Examining Degree Types of Academic Leadership Programs in the United States

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As the discipline of leadership evolves and leadership as a learned process is becoming more of a focus (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Parks, 2005), academic leadership programs have grown substantially over the past few decades (Riggio, Ciculla, & Sorenson, 2003; Schwartz, Axtman, & Freeman, 1998). Although there is data on the number of academic leadership programs within U.S. higher education institutions (Brungardt, 1997; Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt, & Arensdorf, 2006; Owen, 2008; Reiburg, 1998; Roberts, 1981; Watkins, 2018), these studies do not share details of leadership program such as institutional types offering academic leadership programs or details of program structure. To fill this gap in literature and to gain specific and insightful program information, the Leadership Learning Research Center (LLRC) at Florida State University (FSU) requested access to the International Leadership Association (ILA) Leadership Education Directory in 2016 (ILA, 2016), published the first report – Academic Leadership Programs in the United States (Guthrie, Teig, & Hu, 2018), formalized a partnership with ILA in 2018 (Batchelder & Guthrie, 2019), and has continued research on academic leadership programs.

Guthrie et al. (2018) noted that the initial purpose of their first research report was to “share preliminary analysis conducted by the LLRC of data from the ILA Directory (2016) and data captured from institutional website detailing program type, courses, and descriptions” (p. 3). Beyond reporting programs only by numbers, Guthrie et al. (2018) further described the specifics of these programs such as institutional type, degree type, and program course offerings. After the distribution of the first report, the research team received several inquiries about information for specific degree types. The research team decided to continue examining the descriptive data to better understand how academic leadership programs compared by various degree types. Building on this information, the primary purpose of this second report is to further analyze academic leadership programs by degree types to see if any themes emerge regarding the types of academic leadership programs offered in the United States.

METHODS

This research continues the descriptive analysis of the data from the ILA Leadership Program Directory and the additional data collected by the FSU research team. The ILA directory was established by a 2008 grant from the C. Charles Jackson Foundation and invited ILA members to self-report information on their program (Guthrie et al., 2018). At the time, it was the largest available dataset of academic leadership programs. However, it is self-reported and therefore does not represent all academic leadership programs. Additionally, because leadership is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, the way academic leadership programs emerge is based on academics’ personal interpretations of leadership studies in a particular disciplinary context. The information collected by ILA became a publicly available resource on ILA’s website. The LLRC research team began with the data ILA provided from their directory and expanded on the United States information by adding additional data about the programs. After visiting program websites for verification, some specifics such as Carnegie classification (carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/test), U.S. region, faith affiliation, year of establishment, program mission/vision, institutional mission, and course sequencing were updated. With updated program information, we analyzed data on 1,526 academic leadership programs, focusing on the degree types of these programs in the United States. The research team analyzed this data to answer three overarching research questions:
1. How many academic leadership programs are offered through the various degree types in the United States?

2. Where are the specific degree types of academic leadership programs located in the United States regionally?

3. What types of institutions are hosting the various degree types? (i.e. public/private, religiously affiliated, & Carnegie classification)?

Phase 1: Data Verification and Updating

Over the past year, the LLRC research team of three undergraduate students, two doctoral students, and one faculty advisor have returned to the data for a second review to clean and update our data fields. This consisted of verifying and updating program information, removing phased out programs (65) and programs that are now co-curricular (3), adding any new programs offered by the institutions currently in the directory (36), and clarifying definitions of the degree types and delivery methods for cleaner categorization. Additionally, through a partnership with ILA (Batchelder & Guthrie, 2019), the team was contacted by programs wishing to update or add their program to the directory. This resulted in a total of 1,526 academic leadership programs in the United States for the current report.

Phase 2: Classifying Features

With a focus on degrees, the research team identified a total of 10 different types of degrees. These include associate, bachelor, minor, undergraduate certificate, graduate certificate, master’s, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D., Ed.S., & Ed.M.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.), and other doctoral degrees. Each of the degree types aligns with the institution’s definition of the program they are offering. We chose to breakdown the following categories for clarification and interest. The certificate programs were disaggregated into undergraduate and graduate programs as they serve different student populations. The doctoral degrees were further deconstructed into the four categories based on the number of reported programs. The “other doctoral” degrees include a variety of professional, non-research degrees. Within this category, half of the “other doctoral” programs (17/34) were D.Min. programs, and this led us to create a separate category to better understand these programs in comparison.

In order to understand the data by U.S. region, it was important to add the category of region to our dataset. We chose the National Geographic division with an addition of the pacific west outlined in the U.S. Census due to the number of programs offered in this region. These regions allow us to visually see the number of programs by relevant states. While their division does represent relevant states by region, it does not demonstrate an equally balanced number of institutions within the regions. This is a limitation of this data category. To account for this, we considered the number of states included in the regions.

