

ONLINE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES: AN OVERVIEW

Abstract

Technology has transformed education by providing access and opportunities for learning through online formats. Leadership education has not been left out in this transformation as many higher education institutions offer online leadership courses and programs to college students. This case study's primary purpose was to develop a fundamental understanding of the program characteristics of leadership programs offered fully online in higher education. The content analysis on 51 online academic leadership programs within 33 universities shows that these programs share similar characteristics in their goals, targeted student populations, and methods of engaging and supporting students in online leadership learning.

Introduction

Leadership education made its way into the classroom in 1949 as an academic study area for students' military preparation at the Ohio State University (Khurana, 2007). Reflecting on higher education's purpose, the field described leadership as a foundational learning outcome of higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000; Chunoo & Osteen, 2016; Mayhew et al., 2016). As research on leadership incorporated the idea that leadership can be learned, academic leadership programs developed across the nation (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Parks, 2005) and leadership education flourished as an academic discipline in higher education (Riggio et al., 2003; Schwartz et al., 1998). As leadership education develops, it further meets the demand of advancement in technology by offering online academic programs to make leadership learning accessible to various student populations.

Technology has transformed higher education by providing additional access and learning opportunities through online instruction, including online leadership education. Nearly 35 percent of enrolled college students now take at least one online course, and over 170 institutions in higher education offer academic leadership programs via online models (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2019; McCotter, 2008). As an alternative model of instruction compared to "traditional" face-to-face instruction, online leadership education makes academic leadership programs more accessible to students who may face disabilities, geographic distance, or busy schedule challenges (Lei & Gupta, 2010). Also, for institutions limited in resources, the online delivery format minimizes costs and the physical need for classroom spaces, supporting the institutions to offer leadership programs and courses, even at peak times of the day and week (Gould, 2003).

Existing literature on online leadership education focuses on online leadership course offering from an instructional point-of-view (Curtin, 2016; Deschaine & Whale). Phelps (2012) looked at ways to integrate technology such as podcasts, online gaming, and social media into leadership courses in this digital age. Jenkins (2016) further explored the most used ways online leadership course instructors could assess their students' leadership learning. To better understand the effectiveness of online leadership learning compared to the traditional classroom format, Manning-Ouellette and Black (2017) conducted a qualitative research study on the leadership learning outcomes of 30 students. These students were in the same leadership studies course from two different delivery formats: online and traditional classroom. Through a content analysis of student data from this leadership studies course from the spring 2016 semester, Manning-Ouellette and Black (2017) found that online leadership students "may engage more often in deeper learning on assignments than those in the traditional classroom..." (p. 59). Additionally, the authors suggested that instructors for both online and traditional formats use explicit language and course assignments to create experiential learning environments to facilitate students' leadership learning.

Although there has been a growing interest in online delivery in the field of academic leadership programs, little attention has focused on empirical research on the program characteristics of these online leadership programs. Further, the coronavirus pandemic has led education worldwide to shift to online, remote, and hybrid instruction. Although this did not change the curriculum structure, institutions may begin to evaluate their offerings to consider providing online leadership programs. The current study contributes to empirical studies on online academic leadership programs through a content analysis of 51 online leadership programs within 33 institutions. It is essential to fill the gap between practice and research on online academic leadership programs as evidence-based research results could better inform leadership education practice. Developing a comprehensive

understanding of online academic leadership program characteristics provides further insights for both higher education scholars and leadership educators to transform or design their programs online, especially considering one of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on education delivery.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the program characteristics of online academic leadership programs offered in U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs). Specifically, the academic leadership programs that were examined offered 100% online and did not have course expectations or requirements for face-to-face meetings during the program study. Through looking for consistency and patterns of 51 fully online leadership academic programs within 33 institutions, we identified the common program characteristics or frameworks among these online academic leadership programs. The goal of this study was to examine what online academic leadership program characteristics communicated through their program website. Specifically, three research questions guided our study:

1. What are the academic affiliations of online academic leadership programs?
2. What are the programmatic goals of online academic leadership programs?
3. What are the support systems offered to students in online academic leadership programs?

