

# Comprehensive Review of Online Operations

## UPCEA Hallmarks of Excellence in Online Leadership

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University of Phoenix

March 2021



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National Council for Online Education  
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# About the University of Phoenix

From the [University of Phoenix Website](#):

## **Mission**

University of Phoenix provides access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the performance of their organizations, and provide leadership and service to their communities.

## **Purpose**

- To facilitate cognitive and effective student learning—knowledge, skills, and values—and to promote use of that knowledge in the student's workplace.
- To develop competence in communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and information utilization, together with a commitment to lifelong learning for enhancement of students' opportunities for career success.
- To provide instruction that bridges the gap between theory and practice through faculty members who bring to their classroom not only advanced academic preparation, but also the skills that come from the current practice of their professions.
- To provide General Education and foundational instruction and services that prepare students to engage in a variety of university curricula.
- To use technology to create effective modes and means of instruction that expand access to learning resources and that enhance collaboration and communication for improved student learning.
- To assess student learning and use assessment data to improve the teaching/learning system, curriculum, instruction, learning resources, counseling, and student services.
- To be organized as a private institution in order to foster a spirit of innovation that focuses on providing academic quality, service, excellence, and convenience to the working student.
- To generate the financial resources necessary to support the University's mission.

# About the Hallmarks

From [UPCEA's Website](#):

Online education is now critical for the future of America's universities. These institutions can no longer establish a presence in this arena without a concerted institutional strategy and structure to accomplish this now major undertaking. UPCEA's Hallmarks of Excellence in Online Leadership attempt to articulate those features and principles that will create opportunities for students that far exceed anything already achieved in higher education, take pedagogy to a new level, and demonstrate the capacity of universities to be an even more vital force in our society. These Hallmarks are an attempt to infuse idealism into a budding, dynamic profession – to help first-generation leaders in this field so online education can assume its rightful place in what makes universities excellent, respected, and essential to their communities.

The Hallmarks detail seven facets of leadership and organizational development in this domain:

Internal Advocacy. Recognizing that online education, by its very nature, will be an integrated and extensive facet of its university, those charged with leading an enterprise must build internal alliances, and reflect the larger goals, values, and strategies of their institutions.

**Advocacy and Leadership within the University.** Recognizing that online education, by its very nature, will be an integrated and extensive facet of its university, those charged with leading an enterprise must build internal alliances, and reflect the larger goals, values, and strategies of their institutions.

**Entrepreneurial Initiative.** Recognizing that online education is inevitably about innovation, experimentation, risk, and imagination, emerging leaders must have the skills and creativity to facilitate responsible change.

**Faculty Support.** Recognizing that online education is not a solitary instructional process, but one that requires extensive support and resources, leaders must envelop their faculty with the tools they need to create education equal to, if not exceeding, that of the traditional classroom.

**Student Support.** Recognizing that online students demand a learning experience at least comparable to that on-campus, leaders must be ongoing advocates for students earning their degrees remotely from their institutions.

**Digital Technology.** Recognizing that technology creates both opportunities and anxieties, leaders must provide an environment that is current, dependable, and rich in the creative use of tools to enhance learning, interaction, and program integrity.

**External Advocacy.** Recognizing that online enterprises must represent their institutions to an often skeptical public, leaders must be an authoritative voice to regulators, accreditors, alumni, members of the business community, and many others.

**Professionalism.** Recognizing that emerging entities need policies and practices that demonstrate the integrity of a profession still establishing itself, those leading the growth of online learning must exemplify the highest ideals and contribute to a growing professional community on a national scale.

