

Doctorate in Community College Leadership

Empowering graduates to advance community colleges toward excellence and community responsiveness through exemplary leadership



"I am convinced that for presidents, as for students, the old academic competencies are the essential vocational competencies: critical literacy; fluency in oral and written communication; numeracy; information literacy; analytical and evaluative ability; and the capacity to synthesize, generalize, and solve problems. Without these competencies, how can a president lead an institution whose core mission is to prepare those it serves for lives of work and learning? ... At the core of leadership is the building and nurturing of relationships both within and outside the college community. The work of leadership requires courage, and is rooted, as is the word courage itself, in the heart. We need to know others and let ourselves be known. I have learned that in the presidency, as in the classroom, we are our own first texts. We serve our institutions as we teach our students with who we are and how we act even more than with what we know. We learn leadership, as we live and how we live, 'in the crucible of work.'"

Margaret B. Lee
President Emerita
Oakton College



Graduates will have the capacity to:

- Advance the college mission
- Orchestrate effective governance
- Implement institutional strategy
- Enhance academic quality
- Empower student success
- Cultivate community relationships
- Ensure fiscal stewardship
- Develop as a person, scholar, and leader

Admission Requirements

1. Master's degree from regionally accredited institution
2. Minimum of 3.25 GPA or equivalent in the master's program
3. Completed application materials

GRE scores are not required.

To apply or get more information on application requirements, visit ferris.edu/ccleadership.

"I chose the Ferris DCCL program for a few reasons. First, the program focus and course content are highly relevant to me as a community college professional. Second, many doctoral programs claim to be designed for working professionals, but the DCCL program is truly designed for working professionals. The cohort-based, hybrid format is a perfect fit for my busy administrative schedule. Lastly, the DCCL program stands above other doctoral programs because of the dissertation options. Again, I am able to choose a customized dissertation option that is relevant and applicable for me as a community college administrator."

Lesley Frederick
Vice President - Student Services
Lincoln Land Community College

Program Mission

The Ferris State University Doctorate in Community College Leadership empowers graduates to advance community colleges toward excellence and community responsiveness through exemplary leadership.

Program Focus

Designed for leaders of mission-driven, 21st-century community colleges, the Ferris doctoral program focuses on the changing expectations for effective leadership within the dynamic environment of higher education. From a multidisciplinary perspective, leaders consider the social, political, academic, and economic forces influencing colleges, and develop and integrate strategies that will lead the enterprise to greater success. With a practice-focused lens specific to the community college, leaders examine contemporary issues, strategic planning, teaching and learning, policy and governance, leadership and organizational development, community engagement, finance, and resource development. Course assignments and dissertations focus on real-world problems in their specific contexts. The program emphasizes development of a broad perspective while also developing the knowledge and expertise essential for leadership success.

Delivery Model

The program uses a blended delivery approach. Classes typically have a face-to-face component of a few days or a weekend. Typical summers require leaders to be in Michigan for 4 - 5 days. The balance of instruction is online, with occasional synchronous virtual conversations. Cohort members typically make 4 - 5 trips to Michigan each year, except for site-based cohorts that are held at other locations. Summers are generally hosted in Big Rapids, MI on the campus of Ferris State University and weekend courses are held in Grand Rapids, MI.