Methodology. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research team examined the program characteristics among online academic leadership programs in higher education institutions across the United States. As a qualitative methodology, case study research explores "a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded

systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). A case or cases may be a concrete entity, such as a person, a group, or an organization; but it can also be a community, a relationship, or a process at a less concrete level (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). The key to identify a case is that it is bounded, which means it can be defined within certain parameters. The researchers of this current study purposefully selected multiple online academic leadership programs from multiple higher education institutions within the definition of “fully/ 100% online leadership programs”, thus, these selected programs are bounded cases with the parameter if the case is online academic leadership program. With these clearly identifiable cases (online academic leadership programs), case study is an appropriate approach for our study to provide in-depth understanding of the program characteristics of these collective cases.

Data Collection. This study's data was obtained from the largest known dataset of current academic leadership programs in the United States, the Florida State University Leadership Learning Research Center (LLRC). The LLRC research team has been studying academic leadership programs since 2017. While their data originated from self-reported academic leadership programs included in the 2016 International Leadership Association (ILA) directory (ILA, 2016), they have since evolved the data. Through vigorous cleaning, updating, and building on the original ILA directory, the research team developed an Academic Leadership Programs Project dataset for their studies (Guthrie et al., 2018; Guthrie et al., 2019). Although this dataset was only a sample of programs in the United States, it provides characteristic information on 1,526 academic leadership programs from 489 institutions. Within the data, each program description includes the program name, institutional characteristics, links to their program website and course descriptions, degree type, delivery method, and major field category.

Using the LLRC dataset updated in 2019, we

filtered for programs delivered online and found a total of 69 online programs. This study focused on these online programs as the foundation for the data and conducted two data analysis phases to create the finalized list of 51 academic leadership programs offered entirely online.

Online Leadership Programs Review. During this first phase of data review and analysis, the researchers looked to identify academic leadership programs delivered entirely through online formats, through synchronous and/or asynchronous methods, with no course expectation of meeting face-to-face for any period of the course sequencing. Although some programs included a weekend orientation before starting the program, there were no additional expectations for the students to be present at a single physical location to participate in courses and receive the leadership program's degree. Nine programs listed as “online” did not match our definition and were removed.

For this study, academic leadership programs varied in degree types, including associates, bachelor's, undergraduate minors, master's, doctoral, and graduate certificates. As the researchers explored the program websites and program curriculum, six programs were removed as they did not include the study of leadership within the course requirements through titles or descriptions. These were often programs that used leadership in reference to a position within the administration or used leadership instead of management in their program title, but they did not offer leadership-specific courses. Additionally, three programs were removed as they were duplicates, and one was removed as it was a co-curricular program. After this first review of the data, 18 programs were removed, and 51 programs from 33 institutions remained for further analysis of the study (see Table 1).

Table 1. Online Academic Leadership Programs in the United States

Abilene Christian University	Ed.D. Organizational Leadership; M.S. in Organizational Development
Andrews University	Ed.S. in Educational Leadership; Ed.D. in Educational Leadership; M.A. in Educational Leadership; Ph.D. in Educational Leadership
Ashford University	Ph.D. Organizational Development and Leadership
Austin Peay State University	B.A. Leadership & Organizational Administration; M.P.S. in Leadership: Strategic Leadership Concentration; Minor in Leadership Science
Baker College	M.B.A. with a Concentration in Leadership Studies
Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary	Certificate of Christian Leadership
Bellarmino University	MEd. in Higher Education Leadership and Social Justice
Benedictine University	BA in Organizational Leadership Degree; MS in Management and Organizational Behavior
Bethel University	DMin in Transformational Leadership
Bethune-Cookman University	MS in Organizational Leadership
Beulah Heights University	BA in Leadership Studies
Black Hills State University	MS in Strategic Leadership
Brandeis University	MS in Project and Program Management
Brandman University	Graduate Certificate in Organization Leadership
Cairn University	MS in Educational Leadership and Administration
Capella University	EdD in Leadership in Educational Administration; MHA Health Care Leadership Specialization
Carlow University	MEd in Educational Leadership and Principal's Certification; MSN in Nursing Leadership and Education
Central Michigan University	EdS Specialist in Education
Chatham University	MS in Nursing (Leadership Track)
Christian Leadership University	BCL in Christian Leadership; MCL in Christian Leadership; DCL Christian Leadership; Associate of Christian Leadership Degree Online
City University of Seattle	Graduate Certificate in Change Leadership; EdD in Leadership
Clarks Summit University	MA in Organizational Leadership
Clemson University	Minor in Non-profit Leadership
Colorado State University – Global	BS in Organizational Leadership; MS in Organizational Leadership
Columbia International University	PhD in Educational Leadership

