

Distance Learning Leaders— Who Are They?

Recently, a program of study leading to a certificate as a distance learning leader was held at Nova Southeastern University. At the core of the six week long program was the definition offered of a leader.

A distance learning leader is a visionary capable of action who guides an organization's future, its vision, mission, goals, and objectives. The leader guides the organization and its people who have faith in the leader, and have a clear understanding and acceptance of the organization's



Michael Simonson, Editor, *Distance Learning*, and Program Professor, Programs in Instructional Technology and Distance Education, Fischler Graduate School of Education, Nova Southeastern University, 1750 NE 167 St., North Miami Beach, FL 33162.
Telephone: (954) 262-8563.
Fax: (954) 262-3905.
E-mail: simsmich@nsu.nova.edu

worthwhile and shared vision and goals. A distance learning leader has competence in knowing, designing, managing, leading and visioning distance education.

The whole idea of training to develop leaders is an interesting one. The military trains its officers to be leaders during intensive sessions such as the U.S. Marine Corps' Basic School, a six month immersion in all that one could imagine for the new junior Marine Officer. The Navy has the Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, RI, which is a series of schools for officers of various ranks who attend several times during their naval careers. Without exception these schools are months long, and totally dominate the time and the of those in attendance. Then, we have West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy—certainly colleges, but also designed to produce military leaders.

Are we naïve to think we can prepare leaders of distance education organizations in two days and six weeks of online follow up? Or, are there a common core of skills, competencies, and ideas that can be taught, shared, and learned that will produce a new leader. Certainly the idea of certification pro-

grams to prepare leaders is becoming wide spread, and if the marketplace decides, then these many and varied programs must be doing something right. We at the *Distance Learning Magazine* would love to hear from our subscribers and readers about his topic—are leaders trained or do they emerge? Let us know your thoughts, and if you have specific insights or experiences, write an article.

AND FINALLY, as Walter Lippmann said “the final test of a leader is that [the leader leaves behind] in others the conviction and the will to carry on...the genius of a good leader is to leave behind a situation which common sense, without the grace of genius, can deal with successfully.” If distance education – distance teaching and distance learning—is to become mainstream, then many leaders in a multitude of locations will be needed. Informed leaders who believe in high quality and in the rigorous application of sound teaching principles to the learning process.