Sample Schedule

<p>Summer Year 1 <i>1 credit dissertation, Big Rapids</i></p> <p>The Past, Present, and Future of Community Colleges Provides a broad overview of the historical context of community colleges in the United States as well as their current and future roles, governance structures, and leadership challenges to hypothesize future directions and leadership challenges.</p> <p>Critical Issues in Community Colleges Examines the external forces and current issues impacting community colleges, including social, political, and environmental change. Students examine the origins of the issues and the perspectives of varied stakeholders, and evaluate potential impact(s).</p>	<p>Fall Year 1 <i>1 credit dissertation, Grand Rapids</i></p> <p>Foundations of Effective Leadership Examines various leadership theories and the relationship between leadership styles and organizations, examining the optimal “fit” of an individual leader, leadership role, and organizational environment.</p> <p>Creating Culture of Student Learning and Success This course evaluates past and current theories of and strategies for improving student success including best practices in persistence, completion, and student development. Focus is on continuous improvement strategies deriving from data analysis.</p>	<p>Spring Year 1 <i>1 credit dissertation, Grand Rapids</i></p> <p>Leadership for Teaching and Learning This course focuses on current research, theories, and best practices, and future possibilities for effective teaching and learning, with emphasis on methods for reaching diverse student populations, assessing learning, developing essential skills, creating effective learning environments, and exploring alternative curricular and instructional opportunities.</p> <p>Qualitative Research Methods and Data Analysis Addresses foundational principles of methods of qualitative inquiry, with emphasis on ensuring ethical standards, establishing assumptions and limitations for a study, developing appropriate research questions and approach, and designing effective data collection methods.</p>
<p>Summer Year 2 <i>2 credits dissertation, Big Rapids</i></p> <p>Quantitative Research Methods and Data Analysis Addresses foundational principles and elements of methods of quantitative inquiry, with emphasis on ensuring ethical standards, establishing assumptions and limitations for a study, designing effective data collection methods and interpreting quantitative results utilizing standard statistical techniques.</p>	<p>Fall Year 2 <i>1 credit dissertation, Grand Rapids</i></p> <p>Marketing and Community Engagement This course examines the concepts of community relations, engagement, and marketing as they apply to the community college. Topics include effective engagement and communication strategies, building the college brand or image, and methods for measuring stakeholder perceptions.</p> <p>Resource Development Covers the role, rationale, and basic principles of public and private resource development in community colleges, from millage and bond campaigns to grants and philanthropic fundraising.</p>	<p>Spring Year 2 <i>1 credit dissertation, AACC Convention</i></p> <p>Practicum Provides an independent, individual learning experience designed specifically to meet the learner’s professional goals.</p> <p>Leveraging Human Resources Examines methods for maximizing the college’s human resources, including the expertise needed to provide leadership in designing effective models of employee involvement and development within the context of labor laws, agreements, and governance structures.</p>
<p>Summer Year 3 <i>1 credit dissertation, Big Rapids</i></p> <p>Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Explores strategic planning for community colleges as driven by institutional mission, vision, and values. Applying a systems approach, students identify essential elements, integrate these into a strategic plan, and analyze their interrelationships.</p> <p>Managing Financial Resources Provides an overview of the budgetary concepts and processes that are foundational to the financial health of community colleges, including decision-making frameworks, analytical tools, capital planning, technology planning, and state and federal regulations and practices.</p>	<p>Fall Year 3 <i>1 credit dissertation, Grand Rapids</i></p> <p>Policy and Governance Addresses external and internal models of governance, their constituents, and their unique perspectives by focusing on leadership attributes that provide the agility needed to bring these groups together and develop a shared vision.</p> <p>Leading Organizational Transformation and Cultural Change Focuses on theories and best practices for leading organizational change, including how to apply change theories and strategies to organizational needs, develop change plans with articulated visions and strategic frameworks, and define processes for implementing and monitoring change for improvement and sustainability.</p>	<p>Spring Year 3 <i>6 credits dissertation, Grand Rapids and Big Rapids</i></p> <p>Comprehensive Interviews and Presentations Comprehensive Interviews and Presentations (CIPs) is the integrative capstone experience for DCCL students. Through a portfolio and interview process, students demonstrate mastery of the DCCL program outcomes. Successful completion is required for advancement to dissertation defense and graduation.</p> <p>Commencement</p>

Total Credits = 61



PICTURED: Cohort Four during their summer picnic kicking off year three.

Built on Core Values

The DCCL program is built on the foundation of Ferris State University's Core Values: Collaboration, Diversity, Ethical Community, Excellence, Learning, and Opportunity. These values are linked to the courses and permeate the program's philosophies.

Each course in the DCCL program addresses key issues facing higher education and community colleges, providing skills and knowledge essential to the leaders of today and of the future. DCCL courses maintain a strong applied focus, emphasizing effective practice informed by theory. DCCL courses are developed and taught by community college leaders with a wide range of executive leadership experiences.

This three-year Ed.D. program is tailored to the needs of full-time working adults. Graduates are ideally prepared to advance into positions as deans, directors, vice presidents, and presidents.

A Distinctive Approach

Our focus on the skills and perspectives required by leaders in higher education sets us apart. DCCL completers positively impact their colleges.

We are:

Future oriented. By placing our emphasis on strategic thinking, systems perspectives, entrepreneurship, and deep collaboration, we make certain you are ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

Professionally networked. Courses are led by expert practitioners who are current or recent high-level college leaders, and the program is guided by a National Advisory Board of distinguished leaders. Extensive opportunities are provided to build expanded networks, through the inclusion of distinguished lecturers, conference participation, and special events.


A global community. Program participants have the opportunity to participate in study-abroad experiences. Earlier cohorts have visited China, Russia, and Finland. Learners will build both global competency and expanded international networks.

Strategic and relevant. This program focuses on leadership for the future and is characterized by engagement in cases, problems, and professional opportunities that empower leaders to embrace leadership with broader perspectives, creativity, and pragmatic approaches.

Genuinely supportive. We succeed when you succeed. Your cohort will prove to be the ideal community to nurture your professional development. Our expert faculty will provide one-on-one guidance at every point, culminating in an invaluable, individually designed dissertation experience.

Apply now for the next cohort.



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Cohort Four students are pictured in this brochure.

Citations for Lee Message: Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (1997) and *To Know as We Are Known* (1993).
Sandy Shugart, *Leadership in the Crucible of Work: Discovering the Interior Life of an Authentic Leader* (2013).