Columbia Southern University	MS in Organizational Leadership
Concordia University – St. Paul	MA in Criminal Justice Leadership
Creighton University	BS in Leadership; MS in Educational Leadership; MS in Organizational Leadership
Crown College	MA in Ministry Leadership; MA in Global Leadership; MA in Organizational Leadership
Dallas Baptist University	MEd in Educational Leadership
Drake University	MA of Communication Leadership
Southern New Hampshire University	MS in Organizational Leadership
Union Institute and University	MS in Organizational Leadership

Source: Adapted from Leadership Learning Research Center, Florida State University, 2019.

Online Academic Leadership Program Analysis. During the second phase of the data analysis, each researcher reviewed all 51 of the remaining programs for additional verification and further evaluation. The researchers examined the program websites for concrete language describing the program's online aspects, target student audience, and theoretical frameworks for their leadership pedagogy. Further, each researcher searched each program's institutional website for additional information to answer the research questions. One researcher sought out the programmatic goals. A second researcher searched for support services offered to the online students. The third researcher identified the programs learning management system and the technology used in online course delivery. Some institutional and program websites provided more information than others, but the collective information provided the researchers with an in-depth understanding of how academic leadership was being described and offered entirely online.

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that the process of data analysis "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding

and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 181). In this study, content analysis was used in the first cycle coding process to develop a fundamental understanding of the online academic leadership program database listed in Table 1. The research team memoed emerging themes related to our research question exploring program characteristics. Specifically, the themes include programmatic goals, targeted student population, and methods of engaging and supporting students in online leadership learning.

While exploring the programmatic goals, researchers reviewed the website for the program mission statement and vision, the learning objectives, and career opportunities. In examining the websites for the program's targeted student population, the researchers looked for mention of student categories, including full or part-time student status and traditional or non-traditional students. Then, in identifying the services or methods of engaging and supporting students in online leadership programs, the researchers searched for financial aid, community learning environments, and academic support.

Findings

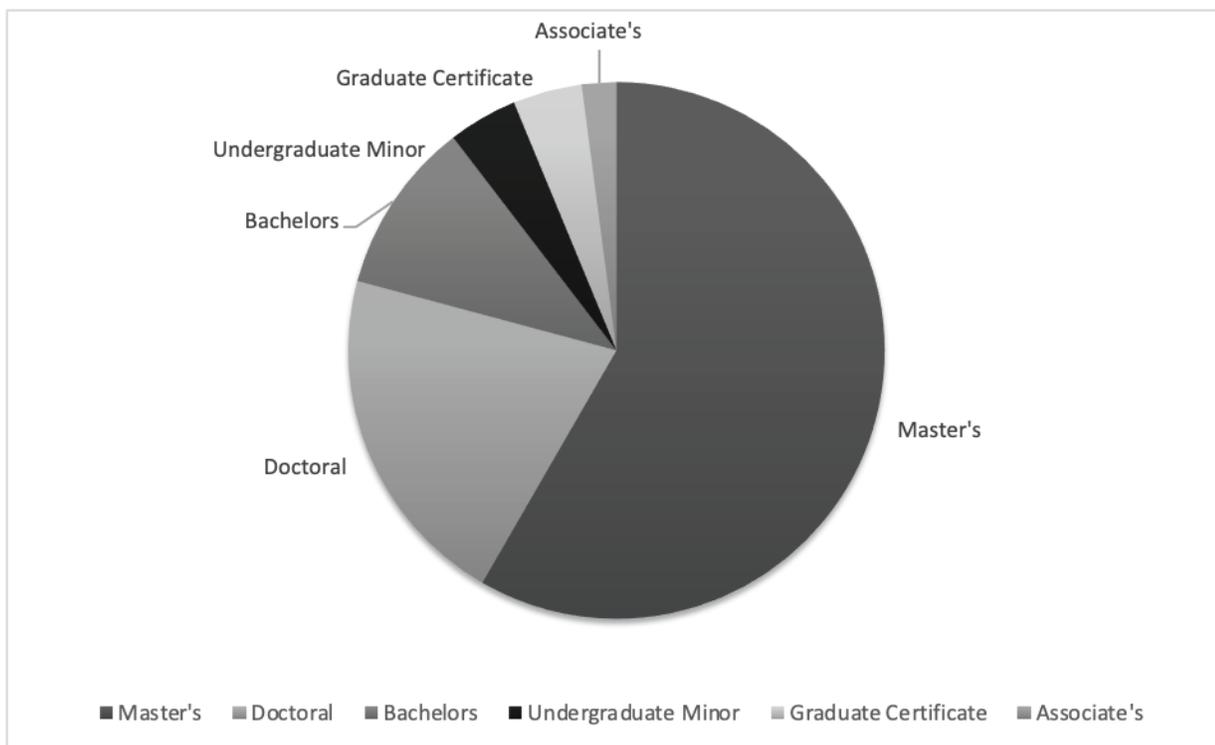
This study explored the common program characteristics shared by these 51 online leadership programs. This study's findings include the program's academic affiliation, descriptive themes, and methods of engaging and supporting students of these online academic leadership programs based on a content analysis of the program information.