# The Peer Review Team

## Ray Schroeder, University of Illinois-Springfield (Lead Reviewer)

**Ray Schroeder** is Professor Emeritus, Associate Vice Chancellor for Online Learning at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) and Senior Fellow, Founding Director of the National Council for Online Education at the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA). He began his academic career in 1971 as an Instructor in the College of Communications at the University of Illinois. Schroeder left Urbana in 1977 to become an Assistant Professor in Communication at Sangamon State University (which became UIS in 1995). His career and publications focus on the application of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Schroeder founded the UIS Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning (OTEL) in 1997. OTEL later became the Center for Online Learning Research and Service (COLRS), combining support for the essential online faculty responsibilities into one unit. The unit has received numerous national grants and awards. It supports 26 online graduate and undergraduate programs ranked among the “Best Online Colleges” by US News. UIS delivers some 500 online classes each semester to students in 48 states and 10 countries. Schroeder’s recognitions include:

- 2018 Albert Nelson Marquis Who’s Who Worldwide Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing more than 20 years of leadership in the field
- 2016 United States Distance Teaching and Learning Association Hall of Fame Award for significant contributions to the field of distance learning through leadership, technology, research and teaching
- 2016 Mildred B. and Charles A. Wedemeyer Award as Outstanding Practitioner in Distance Education by the American Journal of Distance Education and the University of Wisconsin, Madison
- 2014 Past Presidents’ Award for Outstanding Service from the Illinois Council of Continuing Higher Education
- 2012 Innovation Fellow for Digital Learning, UPCEA
- 2011 University of Illinois Distinguished Service Award
- 2010 Mayadas Leadership Award in Online Education, the Sloan Consortium
- 2010 Inaugural Sloan Consortium Fellow
- 2002 Outstanding Achievement in Asynchronous Learning Networks – Sloan Consortium

Schroeder publishes to an array of social media outlets with more than 12,000 daily readers to his publications. He has co-authored multiple chapters and numerous papers over the past 20 years. A frequent keynote speaker, Schroeder is well-known nationally and internationally for his knowledge and writings in technology-enhanced learning.

## **Aaron Brower**

Dr. Aaron Brower is University of Wisconsin System Senior Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Executive Director for UW Extended Campus. His primary responsibility is to develop and expand educational opportunities for adult and professionally-oriented students, the largest segment of the state and nation now seeking higher education. UW Extended Campus has built a national reputation for creating award-winning innovative and student-centric programs that partner with and leverage resources across all University of Wisconsin campuses. Among the many collaborative programs within UW Extended Campus's portfolio is the UW System's UW Flexible Option, the country's first (and still only) competency-based educational program built to support an entire state system of higher education. UW Flex was created under Dr. Brower's leadership when he was Provost and Vice Chancellor for UW-Extension.

From 2012-2018, Dr. Brower served as Provost and Vice Chancellor of UW-Extension and was named Interim Chancellor of UW Colleges and UW-Extension in 2014. Prior to that, he spent six years as UW-Madison's Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning, overseeing and supporting undergraduate education and professional development for teaching and learning. Dr. Brower remains a tenured professor at UW-Madison in the School of Social Work and in the departments of Integrated Liberal Studies and Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis.

Dr. Brower has written 4 books, more than 50 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and received over \$18M in grants to support his work. His scholarship demonstrates the academic and social outcomes produced when colleges blend in- and out-of-class learning and experiences. Dr. Brower's expertise is in educational innovation, student learning, and outcome assessment – engaging the whole university to support “whole student” education. He has created and led many teaching and learning programs focused on integrative learning and evidence-based curricular reform. He consults widely with institutions across the country.

Dr. Brower earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, a Master's Degree in Social Work, a Master's Degree in Psychology, and a Doctorate in Social Work and Psychology, all from the University of Michigan.

## **Karen Pedersen**

Karen Pedersen is the Dean of K-State Global Campus and a At-Large Director on UPCEA's Board of Directors (2019-2021). Throughout her career in senior leadership positions at both public and private higher education institutions, Pedersen has led award-winning off-campus and online learning units focused on engaging cross-institutional academic operations while pursuing enrollment growth and learner success outcomes.

