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NACSA Helps Build Charter School Authorizing Talent with Launch of Fellowship in Partnership with University of Minnesota

Authorizing Fellowship Offers Students Unique Look into a Growing Sector of Education Reform

Chicago, Ill. – Nearly 25 years after passing the nation’s first charter school legislation, Minnesota continues to lead charter school education with the launch of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Innovation in Education Fellowship at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs. The fellowship is the first of its kind, designed to introduce emerging public policy leaders to charter school authorizing—the professionals responsible for approving, monitoring and renewing charter schools.

The yearlong, paid Fellowship is designed to provide hands-on experience that enhances students’ understanding of the critical issues impacting education reform. Each student will be placed at a local authorizing office, where he or she will work full-time in the summer and part-time during the academic year, while also receiving training and additional support from NACSA.

“Authorizing is a growing industry that directly impacts the quality of our nation’s charter schools,” says Kasey Miller, vice president of Talent & Engagement at NACSA. “This Fellowship provides the hands-on experience, coursework and skills necessary to create leaders who can do the quality authorizing work that leads to great schools from Day One.”

The Fellowship is a response to a growing demand for authorizing leaders and staff from state and local education officials. More than one in four large authorizers reported they plan to add staff in the coming year. Nationally, authorizing is poised to grow over 200 percent over the next 10 years.

The Fellowship’s inaugural cohort consists of three Humphrey School graduate students, Emily Edstrom, Aaliyah Hodge, and Griffin Merry, who each bring a passion for education reform to the program driven by their individual experiences within the sector.

“I am these students, I have been in their shoes,” said Hodge. “I am excited to participate in the Fellowship because I believe that every child should have access to the same quality of schools regardless of their background.”

As a former Teacher in Residence, Emily Edstrom hopes the fellowship will help her “continue asking questions about pursuing the best education for all students in our country, as well as the most effective ways to close the achievement gap.”

As part of the partnership, NACSA and the University are also developing authorizing content that will be incorporated into an existing course at the Humphrey School and will be open to all public policy graduate students.

“We realized that despite its importance, there really wasn’t any school out there giving students an in-depth look at what charter authorizing is and what it entails,” said Laura Bloomberg, Associate Dean of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. “We are thrilled to partner with NACSA to give our students an edge when it comes to national and state best authorizing practices. Our partnership is grounded in our shared belief that all children have a right to a high quality education.”

About NACSA

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is committed to advancing excellence and accountability in the charter school sector and to increasing the number of high-quality charter schools across the nation. To accomplish this mission, NACSA works to improve the policies and practices of authorizers—the organizations designated to approve, monitor, renew, and, if necessary,

close charter schools. NACSA provides training, consulting, and policy guidance to authorizers. It also advocates for laws and policies that raise the bar for excellence among authorizers and the schools they charter. In late 2012, NACSA launched its One Million Lives campaign to give one million more children the opportunity to attend a great school. Visit www.qualitycharters.org

About the Humphrey School of Public Affairs

The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota is one of the country's top-ranked professional public policy and planning schools, widely recognized for its commitment to inspiring leaders to advance the common good in a diverse world. The School equips students to play key roles in public life at the local, state, national, and global level, and offers five distinctive master's degrees, a doctoral degree, and four certificate programs. www.hhh.umn.edu.

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