2) cohorts are enthusiastic groups of emerging school leaders from across the Pikes Peak region.



Regional Cohort



Harrison School District Two (D2) Cohort

College of Education Retiree Spotlights

Karin Reynolds



The College of Education's Department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations (LRF) congratulates **Karin Reynolds**, Assistant Teaching Professor for the Principal, Administrator/Superintendent, and Director of Special Education Licensure Programs, on her retirement at the conclusion of the 2025–2026 school year. We are thrilled that Karin will continue teaching in the program. With more than 40 years in education, she has contributed her knowledge and expertise to the development and expansion of these programs.

Throughout her career, Karin served in a variety of roles in secondary education in Colorado and, after 37 years in education, officially retired from Academy School District 20 (ASD20). She began as a teacher in Springfield, Colorado, and then taught English for 11 years at Doherty High School in Colorado Springs.

Karin moved into educational leadership as an assistant principal at Mitchell High School in Colorado Springs School District 11 (D11). She then served as principal of East Middle School and Palmer High School. Karin spent the next 11 years in ASD20 as Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services and Deputy Superintendent. She then worked for four years at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) before coming to UCCS in 2021. She is also an educational consultant and plans to continue this work in retirement.

Karin has enjoyed working with both cohort and online students and remembers each of them clearly. She has seen the programs grow for many reasons, but one substantial reason for increased participation in the Administrator/Superintendent Licensure Program is its shift to an asynchronous online model two years ago. Karin shared, "The numbers have gone up as a result because we can include more students from across the state. Previously, it was difficult for them to travel here monthly. Now we meet once a month synchronously online, and the rest of their learning is hybrid. This has resulted in double, maybe in some years even triple, enrollment from what we've had in the past. Special Education Director Licensure candidate enrollment is particularly on the rise." Karin's outreach, marketing, and recruitment strategies have also been essential to this growth.

Karin's biggest accomplishments are rooted in experiences early in her career, when she was hired about a week before the school year started in Springfield, Colorado. She said, "I did not have a teaching license, but I had a degree in English and was talked into teaching in the rural community of Springfield. That was eye-opening and life-changing because it wasn't exactly what I thought I was going to be doing at that time. I worked with a lot of students in this farming community who didn't see the value in education. They attended school because they had to. . . . So, I think my biggest challenge there was helping them see why Shakespeare was important in their lives. I believe they learned to appreciate literature as they saw its relevance to their own lives. We had great conversations." Meeting the needs of different students became her goal as a new teacher and, later, one of her biggest accomplishments.

Karin also counts supporting her staff members among her achievements. She shared, "After leaving a small community and arriving in the much larger D11, which is where I attended school, I learned that it was time for me to consider becoming a principal so that I could support staff members in supporting those students who are so important to me." Karin's mission and greatest work became "just helping people with the resources they needed to get the work done, whether they were students or teachers."

Karin's passion for inspiring and preparing new school leaders, and for giving them the tools they need to succeed, is evident in her work at UCCS. She has witnessed changes in K-12 leadership expectations and has adapted her instruction to address them. She explained, "I think we are asking more from leaders now than in past decades. Before, leaders were expected to keep things calm and manage the daily operations of the schoolhouse. Now leaders must lead a community in which their school or district resides. Leaders must listen to their communities and align many sets of expectations as they serve school boards, parents, students, and staff who serve them. Leaders must be instructional leaders, financial leaders, climate and culture builders, and lifelong learners."

Relationships with districts and community partners have been essential to the expansion and overall success of the licensure programs. The Education Collaborative Leadership Group has helped increase Karin's awareness of the state of education and the leadership challenges in Colorado's schools. This partnership has made the biggest impact on her work because the licensure team brought leaders from across the region together to talk, share, and contribute ideas. Karin noted that the success of the UCCS licensure programs is a result of "how we respond to district needs as they send their best educators to us to develop into excellent leaders who can make a difference in the communities that they serve. Every one of them—big, small, or middle-sized school districts—brings powerful things. They have all been impactful, and this networking is what makes this job really special."