research question of this study asked: what are the academic affiliations of online academic leadership programs? A discussion of the descriptions of the program degree types and major fields is provided to address this question. In exploring the 51 online academic leadership programs by degree type, most programs were master's degrees (28) followed by doctoral degrees (10), bachelor's degrees (5), undergraduate minors (2), graduate certificates (2), and an associate's degree program (see Figure 1).

Program Academic Affiliations. The first sub-

Figure 1. Online Academic Leadership Programs by Degree Type

Source: Adapted from Leadership Learning Research Center, Florida State University, 2019.

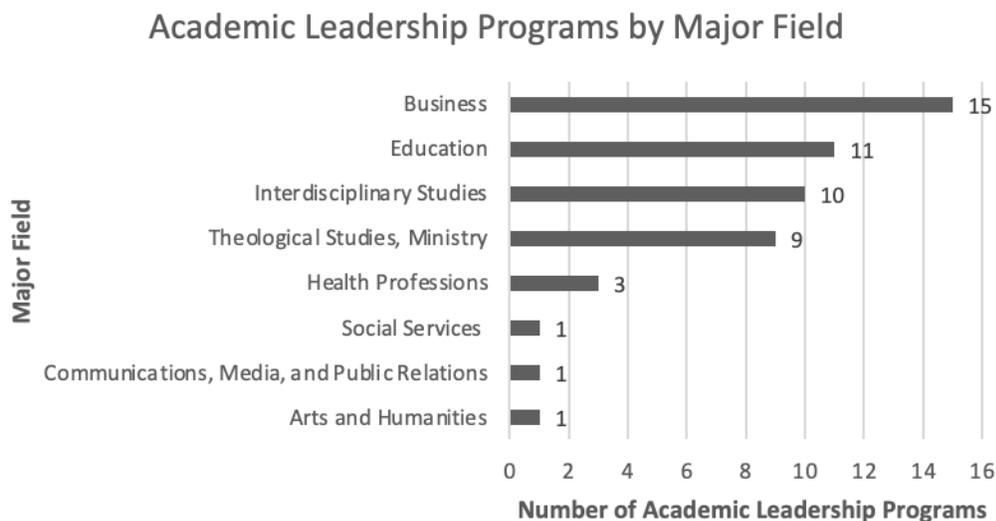


In addition to the degree type, the data shared the major fields of online academic leadership programs. The researchers referenced the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Major Field Categories document (NSSE, 2017) to categorize the programs based on the program title, the college offering the program, and the course descriptions. With 15 programs, the business field offered the most

academic leadership programs. Education followed next with 11 academic leadership programs. NSSE used an "other majors" category with one sub-category labeled "interdisciplinary study" and another labeled "theological studies, ministry." These were the only two sub-categories identified in the data under the "other majors" field, so we pulled them out as categories. This showed ten interdisciplinary

study programs and nine theological studies, ministry programs. Health professions came next with three academic leadership programs. The final three programs were represented with one program in arts and humanities, one in communications, and one in media, public relations, and social services.

Figure 2. Online Academic Leadership Programs by Major Field



Source: Adapted from Leadership Learning Research Center, Florida State University, 2019.

Categorical Themes.

