



SMU SIMMONS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION &
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CHANGE YOUR CAMPUS FOR GOOD.

**JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF VALUES-
FIRST CAMPUS LEADERS.**

The Aspiring Leaders Program is a unique partnership between SMU's Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education & Human Development and select districts. The program prepares school leaders to build an aspirational school culture and lead high-quality instruction for all students. Students are supported on a journey of personal and professional change as they strive to translate their vision into improved student outcomes.

SMU

Expert-led courses. Community-based cohort.

Cohort members spend two years, starting with a summer orientation in May, to learn and serve in their district. Students are **evaluated on ongoing assessments** against competencies while completing seven-week courses, participating in student conferences and receiving mentorship from esteemed SMU Simmons School of Education and Human Development faculty. Unique program benefits include:

- **Rigorous, competency-based program focused on action learning**
- **Second year residency on an urban school campus**
- **Mentoring program supported by successful school principals**
- **Sharing of the latest effective practices in urban schools**
- **Courses taught by experienced urban school leaders and Simmons School professors**
- **Learning alongside a cohort of values-aligned, influential change-makers**
- **Significant scholarship availability to ensure affordability**
- **Development of skills that span across various industries**

Partner districts:

Dallas ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Uplift Education, Irving ISD, KIPP, and Garland ISD. If you are not employed by a partner district, please contact us for more information.

Program structure:

The master's degree is designed to be completed in two years.

Year One: In the first year of the program, students take courses at SMU taught by SMU faculty while **working full-time in their current role as educators**. Students take courses in a sequence that begins with a 3-week intensive session during the first summer of enrollment. During the fall and spring academic terms, students meet each week for classes on Saturdays.

Year Two: In the second year, students serve in an **on-campus leadership role** for a Residency year where they are paired with a mentor principal and implement strategies and skills in real-time, often in roles as coaches or assistant principals. SMU **collaborates with district partners** in identifying appropriate positions to which residents apply during the first year of the program. Residents receive **on-the-job coaching & support** from a leadership development coach.

Alumni Support and Network: Alumni gain access to an **expansive network of values-driven education leaders** at school district and state levels, as well as other areas of the education sector.

Texas principal certification:

Students who meet TEA requirements are **eligible to earn a probationary certificate at the end of the first year** and the **standard certificate at the end of the second year** upon completion of the program.

A competency-based model:

This 36-credit-hour degree program is **designed for working professionals** and can be completed in two years. Our practice-based curriculum is designed to meet the **unique set of needs & challenges leaders face in urban schools**. Our courses are non-traditional and provide unique opportunities to learn and grow as a leader. **Role-plays and field-based experiences** prepare participants to take on the most difficult aspects of school leadership, while group work and collaboration with fellow cohort members **teach leaders the keys to building effective teams**.

Competency-based learning in the Aspiring Leaders Program ensures leaders receive **multiple personalized learning opportunities** to strengthen practices that are key to improving achievement. Working from a discrete set of **research-based practices, our curriculum is created to ensure multiple opportunities** for individual feedback based on a rubric that moves each leader towards mastery.

Frequently asked questions:

When is the application due?

Early Deadline: November 13, 2022

Final Deadline: February 5, 2023

What do I need to do to apply?

- All applicants must complete the [online SMU application](#)
- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution
- A minimum cumulative undergraduate and graduate (if applicable) grade point average of 2.5* (on a 4.0 scale)
- For applicants with a GPA below 2.5, GRE (Graduate Record Exam) scores within the last five years are required. Please use the institution code 6660
- Copy of valid Texas teacher certification
- Copy of service record reflecting two years teaching experience in an accredited public, private or charter school
- Applicants with a degree from countries where the predominant language is not English are required to supply scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) administered by the Educational Testing Service. The minimum scores for admission speaking 24, listening & reading 22, and writing 21.
- Employed by a partner district/charter management organization
- Essays—four prompts will be provided in the application
- Updated Resume. See [Resume Tips](#) for guidance and review our suggested, though optional, [Resume Template](#)
- Official copies of all graduate and undergraduate transcripts where a degree has been conferred or you have received 9 or more credit hours*
 - Official Transcripts must be sent directly by the institution to SMU

Frequently asked questions:

Do I need a Texas teaching certificate to participate in the program? While it is strongly recommended, it is not required. However, a Texas teacher certificate is required in order to be eligible to obtain the Texas Principal as Instructional Leader certificate. If you hold a teacher's certificate/credentials from another state, you are encouraged to have your credentials reviewed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). [Click here to visit.](#)

Can I apply if I'm employed by a non-partner district or charter network? We currently partner exclusively with Dallas ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Irving ISD, Garland ISD, KIPP DFW and Uplift Education. If this is a program you are committed to pursuing, we encourage you to explore employment opportunities with the partners listed above prior to applying.

If I'm a part of the central administration team at a district or charter, how does this affect my eligibility? You are eligible to apply if you possess a minimum of two-years teaching experience as of June 2023. Due to the nature of the residency experience during the second year of the program, you must commit to seeking a campus-based leadership role by the end of the first year of the program.