Highlights from her career include launching more than 45 innovative online degree programs and numerous certificates, serving on the launch team for a competency-based education initiative, securing a \$2.5 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant for supporting underserved students, leading a systemwide enrollment management transformation, and expanding academic partnerships

with military branches and small businesses, corporations, community and technical colleges, as well as with international universities in Brazil, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Pedersen is a frequent speaker on the topics of online learning, quality and excellence, military education programs, enrollment management and adult learner success. She has presented at many education conferences, including the Council for College and Military Educators, Department of Defense Education Symposium, Educause, IMSGlobal, National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, Online Learning Consortium, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Higher Learning Commission, as well as WCET, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. She has served as an invited international speaker, met with congressional leaders advocating on behalf of adult learners, and has published practitioner and research-based articles and books.

Pedersen joined Kansas State University as the dean of K-State Global Campus in February 2018. Before joining K-State, Pedersen was the chief knowledge officer for the Online Learning Consortium, leading thought leader initiatives related to learning innovation, quality enhancement, community engagement, leadership development, institutional transformation and policy advocacy. Before starting her administrative career, Pedersen was a full-time university faculty member. She currently serves as a faculty member for the Online Learning Consortium's Institute for Emerging Leadership in Online Learning and a graduate faculty member at K-State. She has a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln and a Doctor of Philosophy from Oklahoma State University.

# Comprehensive Review of Online Operations - Summary

## Advocacy and Leadership Within the University

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Online education is an integrated and extensive facet of the university, those charged with leading an enterprise have internal alliances, and reflect the larger goals, values, and strategies of their institutions.

The University of Phoenix is strongly focused on the online delivery of programs. The University provided ample evidence to support the statement made in the institution's self evaluation, "The University's Mission has largely been realized through the online modality, with a majority of students and alumni choosing online as the preferred method to complete their education. Online learning is strategically integrated and operationalized across the University, with cross-functional teams that provide input into and action upon key initiatives that aim to continually improve the University's delivery of online education."

## Entrepreneurial Initiatives

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Online education is about innovation, experimentation, risk, and imagination, and its leaders possess the skills and creativity to facilitate responsible change.

A premium is placed on fostering entrepreneurial approaches that lead to innovation and experimentation in the development, review and delivery of online programs. The "agile methodology" and "release trains" approaches undergird a variety of impressive programs that reinforce innovation. The university, as a whole, reinvented itself some four years ago with a new ownership and administrative leadership that brought innovation and supported entrepreneurial approaches.

## Faculty Support

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Online education receives extensive support and resources, faculty have the tools they need to create education equal to, if not exceeding, that of the traditional classroom.

Close attention is given to the selection, training, and continuous support of the faculty. The credentialing, advanced training and mentoring process puts an individual focus on each of the faculty members. Copious data is collected and reviewed with each class offering to identify strengths and weaknesses to be reinforced and further supported.

## Student Support

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Online students receive an experience at least comparable to that on-campus. Leaders are advocates for students earning their degrees remotely from their institutions.

Student retention and success are at the core of the University of Phoenix mission and operation. The university has a robust student support system that is provided throughout the student lifecycle. They assess their students and continually evaluate elements of their student support operations.

## Digital Technology

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Leaders provide a technological environment that is current, dependable, and rich in the creative use of tools to enhance learning, interaction, and program integrity.

The University of Phoenix provides a technology infrastructure that appears sound, utilizing best-in-class cloud services that independent agile teams each monitor the applications and supporting infrastructure 24/7/365. The selection and implementation of technology is, appropriately, driven by sound pedagogy and practice. Careful attention is given to cybersecurity.

## External Advocacy and Leadership Beyond the University

MANAGED

The online enterprise represents the institution to the public, leaders are an authoritative voice to regulators, accreditors, alumni, members of the business community, and others.

The university documents clear and robust external connections to: accreditation, advocacy with federal offices, local communities, the K-12 community (particularly in response to COVID), tribal communities, and corporate partners. This engagement has become far more pronounced in the past four years.

## Professionalism

OPTIMIZED / MANAGED

Those leading the growth of online learning exemplify the highest ideals and contribute to a growing professional community on a national scale.

Significant initiatives are documented in the faculty honorarium, research, scholarship and associated programs that have vastly expanded professionalism at the university. Additional incentives are given for top tier conference presentations and publications. Hosting conferences and a journal are evidence of the commitment to nationally-demonstrated leadership in professionalism.