Career-Development. Out of 51 online academic leadership programs, 20 were categorized as describing their leadership education around career development. This focus included the themes of career preparation, career advancement, and graduate school preparation. These leadership programs discussed personal skills development and knowledge to enter or advance in a career field, often for a specific authority role. Programs like Ashford University's Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Development and Leadership described teaching leadership concepts applicable to someone's current or future career. Austin Peay State University markets their bachelor's degree in Leadership and Organization Administration stating: "Our degree prepares students for a wide variety of

positions and graduate programs [emphasis added]. The curriculum is offered online, and is designed to promote critical thinking skills, leadership skills, and effective writing and communication skills [emphasis added]." Here they describe how their program prepares students for a career or graduate school as a whole by developing leadership skills.

These programs used various terms to describe leadership and those they lead around the focus of career development. The most frequently used word was a variation of leadership ($n = 11$) such as leaders ($n = 8$), leader ($n = 6$), and lead ($n = 2$). These words were often used to reference personal development, such as "leadership competencies," which revolve around individual achievement. Other commonly used words included ethics ($n = 6$), change ($n = 5$), and management ($n = 4$). While these also focus on

individual development, the words also show the programs implying leadership as a relational process.

As career development programs convey the audience for which leaders in their program are intended to oversee, they typically described organization(s) ($n = 13$) or teams ($n = 3$). Black Hills State University's Master of Science in Strategic Leadership program advertises their program to showcase a focus on career development through advancement in positions or career. They further described the various skills development in sharing, "Expert faculty in key leadership areas teach core course work in such areas as visioning, motivation, creative problem solving, strategic thinking and decision making, innovation, leading organizational change, ethics, and effective communication."

Faith-Based. This focus included faith-based language and referred to online academic leadership programs rooted in religious values or practices. Specifically, these programs discussed Christianity as a basis for how they see and teach leadership. All who share this focus were housed in religious institutions like Crown College, Dallas Baptist University, and Christian Leadership University. Columbia International University's Doctor of Philosophy Educational Leadership program markets to prospective students that they will learn:

...to articulate *Christ-centered perspectives* in educational institutions and to represent education from a *biblical perspective* in the broader society. You will develop capacities to think, communicate, and model *biblical excellence* in educational leadership positions through coursework and research...

A total of 16 programs included a faith-based study in their program, with four of the programs offered through Christian Leadership University (CLU). The four CLU programs all linked to the same informational web page. Therefore, the words from these four programs were counted once in our analysis. The most frequently used way to describe leadership was the word itself ($n = 6$), leader ($n = 4$),

and lead ($n = 3$). The programs used various ways to showcase their education rooted in faith. Words such as "biblical leadership" and "Christian" directly show this religious foundation. Other programs centered values around their leadership education, such as "love," "reflective," and "stewardship." Dallas Baptist University's M.Ed. in Educational Leadership mentions the theory of servant leadership and frames it around faith, "The call to school leadership is a call to *servant leadership*. School administrator training integrates academic instruction, community service, and guided reflection from a *Christ-centered perspective* [emphasis added]" Bethel University's Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in Transformational Leadership does the same with leadership theory as a whole: "Engaging learners who desire to advance their understanding of effective transformational leadership in our changing world, the program will challenge learners to *explore contemporary leadership theory in light of biblical foundations* [emphasis added]."

Several of these programs referenced church ($n = 5$) and ministry ($n = 5$) settings as the intended audience to be led from the degree. However, many spoke more broadly with words such as "organizations," "schools," and "non-profits." In these cases, the programs described their leadership education around faith, but not to work in religious settings. Cairn University's MS in Educational Leadership and Administration markets their program to those **"who are interested in taking on a leadership role in their school or district," yet they explicitly target "Christian educators."** **Crown College's MA in Global Leadership describes how they integrate faith-based values into leadership education for future success:** "Cross-cultural learning and dynamic collaborations equip students with faith-based leadership skills critical to professional success. Students will be more than prepared for effective intercultural work founded on strong Christian principles."

