

**CEHD: Starting with your time at UofL... can you speak a bit to your program, the value of the education you received in the CEHD, and any specific faculty who influenced you?**

MN: I was very excited to begin my Doctoral work in the ELEOD program. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to research ways to improve educational outcomes for at-risk, underprivileged students. I am grateful for the amazing cohort structure the program offered, as well as being surrounded so many passionate educators focused on diversity and equity outcomes for students. Most importantly, I am appreciative of the faculty who helped shape my journey and dissertation. Each professor brought an expert's lens in their areas of specialty. I want to thank Dr. Kyle Ingle and Marco Munoz for their quantitative analysis expertise, Dr. Georgia Hampton for helping me shape my passion for leadership, and Dr. Debbie Powers for her personal support as I completed my program.



**CEHD: Can you talk a bit about your career trajectory? Was principal of a high school always your goal?**

MN: It wasn't until about three years into my teaching career that I found a calling to become a school leader. I was fortunate to have a school principal, as well as many colleagues, who saw my potential and pushed me to consider pursuing my administrative degree. I am a very goal driven individual, and I believe you have to always look for ways to challenge yourself. My first goal was only to become an Assistant Principal. But it was from there that my passion for students and teachers pushed me onward to my principalship at Western High School. This past year I had the fortune to serve our Commonwealth as the Commissioner of Professional Licensing. While I am grateful for the experience it afforded me, my passion for education brought me back to JCPS and to Manual High School as the principal. I am extremely excited for this opportunity and look forward to finishing my career leading the Crimson Family.



**CEHD: What excites you about your new role?**

MN: First and foremost, I am excited that I get to continue living my passion of empowering students and the school community to be models of growth and leadership. Manual is a school with esteemed History and Tradition. I look forward to serving our community by providing outstanding learning opportunities through our Five Magnets for our diverse student body.

**CEHD: What are your goals for your first year at Manual?**

MN: With my role beginning during the pandemic, my first goal is to ensure that we provide a safe return to in-person learning as well as support our students and faculty during the transition. I also look forward to

improving communication systems with the Manual Community so teachers, parents, and students are aware of the work Manual is doing to improve school outcomes, while celebrating the achievements the school accomplishes. I will also continue my passion, and the school's goal, for racial equity and diversity. I look forward to leading Manual in becoming a model school in our efforts of ensuring inclusivity, instructional inclusion, and valuing student voice. Additionally, I look forward to enhancing the student's experience while attending Manual.

**CEHD: What advice would you give to young aspiring educators in the CEHD who may envision themselves becoming a principal one day?**

MN: First, challenge yourself by setting growth goals by selecting school systems you're less knowledgeable of. Next, be reflective of your work; do not be satisfied, always look for ways to improve outcomes. Most importantly, ensure you have a mentor and support group. You cannot lead in a silo. You should learn from those who are experienced, and you should surround yourself with peers who aspire to accomplish similar goals. Together, you can learn from each other's strengths and lived experiences to improve outcomes for the school you eventually lead.