FINDINGS

Academic leadership programs in the United States by degree type

The data shared a sample of 1,526 programs representing 489 institutions of higher education in 49 states within the United States. Within our sample, there were 643 master’s programs, 203 bachelor’s degree programs, 173 Doctor of Education programs, 161 graduate certificate programs, 128 minor programs, 125 Doctor of Philosophy, 48 undergraduate certificate programs, 17 Doctor of Ministry programs, 17 other doctoral programs, and 11
associate degree programs. Figure 1 demonstrates degree types for each area. Master’s degrees (42%) make up the majority of the programs within the United States trailed by bachelor’s programs (13%). Associate degrees account for the smallest representation (0.7%). Overall, the majority of leadership programs currently exist at the graduate level. When looking at the certificate programs (13.7%), graduate programs make up 3.5 times as many as undergraduate certificate programs.

**Figure 1. Academic Degree Programs in the United States by Degree Type**

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**Academic Leadership Programs in the United States by Region**

To understand the academic leadership programs representation across the United States, we broke down the programs by U.S. region. Figure 2 presents the academic degree types by U.S. regions. Once again, master’s programs show a dominance represented across all regions. The bachelor’s, undergraduate certificate, masters, minors, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy degree types demonstrated a relatively even spread across the regions by percentage, but there were a few variances among the remaining types. Although still demonstrating the lowest representation across most regions, 36.4% of associate programs were found in the Midwest region. The Midwest has the largest representation of academic leadership programs overall, and the largest portion of each degree type except for graduate certificate programs. Graduate certificates have a stronger presence in the Northeast (46), Midwest (39), and Mid-Atlantic (29). When looking at the percentage of each degree type present by region, graduate certificates show the largest representation of programs in the Northeast (28.6%). The Doctor of Education degrees have a good visual representation in each region, but it has the most programs (40) in both the Midwest and the Southeast followed by the Northeast (34). Otherwise, there are 18 or less Doctor of Education programs in each of the remaining regions.
Figure 2. Degree Type by United States Region
Academic Leadership Programs in the United States by Institutional Elements

Institutions have specific elements as a part of their identity, including funding structures and religious affiliation. Beginning with the common designation of private and public funding structures, Figure 3 demonstrates the breakdown by degree type. The majority of academic leadership programs are designated as private institutions with 1,038 programs as compared to 488 public programs. Although the trend continues with master’s programs dominating both types of institutions, there is a larger representation of master's programs in private institutions (47.5%) than public institutions (30.7%). Bachelor’s programs represent 13.1% and 13.7% of private and public institutions respectively. However, Doctor of Education and minor programs each represent 14.3% of programs at public institutions showing a slight edge over bachelor's programs. Doctor of Education programs also show a stronger presence in public programs (14.3%) when compared to private programs (9.9%). Further, the representation of minor programs is stronger in public programs (14.3%) than private programs (5.6%). Due to the specific study of religion, it is understandable that there are no Doctor of Ministry programs in public institutions. However, there is only one program designated as “Other Doctoral” in the public institution designation.
The data from the 1,526 academic programs in our sample also included designations for institution type by Carnegie classifications and religious affiliation. There are 45% more non-religiously affiliated (n=902) than religiously affiliated institutions (n=624). The degree types offered within these two designations are outlined in Figure 4. In comparing the degree types among these designations, bachelor’s, master’s, and Other Doctoral programs are comparable. However, most of the remaining degree types are represented at close to double the rate in non-religiously affiliated institutions with the exception of Undergraduate Certificates. Only six (12.5%) of the Undergraduate Certificates are found in religiously affiliated institutions, but the remaining 42 (87.5%) of them are at non-religiously affiliated institutions.

Figure 4. Degree Types by Religious and Non-Religious Affiliation
In our data, all but 26 institutions were categorized into 17 of the 33 various basic Carnegie classifications (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2015). The largest representation (424) is present in the Master's Colleges and Universities: Larger Programs category which has at least one of each degree type. The master's degree type is present in 15 of the Carnegie classifications followed closely by the Doctor of Philosophy shown in 14 of the classifications. In general, the higher the number of academic leadership programs in each degree type resulted in more Carnegie classifications represented. When the Carnegie classifications were grouped into broader categories of degree levels (associates, baccalaureate, doctoral, master’s, and special focus institutions), as shown in Figure 1, most academic leadership programs can be found at doctoral institutions (723). Further, the doctoral institutions also represent the largest number of programs in each of the following degree types: graduate certificates, undergraduate certificates, Doctor of Education, minors, other doctorate, and Doctor of Philosophy.

