

## **Quality M.Ed. Principal Licensure Degrees + Conscientious Students = Leader Principals**

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### **Abstract**

Effective educational leadership at the principal level positively correlates with quality classroom teachers and improved student achievement (Portin et al., 2009). It also fosters a caring, supportive and inter-connected environment that inspires students and engages teachers (Seashore et al., 2010). Preparing competent, effective, and caring principals, via an online program, is the goal of Northcentral University's (NCU) 36-credit hour *Master of Education with a specialization in PK-12 Principal Leadership (M.Ed./PLCS) degree*.

NCU's M.Ed./PLCS program aligns with research completed by the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), which found that the six most important leadership responsibilities of a principal were: planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring (Porter et al., 2008). Furthermore, the M.Ed./PLCS specialization program is fully aligned with several sets of policy documents and standards on the national, state, and local level, including the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) as well as the Professional Administrative Standards authored by the Arizona Department of Education.

### **Introduction**

Effective educational leadership at the principal level positively correlates with quality classroom teachers and improved student achievement (Portin et al. 2003). It also fosters a caring, supportive, and interconnected environment that inspires students and engages teachers (Seashore Louis et al. 2010). Preparing competent, effective, and caring principals is the goal of Northcentral University's (NCU) 36-credit hour *Master of Education with a specialization in PK-12 Principal Leadership (M.Ed./PLCS) degree*, offered through its School of Education.

### **Literature Review**

Knowing the breadth and depth of the demands and responsibilities facing principal candidates and taking into consideration the intensity of quality licensure programs, institutions are looking more closely at how to meet the educational needs for working educators seeking principal licensure. While holding principal candidates and faculty accountable to high national, state, and programmatic standards, accessibility and flexibility have become an integral part of the discussion. The use of distance technology to deliver leadership programs is becoming more and more acceptable with the opportunity to validate the effectiveness as compared to face-to-face instruction. According to Sherman, Crum, and Beaty (2010, 600), "Students indicated that

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they enjoyed pedagogies that were embraced through distance technology (81%) and believed distance technology required them to be more independent as learners and become more responsible for their own learning.”

### Demand for Online Education

The very first virtual classroom environments were created in the 1960s at the University of Illinois (Eduventures 2012). In 2014, online courses are now a norm—not an anomaly—at private, state, and for-profit schools (Eduventures 2012). Allen and Seaman (2014) define online learning as taking place when 80% of a course’s content is delivered online, without face-to-face interaction (Allen and Seaman 2014).

The most recently available estimates, for 2011, indicate online courses are capturing 14% of the total education market share and more than 30% of the adult graduate market; annually, over seven million students take at least one online course (Eduventures 2012; Allen and Seaman 2014). In fact, online education revenues for the 2010/2011 school year were expected to reach \$24 billion (Eduventures 2012). According to Eduventures (2012), 20% of the US student body will be enrolled in online courses or programs by the end of 2014. Online M.B.A. programs are the most popular subject area, followed closely by M.Ed. degrees (Eduventures 2012).

Students are choosing online programs for four primary reasons: the modality does not conflict with their professional careers (31%); there is no need to travel to a campus to attend classes (25%); it allows them to take care of family obligations (21.9%); and some students prefer an online versus in-person educational experience (21.9%) (Sherman, Crum, and Beaty 2010). Online education also fits the preferred study times of students; 53% of students prefer to engage in learning activities in the late evening versus 35% who prefer the morning (Sherman, Crum, and Beaty 2010).

### Access and Innovation in Online Education

Access and innovation frame the discussion surrounding the rapid growth of online education. Online education has created a different yet flexible landscape for students to earn entire degrees, while universities are capable of offering more program and specialization options to a greater diversity and geographical range of students (Eduventures 2012). As online education continues to expand, the majority of institutions are incorporating or enhancing online education into their long-term strategic planning, ranging from initial implementation to advance delivery (Allen and Seaman 2014). Interestingly, the percentage of higher education institutions reporting online education is included in their long-term strategy has increased to 70%. While there still exists a consistent group of institutions that do not prioritize online courses in their strategic plans, that number dropped to below 10% in 2013 for the first time (Allen and Seaman 2014).