Two core values have driven Karin throughout her career: the power of collaboration and the way she treats those she serves and works alongside. She said, "Collaboration is critical, and it's a core value of mine because decisions can't be made in isolation unless they're crisis situations. Sound decisions are collaborative; it is the way we work together to be innovative problem solvers who respect one another. I hold 'unconditional positive regard' for every person I encounter, whether a difficult student, an upset parent, board members seeking to understand, or colleagues who might think differently than I do. This carried into my role as president of the [ASD20] school board. Everybody's opinion is important as we seek to be inclusive and equitable. Leaders listen, collaborate, and are fully aware of their non-negotiables—those things that are never lost about who you are."

Her core beliefs also shape her advice to future school leaders and faculty. She said, "You have a calling; never forget what that is. Your true north must remain your true north at all times, even when the going gets tough. Bring those values and non-negotiables with you as you walk into a building or into a classroom. Be true to who you are. Find a place that's going to fit you—a school or district that you want to serve because you can belong and make a difference."

Karin shared that her favorite memory of working at UCCS "will always be this incredible team I work with." She highlighted her time working alongside Dr. Margaret Scott as an incredibly powerful collaboration with an excellent leader and teacher. She will also remember the good conversations and laughter shared with the whole LRF team. She added, "I still love the district partnership cohort model because we get to see students face to face; strong relationships and good networking are a natural outcome of this model. Students can engage with that in online programs as well, particularly if they attend optional class meetings so that they meet other educators from across Colorado. And so, my favorite memories are of those students who have gone through regional and district cohorts that I've been a part of. I

remember them as I remember online students who engaged in virtual discussions with me and one another. I remember their names and their faces, and I get really excited when I hear that they got that perfect job."

In retirement, Karin plans to spend time with her family and travel. She will also continue consulting and will teach at UCCS when needed. She said her work in education will continue because teaching never really leaves your blood, even if you move into leadership roles. "Once an educator, always an educator," she said. "Whatever is out there for me, I'll grab onto it so that I can continue to make a difference for children and the educators who serve them. But along the way, I am going to have a little more time to do things like travel, golf, bike, play pickleball, and enjoy time with my grandkids."

Margaret Scott, PhD



The College of Education's Department of Leadership, Research, and Foundations (LRF) congratulates **Dr. Margaret Scott** on her retirement at the conclusion of the 2025–2026 school year. We are delighted that Margaret will continue teaching in the program. Margaret, a Teaching Professor and Co-Director of the Principal Licensure Program, has made a profound impact on the program's evolution. The thriving program she leaves behind marks her legacy of supporting the growth and development of educational leaders throughout Colorado.

Before beginning her career at UCCS, Margaret spent 30 years as a K-12 educator in the Tucson Unified School District, working at the elementary level as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. She earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Arizona while working as an educator in Tucson.

Margaret's experience in education includes serving diverse populations of students, such as multilingual and gifted students, in an urban school district, where she also worked in a school on school-improvement status.

In 2013, Margaret joined the UCCS faculty in the Principal Licensure Program, where she has positively impacted many local school district cohorts and online students—all of whom, according to Margaret, have been equally wonderful to teach. Margaret said, "There's no district that to me stands out. I've participated in cohorts with multiple districts. We have students from Western Colorado to Eastern Colorado, with the majority coming from the metro area of the Springs." Margaret attributes much of the program's expansion into multiple cohorts to marketing and outreach led by her co-director, Karin Reynolds. She also shared that her strongest partnership has been with the Education Collaborative Leadership Group, through which she maintains communication and relationships throughout the region. This partnership has given all districts representation and a voice in shaping and affirming the direction of the program.

When asked about her biggest career accomplishment, Margaret said, "I started my career when I was hired two days before school started at a school that was very different in population from anything that I experienced in my own K-12 and college years. It was a school that had a large proportion of minority students and a good number of Spanish speakers and students in poverty. Because that was my very first teaching experience, that drove my need to serve a variety of students and to make sure that all students received equitable access to an education. So, my biggest accomplishment has been to be able to reach a wide variety of students and then focus my leadership development on making sure that leaders are also prepared to serve all populations."

Margaret has adapted her teaching at UCCS to the changes she has witnessed in school leadership over the years. She explained, "The building leader now needs to be all things to all people and must be exceptionally well-versed in instructional guidance and understanding improvement. She also needs to support teachers in developing relationships with one another, and developing great relationships with them has become more important as we've moved through the years. It wasn't as important earlier in my career for a principal to be as intentional about building good relationships. Now it's much different, and it's much richer."