Table 1. Degree Type by Institutional Degree Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Associate</th>
<th>Baccalaureate</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Special Focus 2</th>
<th>Special Focus 4</th>
<th>Number of Records</th>
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<td>Associate</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate - Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate - Undergraduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdD, EdS, EdM</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Doctorate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>
DISCUSSION

The interest in learning more about academic leadership programs in the United States has driven our research. Guthrie et al. (2018) provided a foundation to better understanding these programs, and the data from this current report digs further into the range of degree types at various institutions related to academic leadership programs. Based on the data, we found that master’s programs are the largest overall degree type with 42% of the 1,526 academic leadership programs in the United States, followed by bachelor’s at 13%. This trend shifts a bit when we look at degree types under different categories such as regions and institutional types. Figure 2 deconstructs degree types by regions and shows master’s programs are dominant components of academic leadership programs across all six regions in the United States. Although bachelor programs are still secondary in the Midwest, Southeast, Pacific West, and Southwest, there is a stronger presence of graduate certificate program in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast than bachelor programs.

Continuing to examine the degree types by U.S. region, the strongest presence of Doctor of Education programs in the Midwest (40), Southeast (40), and Northeast (34), while the rest of regions held less than 18 of these programs. As we analyzed the data, we questioned why the Doctor of Education and graduate certificate leadership programs are more significant in these particular regions. Do leadership educators generally know the trend of leadership degree types by regions? What can we do to make this information more meaningful for leadership education? Reflecting on these questions, the LLRC research team continued to question the relationships between degree type and variables of regions and institutional types. This demonstrates an opportunity for growth in the remaining regions of the United States (Pacific West, Mountain West, Southwest, and Mid-Atlantic).

Based on the degree types by designation data, it is easy to see the majority of academic leadership programs are offered at private institutions and are classified as master’s programs in both private and public institutions. We questioned why private institutions had such an emphasis on leadership education, was it connected with their institutional mission, their funding structure, or a combination? Further, we examined the presence of the 10 degree types at private and public institutions individually, and we found the likelihood of these degree types within public and private were quite different. For example, nearly half of the leadership programs in private institutions are master’s programs (47.5%), which is higher than the representation of master’s programs in public institutions (30.7%). However, both Doctor of Education programs and minor programs showed a stronger presence in public institutions than in private ones. The research team is curious about whether the trend of degree types by designations has any correlation to institutional missions or program missions, which would need further data collection.

The degree types by religious affiliation data present nearly 60% academic leadership programs are non-religious affiliated. Reflecting on one of our findings we mentioned above: the majority of leadership programs are offered at private institutions; however, we question the overlaps between degree types by private/public institutions and by religious affiliations. For example, D.Min. leadership programs are only offered at religiously affiliated institutions; more exploration into why these institutions have a focus on leadership within their doctoral programs is warranted. In addition, we found a comparable distribution of bachelor’s, master’s, and other doctoral programs among religious affiliations, but undergraduate certificates were
primarily found in non-religiously affiliated institutions.

In examining the academic leadership program degree types by Carnegie classification, there were no major differences in degree types. However, when examining Carnegie classifications in broader categories, institutions with Carnegie classifications of the doctoral level held the most representation. We did find the majority (424) of academic leadership programs were at Master’s Colleges and Universities: Larger Programs Carnegie classification. This is a large representation of this classification. We would need to use statistical analysis to determine the significance of this information.

As with any research, limitations to this data collection and analysis should be noted. As mentioned in the introduction section, the original ILA directory data was from self-reported program information from ILA members. This causes several limitations, not only as to who had access to report, but how they reported information. Since leadership educators may hold different definitions of leadership, the leadership program information reported to the directory may be varied based on educators’ positionalities. Secondly, the academic program data is constantly evolving as leadership programs in the United States have new goals, administration, and societal pressure potentially from policymakers. It is important to note that this second report is a snapshot of academic leadership program information as of May 2019.

CONCLUSION

Our overarching goal in examining academic leadership programs is to provide information about these programs for leadership educators and scholars. The LLRC research team continually updates the original ILA directory data, incorporating emerging leadership programs, and examining the data we have. This report examined the degree types of academic leadership programs in the United States and shared the number of programs, where these programs are offered regionally, and information on the institutional type offering academic leadership programs. We were able to provide a clearer picture of these academic leadership programs, which helps to establish a stronger foundation for scholarship in the field of leadership education. However, there is a long way to go in fully understanding the breadth and depth of academic leadership programs.
REFERENCES


The Leadership Learning Research Center is a partnership between the College of Education and the Division of Student Affairs at Florida State University.