### **NCU’s Online M.Ed. with a Specialization in PK-12 Principal Leadership**

NCU’s M.Ed./PLCS is designed to provide principal candidates with 12 rich and challenging online courses plus practical experience during a 16-week internship. The entire program—courses, field experiences, assessments, and internship—is aligned with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards (ILLCS), plus the functions and sub

standards that comprise each function. Upon graduation from NCU's M.Ed./PLCS program, students will be able to provide a hiring school or district documented evidence of their successful, evaluated experiences in: school budgeting, teacher professional development, instructional supervision, curriculum planning, and data collection/analysis/application. This documented experience aligns with research completed by the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), which found that the six most important leadership responsibilities of a principal were: planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring (Porter et al. 2008). VAL-ED is an evidence-based, behavioral assessment model of principal leadership that has been field tested at 300 schools. Colleagues and direct reports of principals complete this 25-minute assessment that provides an overall picture of a principal's leadership skills (Porter et al. 2008).

### **Quality Measurement in Online Education and Principal Preparation Programs**

The role of a principal is shifting; today's principals are being challenged to lead high performing schools and increase test scores, not just meet the expectation of running and administering a school (Education Development Center 2009; Ikemoto, Taliaferro, and Adams 2012). According to Ikemoto, Taliaferro, and Adams (2012), up to 25% of student achievement can be attributed to principal leaders. Three areas that principal leaders have the greatest impact are developing teachers, managing talent, and fostering a culture that is a great place to work; it is this influence on teachers that creates the dynamic in which student achievement takes place (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, and Adams 2012).

To evaluate the quality of principal leadership programs, the Education Development Center (2009) recommends the Quality Measures Rubrics and Program Assessment Process. These research-based measures fall into two functions: content and pedagogy, and clinical practice (Education Development Center 2009). Their recommendation is that content and pedagogy are aligned to Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) guidelines (Council of Chief State School Officers 2008), and include project learning in real settings plus well defined assessment measures. Within clinical practice, Quality Measure's recommendations highlight the importance of principal mentors and problem-based challenges.

Produced by Eduventures (2012), the guide *Effectively Delivering Quality Online Instructions*, meanwhile, highlights four areas that online principal preparation programs should be judged by: faculty training and qualifications, student learning and support mechanisms, technology, and program accountability. Academic quality, meanwhile, is judged in three ways (Eduventures 2012): the manner in which students and faculty interact, academically and socially, in an online teaching environment; the frequency with which programs and course curriculum is assessed to ensure learning objectives and outcomes are consistently met; and the scope of training that faculty undergo to prepare them to teach in an online environment, coupled with an engaging and academically stimulating culture.

### **Northcentral University and One-to-One Learning**

Founded in 1996, Northcentral University (NCU) is a regionally accredited, private, online, and graduate-focused university serving professionals globally. NCU offers doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degrees in business and technology management, education, psychology, as well as marriage and family

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therapy. The University is comprised of four schools: the School of Business and Technology Management, the School of Education, the School of Psychology, and the School of Marriage and Family Sciences.