Specific Industries. The data demonstrated a theme in how online programs framed leadership under a specific industry or discipline. This was present in 21

of the programs and referenced specific industries such as education, business, health care, non-profit work, communications, and criminal justice. For example, Chatham University's MS in Nursing applies leadership learning to the field of nursing and have learning outcomes such as "synthesize organizational and systems leadership principles to promote high quality and safe patient care [emphasis added]" and "advance nursing practice [emphasis added] through education, informatics, or leadership utilizing didactic and experiential learning"

Creighton University's MS in Educational Leadership explicitly states how it is "designed *around the leadership behaviors and practices* [emphasis added] that researchers have told us make the greatest difference for *student outcomes* [emphasis added]." Their program director is quoted on the webpage discussing the importance of leadership for those who work in an educational setting, "studies have shown that *effective leadership* [emphasis added] is second only to quality teaching in terms of improving student achievement." In both cases, the program is framing leadership and teaching it specifically for educators to best support students.

Similar to the other two focuses, these programs most frequently described leadership with variations of that word: leadership ($n = 10$), leader ($n = 11$), leaders ($n = 3$), and lead ($n = 3$). These were typically described in reference to the specific industry of that program. For example, Bellarmine's M.Ed. in Higher Education Leadership and Social Justice advertises their program as providing "students with the breadth of knowledge and professional experiences to be able to *lead and serve in a variety of entry and mid-level positions in higher education*" [emphasis added]. Other commonly used words included communication ($n = 5$), ethics ($n = 5$), and professional ($n = 2$).

They also described groups that related to that industry as those who is being led. Words such as schools ($n = 5$), employees ($n = 4$), business ($n = 2$), and healthcare ($n = 2$) showed the particular discipline focus. For example, Capella University's MS in Education, Leadership in Educational

Administration articulates their focus on schools:

You have the potential to advance in your role as a leader. Capella offers [a degree] that can help you build *school-level leadership* [emphasis added] knowledge and skills. You'll focus on developing and implementing a *school vision aligned with district priorities* [emphasis added]. Build skills for continuous *school improvement while also protecting the interests of school and community stakeholders* [emphasis added].

Methods of Engaging and Supporting Students.

Next, our research team found that these online leadership programs shared very similar characteristics with the methods and services that they highlighted on their program websites to support and engage their students with online leadership learning. Specifically, each of the 32 institutions offering online leadership programs online employed a learning management system to deliver their leadership programs' content. Blackboard was the most commonly used learning management system among these fully online leadership programs. According to our data analysis, nine institutions used Blackboard for their leadership program delivery. Subsequently, seven institutions used Canvas, seven institutions used Moodle (with one being Moodle-based), and four used D2L's Brightspace. The remaining six institutions were the only users of their platforms, including Blueline, Jenzabar eLearning, Engage, Schoology, eLearning, and CelticOnline.

As to the student support services and resources described within these online leadership programs, financial support was widely mentioned by multiple programs. For instance, the Online Certificate of Christian Leadership at Baptist Missionary Theological (BMT) Seminary underscored their efforts to make education possible for anyone, "regardless of their financial abilities" (BMA Seminary, 2020). Specific financial supports offered for the online leadership programs at BMT Seminary include Scholarships, Federal Student Aid (Pell Grants, Student Loans, Disbursement), Veteran's Administration, and

Payment Plans. Tuition and tuition rates have been mentioned by these online academic leadership programs as well. MS in Organizational Leadership at Colorado State University – Global and MS in Organizational Leadership at Columbia Southern University highlighted their low tuition rates compared to their competitor and described their employer discount and benefits with their tuitions.

These online academic leadership programs provided students with support in their online leadership learning through various advising services and resources via online formats. Program advising has been commonly mentioned by Each individual of these programs. Every program provided their contact information on their website for potential students to reach out for program information. Several online leadership programs highlighted academic advising and career advising, such as Online MS in Organizational Leadership at Southern New Hampshire University and Online Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership Degree at Benedictine University. Also, BS in Business with a specialization in Management and Leadership at Capella University has regular advisor check-ins for their students.

Additionally, networking among the students of these online leadership programs with their peers, faculty, and program alumni have been recognized to support student engagement before, during, and after their online leadership program study. D.Min in Transformational Leadership at Bethel University, MS in Organizational Leadership at Bethune-Cookman University, and BS in Business with Specialization in Management and Leadership at Capella University noted their online discussions with classmates to build up cohort network for their students even though they enrolled in online leadership programs. Programs such as the DMin in Transformational Leadership at Bethel University, MA in Ministry Leadership at Crown College, and the PhD in Educational Leadership at Columbia International University underscored their faculty support, student and faculty interactions, and mentoring from faculty to support student success. Online MS in Organizational Leadership at Southern New Hampshire University introduced

their nationwide alumni network to support their students further – “you’ll have the potential to tap into a number of internship and career opportunities” (Southern New Hampshire University, 2020).

