



Department of Education Policy and Leadership FAQs for the Accelerated School Leadership Program

Why study educational leadership?

There is a significant body of research that underscores the critical role of the principal in creating effective schools. The principal and other instructional leaders are responsible for creating the environment which encourages teachers, students, families, and communities to work together to achieve the vision of the school.

What will I learn in SMU's program? What is the basis for the curriculum?

Through study and research in the core areas of organizational leadership, academic leadership, and educator effectiveness, graduates of the program will be well prepared to serve in a variety of leadership positions in schools or other educational organizations.

There are many educational leadership programs offered in the area. Are there any unique features of SMU's program?

- Comprehensive Academic Leadership component: A series of courses focused on the core domains of instruction (i.e., mathematics, literacy, science, social studies and world languages) as well as special programs such as fine arts and Special Education.
- Field-based projects (internship experiences) integrated throughout the program and completed on each student's campus of employment, so that all learning is immediately applied.
- A schedule which enables students to complete the M.Ed. program in 14 months as part of a cohort.
- A focus on ensuring that all graduates have the knowledge and skills to evaluate the impact of their leadership on the schools in which they serve

Can I earn certification as a principal?

Yes, this program is designed in accordance with principal certification competencies. Candidates must also pass the TExES certification exam in order to be eligible to apply for certification. The certification is valid for PK-12 principal positions in Texas for any type of school (public, private, charter, urban, suburban, rural). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Candidates for this program are required to have two years of teaching experience in an accredited school. Although teacher certification is not required for admission to the program, it is a requirement if the candidate wishes to apply for Texas principal certification. (This is a state requirement.)

What if I want to be in a leadership role but don't want to be a principal?

Other career options available to candidates completing this degree and certification include a wide variety of instructional leadership positions such as curriculum director, instructional coach, dean of students, department chair, program director, and director of professional development.

Is this program only for public school teachers?

No, it is open to teachers or other professional educators from a variety of school settings. As indicated above, the Master's Degree in Educational Leadership prepares educators for leadership positions in all types of pre-K through grade-12 settings. The program is intense and rigorous; therefore, it is intended for educators who demonstrate a high level of commitment, initiative, and focus in addition to the leadership traits and dispositions identified in state and national standards.

Who is on the faculty?

Our permanent faculty is comprised of distinguished leaders and scholars with a broad base of expertise and practical experience and a strong personal commitment to excellent teaching.

Are courses scheduled so that full-time teachers can take them without missing school?

Yes! Students begin the program in the summer as part of a cohort, taking 2 courses in June and a 1-week internship in late July/early August, followed by two 7-week modules during the fall, two 7-week modules during the spring, and one 4-week module in June during the final summer. Classes are taught on the main campus. Internship experiences are integrated throughout the program and are completed on each student's campus of employment. Students should plan for the possible need to take one or more personal days during the program in order to visit other schools as part of the field requirements. As previously mentioned, it is an intense program and requires careful planning in order to balance academic work, personal/family needs, and professional commitments.

Is there a thesis requirement? What about comprehensive exams at the end of the program?

In lieu of a thesis or comprehensive exams, this program requires a field-based project which integrates competencies from the three core strands of organizational leadership, academic leadership, and educator effectiveness. The project is carried out throughout the program and tracked in an electronic portfolio. The project is finalized during the July summer session at the end of the program.

What if I want to be in a leadership role at a community college or a university?

The M.Ed. program in Higher Education is available in our department to serve educators at this level.

Is there a doctoral program for principals who wish to pursue a doctorate?

Yes. The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is designed for educational leaders who work full-time. <http://www.smu.edu/Simmons/AreasOfStudy/EPL/EDD>

What is the cost of the program? Is financial aid available?

Current published tuition rates are available here. The only additional fees are charges for campus parking and the certification fees required by SBEC and Region 13. Financial aid is available. **Students interested in applying for financial aid should complete and submit the FAFSA, which can be done even before applying for program admission.** Information on completing the FAFSA is available at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Information for applying for financial aid at SMU is available at http://smu.edu/financial_aid/.

How do I apply?

The application for admission is located on the program website. Detailed instructions and admission requirements are provided. **Please note that the GRE is required for any applicant whose GPA is below 3.0.** (See <http://www.ets.org/gre/>). Applications for financial aid are handled by the **Office of Financial Aid** once the FAFSA has been submitted and processed and the student has been admitted to the program. **(It is very important to complete and submit the FAFSA early in the application process.)**

Can I transfer credits from another institution? Can I take courses as electives without being enrolled in the program?

Because this is such a unique program with an integrated curriculum, opportunities to transfer credits from other programs are very limited and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. At this time, only students who are accepted into this program and are enrolled in the program on a full-time basis may take courses.