### Accreditation

At NCU, which is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), each course is facilitated in our one-to-one model; classes are not taught in a team setting. Faculty members, all of which have a terminal degree, teach each student on a one-to-one basis. Nor does NCU require a physical residency. Additional school and programmatic accreditations, as well as academic alignments include:

- *Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs*: NCU programs in the School of Business and Technology Management are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs.
- *Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education*: NCU offers the first primarily distance-based Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education.
- *Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)*: Nine specializations in NCU's Master of Education (M.Ed.) program have received five-year initial accreditation through the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC).
- *Project Management Institute*: NCU is a Registered Education Provider for the Project Management Institute.
- *The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)*: NCU's MBA in Human Resources Management has been recognized as fully aligning with SHRM's HR Curriculum Guidebook and Templates.
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### One-to-One Mentored Education / Oxford Model of Instruction

NCU's focus on one-to-one mentored education is an application of the Oxford Model of Instruction. The one-to-one model enables NCU faculty to teach via feedback mapped directly to each student's needs. Specifically, this supports NCU's view that teachers teach students and not material, and that each student has different needs and knowledge. In NCU's one-to-one model (Northcentral University 2012b):

There are four essential actions to our applied experiential learning process: act, reflect, conceptualize, and apply:

- **Act**—Courses provide opportunities for students to read real-world scenarios of program content application. Students engage with the Northcentral community and other professional communities throughout their academic program.
- **Reflect**—Programs invite students' critical reflection on learning, which leads to an integrated understanding of their field.
- **Conceptualize**—Students' critical reflections inform their own learning. Engaged and prepared faculty mentors facilitate student learning through transfer of knowledge and feedback that encourages further reflection. Courses provide rich content delivered professionally in a variety of mediums to support students' reflection and further conceptualization of ideas.
- **Apply**—Based on reflection and conceptualization, students develop course work applicable to their professional field of study and relevant to our times." (11)

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The University uses technology to facilitate its instructional model, while extensive training is provided to faculty on Teaching Through Feedback. NCU faculty do not simply correct papers, but provide comments and feedback that feed forward a student's learning and challenges them to apply their learning in a professional setting. This happens in alignment with the learning outcomes for each assignment and course. This education model is supported by research, specifically *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* authored by the Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (2000); and *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition* (Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education 2000).

NCU understands that the resources provided to students are key to educational success. NCU meets the needs of its students by offering an online library, Writing Center, Dissertation Center, *Attack Your Day! Before It Attacks You*, time management program, plus online tutoring support (Smarthinking). Within the Writing Center are over 100 handouts on writing academic prose, resource links to other online writing centers, APA formatting guides and other writing styles, and courses to assist students in improving their academic writing skills (Northcentral University 2012b).

The NCU library provides resources, services, and research assistance for students, faculty, and staff. "The library subscribes to over 30 [educational] databases...and other informational sources. NCU's library offers an interlibrary loan service where faculty, students, and team members needing research materials outside the library's collection can submit an interlibrary loan request. Another available service is the 'Ask a Librarian' reference service," (Northcentral University 2012b, 13).

The Dissertation Center contains resources to help NCU doctoral students locate resources to complete their dissertation. Resources include dissertation conference calls, introduction to case study methodology presentations, testing of statistical assumptions, as well as example papers on conflict of interest, annotated concept papers, and guidance on developing a theoretical framework. An additional feature that is available in the Dissertation Center is "Ask a Researcher." The University employs several researchers who are available to answer general research and statistics questions (Northcentral University 2012b).

Based on literature and feedback from NCU students, the University determined one of the biggest challenges in higher education is time management. To meet this need, NCU partnered with *Attack Your Day! Before It Attacks You*. *Attack Your Day! Before It Attacks You* teaches students five activity management skills for effective time management; first and foremost students learn how to document and accomplish their academic goals (Northcentral University 2012b).

Meanwhile, Smarthinking connects students to a live, on-demand tutoring service, enabling students to get the help they need when they need it from expert educators. All NCU students receive 10 free hours of Smarthinking tutoring during their course of study. Smarthinking allows NCU students to work in real-time, with a tutor, on math and writing, through virtual whiteboard technology (Northcentral University 2012b).

### Faculty-Student Interactions at Northcentral University

Successful distance education centers on two principles: faculty-led interactions between students and instructors are a priority while interactions and feedback from instructors must be substantive and promote learning. In the NCU context, learning groups are a cohort of one. Our faculty are required to interact and engage with each of their students to enhance their online education experience. Students rate their faculty on their level of engagement during each course as part of an end of course survey (Northcentral University 2012a).