Discussion and Implications

In this qualitative case study, the researchers evaluated 51 online academic leadership programs to answer the overarching research question: what are the online academic leadership program characteristics communicated through their program website? In addressing the first sub-research question exploring the programs' academic affiliations, the findings on degree types showed 41 of the programs were offered at the graduate level. Further, the top three major fields represented in data were business, education, and interdisciplinary studies. These programs likely aim to support students' further advancement in academic studies and future careers by offering leadership education in these major fields. From this finding, we recognize how graduate programs and these three major fields are leading the work in online academic leadership education. Other degree types and major fields that were not present in this data may see this as an opportunity for their programs to fill the gap and offer online leadership education programs in their respective areas. For others who align with these degree types and fields, emerging online leadership programs can use this information to benchmark their program's development and progress with their peers.

Our second sub-research question examined the programmatic goals of the online academic leadership programs. The content analysis of program website information revealed three major themes: career-development focus, faith-based focus, and specific industries. These focuses show how the academic programs make sense of leadership and their intended audience for marketing. Perspective online leadership students who are employed or have familial responsibilities seek flexibility in the time and

location. The marketing of these online leadership programs meets these expectations by offering students the flexibility to take classes remotely with evening, weekend, and flexible times to engage in course content. So, it makes sense that these students would be more likely to enroll in online academic leadership programs. Additionally, framing and teaching leadership around careers and skill development, around faith, and in specific industries provides options for prospective students to combine their individual goals or interests with leadership learning and future career advancement. As online leadership continues to grow as an area of study, programs may consider providing a specific focus within their program design that makes it stand out. These programs will also want to ensure their unique features are included on their program websites.

Our third sub-research question studied the support systems offered to students in online academic leadership programs. The data described supplemental support services such as financial support, advising services, and network development. The repetition of these services demonstrates their necessity to attract, enroll, and further support students' engagement and success in online leadership learning. Current and emerging online leadership programs will benefit from including this in their program design, development, and marketing. Further, multiple online learning management systems and support services were identifiable for these institutions but were not easily found on the program websites. As the academic leadership programs are fully online, technology plays a significant role in advertising these programs. It is essential to share the major online learning management systems with their perspective and current students to help them get familiar with their online study formats. Although this may not be a decision-making point, recognizing the learning management system as something they are familiar with from previous educational experiences may ease concerns about transitioning into the program.

The program characteristics of online academic

leadership programs regarding their academic affiliations, program mission and goals, and support services identified from this study could provide valuable implications for leadership researchers and educators. As there was little empirical research on online academic leadership programs, this current study provides a fundamental understanding of online leadership programs for leadership educators who can look to this data for benchmarking and developing their programs. Further research could expand on these findings by including a larger sample size and diving into these online leadership programs' pedagogical design and practices.

As this data was collected before the coronavirus pandemic, it would also be beneficial to explore the impact of online academic leadership programs beyond the shift to online education learning worldwide. Through this unexpected shift to online and remote instruction, we are becoming more conscious of what technology offers in its opportunities and limitations. Though there is uncertainty in what higher education will look like post-pandemic, all signs point to further technology integration in the educational environment and practices. It will be interesting to see how online leadership education programs are considered and developed over the next few years. As higher education continues to recognize the importance of leadership learning as a viable field of study, we can expand our outreach to offer academic programs through online platforms to provide access to students who are working, have families, are location-bound, and have different learning abilities. It is the hope that this data will provide fundamental considerations in the development of new online leadership programs.

Overall, considering the academic affiliations of online leadership programs in this case study aligned with the program mission and goals to advance students' academic studies and future careers, it is valuable for leadership educators to have their prospective students' expectations in mind while creating or modifying their online academic leadership programs. To meet these needs, online academic leadership

programs should provide support and resources to meet students' online learning needs and increase leadership learning access. Leadership educators can use this data to learn from other online leadership programs to support students through this study while taking their targeted student population and unique leadership program specifics into account.

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