



September 8, 2026

Dr. Phillip Payne
Interim Dean of Graduate School
Eisenhower Hall
CAMPUS

Dear Dean Payne,

The Department of Educational Leadership and the Community College Leadership Faculty request that Ms. Carmen Johnson, doctoral student in the Community College Leadership program, be awarded a posthumous EdD degree during the December 2026 Commencement ceremony.

The Community College Leadership program is designed for the working professional. Courses meet on weekends and evenings, while students maintain their fulltime jobs. To be admitted to this program, the prospective student must document the employment and career goals. The Community College Leadership Doctorate (Ed.D.) at Kansas State University is a cohort-based program that prepares leaders to meet the challenges facing today's community colleges. Many of the graduates have gone on to become presidents of community colleges across the United States. Students complete six credit hours every semester including summers. It is a nontraditional program for the nontraditional student.

We call Carmen a fighter and strong willed. Carmen was a cancer survivor at the time she began the program having had cancer in 2006 but was successfully in a state of remission. Carmen began her studies the Fall semester 2022. She was a highly successful student until the Fall semester in 2024 when the cancer metastasized in her abdomen. She went through a rigorous regiment of chemotherapy and did not drop any courses. She stayed enrolled and participating in six credit hours a semester. While her coursework remained strong, her simultaneous writing on the dissertation proposal suffered. The Fall semester 2025 she completed all the remaining coursework for the doctoral program, even though during the summer of 2025 the cancer metastasized in her bones. Her persistence never wavered. She continued to try to work on the proposal, while enduring all the treatments through 2026. She continued to meet with her cohort during writing times and working with her major professor. She was informed she was in remission a few days before she passed away as her heart could no longer withstand the immense physical strain of her prolonged battle. Ms. Carmen Johnson passed away on July 13, 2026.

Per the K-State handbook, the criteria for consideration for posthumous degree includes:

1. Graduate students within 1-2 semesters of completion, or students who have completed at least 75% of degree requirements.
2. Good academic standing (minimum 3.0 GPA for graduate students) and good standing with respect to conduct.
3. For doctoral degrees, successful completion of the preliminary exam, proposal defense, and/or practicum requirement, if applicable

At the time of her passing, Carmen was 80% completed with the degree program. Her GPA was above the minimum of 3.0 and was in very good standing as far as her conduct. In this program, the preliminary exam is the proposal defense which includes the first three chapters of the dissertation and an oral defense of the

proposal. Carmen could not physically complete the written document or oral defense. If Carmen had been in a traditional doctoral program where traditional prelim exams are given the semester after coursework, she would have successfully completed all three of K-State's requirements.

The students of the Southeastern Michigan – Wayne County Community College District cohort reached out to us following her death and requested consideration of the posthumous degree for Carmen. This cohort has made plans to attend the December commencement to honor Carmen.

The Faculty join them in this request that Ms. Carmen Johnson be awarded the Posthumous degree of EdD in Community College Leadership. She kept fighting through the illness and never withdrew from dissertation credit hours each semester. Please do not allow the design of the program to make her ineligible. Carmen fought through the illness for two years while working fulltime and continuing to make progress. She just ran out of time. Carmen is more than deserving of this degree.

I thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Royce Ann Collins".

Dr. Royce Ann Collins
Professor and Department Chair
Elvon Skeen Endowed Chair in Education
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
Bluemont Hall, Room 362
Kansas State University
racollin@ksu.edu