The task of the faculty is to be a catalyst in the learning process. At NCU, a faculty member facilitates learning by acting as a facilitator and respondent to the student in the classical Socratic Method in three ways. First, faculty involve students in a meaningful process that influences the ways in which they experience learning. Second, faculty guide, coach, direct, advise, evaluate, encourage, critique, and correct the learning process. Third, faculty assist students with the learning outcomes associated with each course (Northcentral University 2012c).

Effective feedback requires a facilitating skill embedded in one-to-one teaching and student-centered interactivity; it is of primary pedagogical importance in meeting the University's commitment to students developing and applying critical thinking, problem-solving, and active self-learning skills. That means that the teaching role is more complicated and dynamic than simply transferring course content to the student. Substantive feedback is asking the big questions—what, where, why, how, when—and challenging students to expand on their interaction with course content. To do so, requires students to use higher level thinking skills that includes analysis, application, integration, and evaluation. Online faculty members interact with a student twice on each activity. They facilitate the interaction of the student with course content through assignments designed to offer applicable learning opportunities. After evaluating the student's efforts, the faculty member provides meaningful feedback as the next layer of learning. Feedback is not about making corrections. It is about opportunity and opening doors. Feedback is how a student experiences their faculty and how the faculty facilitates the student's experience with course concepts (Northcentral University 2012c).

### **Master of Education Principal Leadership**

Effective educational leadership at the principal level positively correlates with quality classroom teachers and improved student achievement (Portin et al. 2003). It also fosters a caring, supportive, and inter-connected environment that inspires students and engages teachers (Seashore Louis et al. 2010). Preparing competent, effective, and caring principals is the goal of Northcentral University's (NCU's) 36-credit hour *Master of Education with a specialization in PK-12 Principal Leadership* (M.Ed./PLCS) degree, offered through its School of Education (Northcentral University School of Education 2013d).

Most states require public school principals to be licensed as school administrators. Although licensure requirements vary from state to state, the most common thread is the requirement to hold a master's degree or some other training. Candidates seeking licensure typically must pass a professional content and knowledge exam. In addition, principals complete ongoing continuing education and/or professional development courses and workshops to stay

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current and relevant as a principal and maintain their license. Working with an on-site or nearby principal mentor in collaboration with a university supervisor is almost always a requirement during the internship. Some states have alternative programs for job candidates who do not have a degree in education administration or leadership but have experience in another field. Principals in private schools do not necessarily have to be licensed as school administrator (Northcentral University School of Education 2013b).

The M.Ed./PLCS is designed to provide principal candidates with 12 rich and challenging online courses plus practical experience during a 16-week internship. The internship requires exploration of diverse school settings and different educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Over a period of two years, NCU M.Ed. candidates work on a one-to-one basis with scholar-practitioners who have a terminal degree *and* have demonstrated a dedication to learning, leading, and helping make schools ever better places for the children, and adults, who learn and work within them. The entire program—courses, field experiences, assessments, and internship—is aligned with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLCS), plus the functions and sub standards that comprise each function (Northcentral University School of Education 2013b).

The program is designed for individuals interested in earning a graduate degree and seeking an administrative licensure to work as principals or assistant/associate principals in PK-12 school settings or in other educational settings wherein a graduate degree and PK-12 administrative licensure are required. The specialization program is fully aligned with several sets of policy documents and standards on the national, state, and local levels. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a subsidiary of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers, has assembled a set of six ISLLC standards to inform the design and assessment of educational leadership programs (Northcentral University School of Education 2013b).