Margaret's core values—to serve all and to ensure equity and equitable access for every student—have driven her throughout her teaching and leadership career. She shared, "The other thing that has really grounded me in both teaching and leading is the desire to make sure that creativity is always part of the process and that we don't let other factors pull us

away from realizing the importance of that." Her advice to future school leaders and UCCS faculty is to know who they are and what they value, and to find a good fit. She explained, "Don't jump at the first opportunity if it's not a good fit. You want to be able to feel like you belong, where you're making that impact and where you can be who you are."

Margaret's best memories of her work at UCCS are times of collaboration with her colleagues. She remarked, "I feel like because we have such a good collaborative working relationship, we've not only grown the program in numbers, but we've strengthened the program's content and the impact it has on the experience that students get out of the program. Hearing the success stories from the students is what it's all about, and their successes help fuel us for the future."

Margaret looks forward to spending time with her grandchildren and traveling in retirement. She also plans to teach at UCCS when needed because, after 44 years in education, she remains deeply passionate about the work.

UCCS Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the following students on receiving a $1,000 scholarship from UCCS!

- **Lisa Brandt**, Special Education Administrator
- **Gabe Fearon**, Assistant Director for Special Education
- **Jessica Hamilton**, Principal
- **Staci McGruder**, Superintendent
- **Kristen Medina**, Special Education Director
- **Erin Swaim**, Individualized Education Facilitator
- **Thora Thorkelsdottir-Owens**, Special Education Lead Teacher
- **Alexis Toussaint**, Mental Health Coordinator

Now Accepting Applications Online Principal Licensure Program

Do you know an aspiring school leader who is ready to take the next step?

We are now accepting applications for the online Principal Licensure Program at UCCS! This is an excellent opportunity for dedicated educators to grow their leadership capacity, earn their principal license, and make a meaningful impact in their schools and communities.

Please share this information with educators you believe are ready to pursue licensure. Those interested can contact Dr. Elizabeth Domangue at edomangu@uccs.edu for more information.

Colorado Jobs Boards

Looking for a new educational position in Colorado? Please check out the following job boards:

- **CASE (Colorado Association of School Executives):** https://www.co-case.org/networking/opening_search.asp
- **Connecting Colorado:** https://www.connectingcolorado.com/
- **K12JobSpot:** https://www.k12jobspot.com/
- **Chalkbeat Jobs Board:** https://jobs.chalkbeat.org

UCCS Leadership Programs and Application Process

The MA in Leadership and Advanced License Programs (Principal License, Special Education Director License, and Administrator License) are carefully designed to develop educational leaders who articulate and implement a vision that results in learning communities in which all members of a diverse society are accorded opportunity and respect. These programs satisfy the accreditation requirements of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE).

Principal License and MA in Leadership:
https://coe.uccs.edu/academics/leadership-research-foundations/principal-license-ma

Administrator and Special Education Director Licensure:
https://coe.uccs.edu/academics/leadership-research-foundations/administrator-superintendent-and-director-sped-prep-programs

Apply:
Complete the online graduate application at https://www.uccs.edu/admissions-aid/details/graduate.

Applying for Your Advanced License from CDE

Visit the Colorado Department of Education website for complete information on applying for your advanced license: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof.

Advanced License Application Requirements

- **Principal License:** Complete an approved preparation program; hold a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution; have at least three years of licensed experience in a public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school; and pass the PRAXIS (#5412) with a score of at least 146.
- **Administrator License:** Complete an approved preparation program; hold a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution; and pass the PRAXIS (#6991) with a score of at least 162.
- **Special Education Director License:** Complete an approved preparation program; hold a bachelor's degree or higher in special education, a master's degree in speech-language pathology, or a post-graduate degree in school psychology; have two years of experience with students with special needs; and pass the PRAXIS with a score of at least 162.

Program Verification Form: To verify that you have completed an approved preparation program, you must request a Program Verification Form from the College of Education. Once you have completed your program and passed the PRAXIS exam, contact Elizabeth Domangue at edomangu@uccs.edu to request the form.