Specialization programs seeking Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) approval must align programmatic components with a set of national standards; the ISLLC Standards are one of two national standard sets that meet this requirement. The Arizona Department of Education also requires universities that prepare educational administrators to align their specialization programs with the ISLLC standards. Administrative preparation programs at Arizona colleges or universities must furthermore meet state code requirements under R7-2-603 (Professional Administrative Standards), which are similar but not identical to the ISLLC standards. In addition, the Statewide Framework for Internship Programs for School Leaders (2008) requires Arizona administrative preparation programs to provide course-embedded field experiences prior to an administrative practicum/internship and provides specific criteria for the design and delivery of field-based components (Northcentral University School of Education 2013b).

The School of Education (SOE) at NCU has developed standard sets consisting of programmatic learning outcomes at the school, degree (in this case, the master's/M.Ed.), and specialization levels. The specialization outcomes are tightly aligned with the national ISLLC standards. In addition, each of the courses in the proposed specialization program feature a set of course learning outcomes that are informed by the functions/descriptors under each of the six

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ISLLC standards. Signature assessments in each course are thereby aligned with national standards as well. Field-based components (spanning coursework and the final practicum/internship) will require NCU students to demonstrate each of the skills-focused functions/descriptors under each of the six ISLLC standards. In summary, the program specialization is aligned at every level and in every aspect, from the overriding program elements to the specific courses to the signature assessments to the field-based components (Northcentral University School of Education 2013b).

Full-time and part-time faculty members who hold doctoral degrees in educational administration or similar areas teach the courses and mentor the candidates. All faculty teaching in the proposed program are experienced practitioners in their respective fields who share knowledge and expertise in areas of school leadership, administrative foundations and organizational theory, PK-12 legal issues, public school finance, curriculum development, data-driven assessment, educational change, and the practice of instructional leadership. Field experiences are embedded in a majority of the programmatic courses and the course of study concludes with supervised and mentored 16 weeks of practicum/internship, which includes the implementation of an action research project, designed in the Principalship course taken immediately prior to the practicum/internship capstone experience (Northcentral University School of Education 2013d).

Signature assessments within each course guide candidates through observation transfer of theoretical concepts to practice and hands-on leadership experiences. Candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate the application and assessment of cumulative knowledge and skills to real-time situations. The signature assessment from each course, in addition to ISLLC standards-based field experience and practicum/internship assessment rubrics, comprises the e-folios that are prepared by each candidate as a requirement to reach the benchmark point of successful program completion. When NCU School of Education M.Ed. candidates in PK-12 Principal Leadership graduate and apply for state certification, they will be prepared to be effective, reflective educational administrators in PK-12 schools and other settings requiring administrative certification. They will also be assisted in their initial years of practice by an online administrative induction program, designed to foster problem-solving collaboration, bolster the morale of fledgling school administrators, and keep NCU graduates connected to their degree-granting university as a source of continuing online professional development for themselves and their colleagues (Northcentral University School of Education 2013d).

### Unique Program Characteristics

Unique characteristics of the program include several aspects in support of online delivery. There is an alignment of programmatic components not only with the overriding national ISLLC standards, but also alignment of field-based components with the functions/descriptors under each standard. This requires NCU candidates demonstrate working knowledge of specific skills under each standard helping to better assess the performance of each principal intern. All courses developed at NCU using a centralized set of guidelines, content experts and several approval levels for quality assurance. The courses offer Bloom's Taxonomy progressions starting with the introduction of specific content knowledge and basic skills, to analysis of knowledge/skills components in online video clips of school experiences and case studies, to application of applied knowledge through course-embedded field experiences where



applicable, to synthesis of applied knowledge in the context of an inquiry-enhanced practicum/internship experience. It includes online internship seminars and preparation programs for administrative interns and for the mentor principals and university supervisors who will work with the candidates at this crucial point in their preparation. Additionally, there are plans to implement an online administrative induction program, initially staffed by full-time and part-time faculty who will eventually be joined by program graduates; the result will be a professional learning community to facilitate professional networking, collaboration, and professional/interpersonal support and encouragement for NCU graduates (Northcentral University School of Education 2013d).

A further central component of NCU's program is its *mentor principal*. On-site principals, possibly a candidate's current principal, commit to providing specific and continuous support to the candidate during their program. In the case of candidates who are already "acting principals," colleagues from a neighboring school or their district's central office may fill this role. *Mentor principals* also oversee the candidate's local internship. Additionally, university faculty supervisors are assigned to each intern. The university faculty supervisor works closely with a student's *mentor principal* during the internship evaluation process and facilitates the two internship courses attached to the internship experience (Northcentral University School of Education 2013d).

### **The role of Assessment and Initial Student Results**

At the institutional level, NCU strives to attain a level of broad knowledge connected to both affective and cognitive domains. All current assessment instruments utilized by NCU at the institutional level measure constructs from the affective domain, or students' beliefs and opinions. These instruments are surveys either created internally or contracted externally such as the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) administered by Noel-Levitz (Northcentral University Office of Assessment and Institutional Research 2013a).

#### Assessment at the Academic Program Level

While assessment at the academic program level also strives to measure students' skills and knowledge (cognitive) and their beliefs and opinions, the assessment of programmatic outcomes is more focused. Emphasis is placed on measuring learning, development, and growth of students within each academic program. Results from programmatic assessment normally demonstrate students' average performance in relation to a specific learning outcome across an entire academic program. Providing student learning assessment data collected at the academic program level directly supports NCU's efforts to assess and continuously improve the quality of all the University's academic programs. This information is also critical in providing evidence to our accreditors on how NCU verifies that student learning is occurring and meets expectations for high quality higher education academic programs (Northcentral University Office of Assessment and Institutional Research 2013a).

#### Assessment at the Course Level

Course level assessment of student learning occurs at NCU through required assignments created by school curriculum and instructional design personnel, and used by faculty to assess students' performance in each course. This level of assessment also occurs through any other quizzes, tests, or additional activities. Students' opinions related to course quality are collected

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via a post-course survey provided to students upon completion of each required course in their selected academic program. These surveys are also used to assess students' beliefs related to the quality of their faculty and the instruction provided in each course (Northcentral University, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research 2013a).

### Assessment Tools

Taskstream is NCU's Assessment Management Tool chosen to collect and maintain student learning assessment data that demonstrates students are meeting programmatic outcomes. Initial implementation of Taskstream in select M.Ed. courses began in September of 2013. It was chosen due to its direct mapping of programmatic outcomes selected to evaluate with this first implementation cycle. At this time, we are beginning to evaluate the data for trends. We expect that this data will demonstrate where students are either meeting or struggling to meet programmatic learning outcomes, allowing us to make changes where necessary in the curriculum. Taskstream will eventually be implemented in all programs across our four schools by December 2014 (Northcentral University Office of Assessment and Institutional Research 2013a).

In order to measure formative course-level outcomes, NCU contracted with Qualtrics, a survey and quiz administrative software platform, to provide weekly quizzes in selected academic programs and courses. M.Ed. courses were selected to pilot in the first iteration of the Qualtrics quizzes, estimated to begin in March 2014. The weekly quizzes will determine whether students comprehend course-level seminal content knowledge, as well as attitudinal measures, such as students' relationship with their course instructor. Being able to provide weekly formative information to the instructors on student progress will allow changes to be made as necessary, ensuring that students comprehend and succeed in their course-level outcomes (Northcentral University Office of Assessment and Institutional Research 2013a).

### Alumni Association Surveys (2013 and 2014)

There are no graduates as of yet from the M.Ed. / PCLS; the first students are estimated to complete their degree in 2016. However, 309 2014 NCU Alumni Survey respondents indicated that their most recent degree was completed within the School of Education. The results do provide indicators of the success of School of Education students. Specifically: 79% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "My degree program was useful in improving the quality of my teaching directly impacting my students' achievements" (n=286); 76% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that "their faculty members added value to [their] learning" (n=305); and 64% of survey respondents answered yes to the question, "Would your employer rank your performance higher after receiving your certificate / degree" (n=304) (Northcentral University – Alumni Association, 2014).

### Graduate Achievements

NCU maintains a list of distinguished alumni. Within the School of Education, there are 13 graduates listed:

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*Phillip Price*

Director of Achievement, Edison learning  
M.Ed., 2011

*CJ Mitchell*

Command Master Chief, US Navy  
M.Ed., 2008

*Darren Hargrove*

Pacific Region Dental Command Sergeant Major, US Army  
M.Ed., 2011

*Judy R Colwell*

Vice President of Academic Affairs, Northern Oklahoma College  
Ed.D., 2011

*Louis Fletcher*

Regional Director, Troy University  
Ed.D., 2008

*Rebecca Collins*

Special Education Administration/Project Director, Cooperative Educational Services Agency #9  
Ph.D., Education, 2013

*Cade Douglas*

Superintendent, Servier School District  
Ph.D., Education, 2009

*Harold Golubtchik*

Assistant Professor, Brooklyn College  
Ed.D., 2008

*Don Macon*

Fulltime Professor of English, American Public University  
Ed.D., 2013

*Stanton McNeely*

Dean, Planning & Institutional Effectiveness, Fletcher Technical Community College  
Ed.D., 2013

*Terry Morris*

Associate Professor & Author, William Rainey Harper College  
Ed.D., 2010

*Kwame Morton*

Principal, Cherry Hill High School

Ed.D., 2011

### **Future Research**

Existing research clearly highlights the positive correlation between effective leader principals and quality teachers; in particular its critical impact on improved student achievement. Effective leader principals greatly influence teachers, inspire more effective teaching in the classroom, and impact student learning. This is second only to the role of classroom instruction (ISLLC). Thus the importance of great leader principals, leading great teaching and learning, warrants ongoing research. Research should focus on program components to ensure the effectiveness of the M.Ed./PLCS program and its ability to develop and influence the impact of teachers in the classroom and on student learning (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, & Adam 2012).

Northcentral University plans to conduct a research study amongst the first principal candidate graduates of the *M.Ed. PK-12 Principal Leadership* specialization. The study will follow the individual principal candidates from the point of admission into the program through their internship and first year of post-graduation teaching. The study will address the components of the program that principal leaders find most helpful with classroom instruction, thus student achievement. The case study research will include collecting data sets on the cohort of principal candidates, their leaders, and student achievement. A complete analysis of varied data sets, including program components, surveys, interviews, and achievement scores, making comparisons from those principal leaders who demonstrated above average student achievement, will be completed.

### **Conclusions**

As online education enrollment increases, the demand for access and innovation in quality distance learning increases as well. NCU's M.Ed. with a specialization in PK-12 Principal Leadership aligns with an array of research-based approaches to learning and leadership, including the Oxford Learning Model, VAL-Ed's established important responsibilities of principals, CCSSO guidelines, and ISLLC standards. These standards are consistent with the shifting role of principals in our schools today (Reason and Reason 2011).

NCU focuses on one-to-one interaction between faculty and students, while faculty members provide feedback and support, recognizing their role as catalyst to the learning process. Standards are also upheld through technological resources including a time management system, live tutoring service, dissertation center, and high-performing research assistance methods. Along with NCU's alignment with a multitude of best practice approaches, there are unique program characteristics that go beyond national ISLLC standards, including a 16-week internship, implementation of Bloom's Taxonomy progressions, and a *mentor principal* program.

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In order to approve the quality of instruction, standards, and outcomes, these programs will continue to be assessed using Taskstream, Qualtrics, and future Alumni Surveys. These methods of assessment will continue to measure and evaluate the program and its success rates.

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