If I'm currently working in the private or nonprofit sector, how does this affect my eligibility? Participation in the Aspiring Leaders Program is contingent upon employment within a partner district. As a result, we strongly encourage you to explore employment opportunities with our district and charter network partners prior to applying. You may apply if the district/charter leadership approves of your participation. In order to be accepted, you must have two years of previous classroom experience and be approved by the district/charter you intend to work for in the 2021-2022 school year.

Can I apply if I have an H1B visa? An H1B visa is specific regarding the occupation its holder has been sponsored to possess. We have learned that H1B visa holders must remain in the position as listed in their work documents, and are unable to move into a different role (i.e. assistant principal or principal). At this time, we are unable to sponsor H1B working visas. Please reach out if your residency status changes in the future.

The application asks for a copy of my 2021-2022 Teacher Evaluation. What should I use? If you were a teacher last year, include your summative evaluation:

- Dallas ISD: TEI Summative Scorecard
- Garland ISD: T-TESS Summative Evaluation
- Ft. Worth ISD: T-TESS Summative Evaluation
- Irving ISD: PDAS
- KIPP: End of Year Teacher Evaluation
- Uplift Education: Instructional End of Year Performance Review

If you were in a non-teacher role, include the summative evaluation for your position. If you have additional questions, please reach out to aopersteny@smu.edu.

When is the application deadline?

Early Deadline: Sunday, November 13, 2022 @ 11:59 PM CST

Final Deadline: Sunday February 5, 2023 @ 11:59 PM CST

Frequently asked questions:

Can I save my application and return to it later? Yes, you may return to your application through by clicking “Apply Now” on the main website (www.smu.edu/urbanleader) or directly at <https://gradadmission.smu.edu/apply/>.

Do I need to take the GRE? Applicants who graduated from an accredited undergraduate or graduate program with a 2.5 GPA or higher are not required to submit GRE scores. Specifically, as required by the Texas Education Agency, candidates are required to have at least a 2.5 GPA on all coursework attempted at an accredited institution of higher education (i.e., this could be an undergraduate degree or a master’s degree) OR at least a 2.5 GPA in the last 60 semester credit hours attempted at a higher education institution.

If my GPA is such that I need to take the GRE, do I need to take the GRE before submitting my application? Yes. We recommend that candidates who are required to take the GRE register for it as soon as possible; candidates will not advance in the process if it is determined a GRE score was required and was not submitted. Please note that official scores may take up to 15 days to arrive.

If I need to take the GRE, what is the minimum GRE score requirement? In accordance with TEA guidelines, for those who do not meet the GPA requirements noted above, applicants are required to score a minimum 140 in Quantitative Reasoning, a minimum 143 in Verbal Reasoning, and a minimum 3.0 in Analytical Writing on the GRE. Please note that meeting the minimum requirement does not guarantee admission.

How soon can I expect to receive a response after submitting my application? Candidates will be notified of their status regardless of if they are moving forward or not by approximately three weeks after the application deadline. For those advancing in the process, additional selection processes will be conducted . Final decision notifications may vary by district/CMO.

Who can be used as a reference? Reference #1 must be submitted by your current principal. Reference #2 can be submitted by either: 1) Someone who has worked with you in a professional capacity and who has knowledge of your current practice as an educator and your leadership experience, or 2) Your current supervisor, if that person is not currently your principal.

Note: If you have a special circumstance (e.g., you have been out of the classroom for 5 years, currently work at a non-profit or in the private sector, etc.) please reach out to us directly.

Should I submit a third reference? No, a third reference is only required for current Teach For America corps members. We ask that their Manager of Teacher Leader Development submit an additional reference along with their principal and current supervisor/colleague.

How does my reference obtain the reference form? Your listed references will receive an email through the application system when you list them as a reference. It is your responsibility to ensure each reference submits the form on your behalf no later than the application deadline you applied for. We encourage you to additionally contact your references directly to encourage them to complete the online reference form to avoid delays in processing your application.

Frequently asked questions:

What does the selection process entail?

- **Phone Interview:** Some candidates may participate in a 30-minute phone interview.
- **Assessment Center:** An experiential process for assessors to best understand and identify if this is the right program for a candidate at this specific time. Candidates can anticipate engaging in various role plays, data activities, and conversations with multiple assessors.
- **Final Interview:** Some candidates may be contacted in order to follow up on conversations from the Assessment Center.
- **District or Charter Employer Review:** All candidates are subject to review and approval by their district/charter(employer). District/CMO partners may also be engaged at different points in the selection process, including participation in the assessment center and/or an additional selection process tailored to the district/CMO.
- **Offer Extended:** Once the offer has been extended, selected candidates must complete the online acceptance form, along with any other documents as required.

What happens after I have been selected? Once the offer has been extended, selected candidates must complete the online acceptance form, along with any other documents as required. Also, an evening orientation session will take place in May.

When does Summer Intensive begin? The program starts with an immersive experience called Summer Intensive, which is held on campus at SMU and consists of three consecutive weeks of courses. It typically begins in late June and continues through July.

If I am not accepted, am I eligible to apply again? Yes. Past candidates have not been accepted the first time, but implemented the feedback provided during the Assessment Center to develop themselves and were later admitted to the program. For many, it is not a question of “if” but “when.”

Is financial aid available? Yes. No additional financial aid application is required to receive scholarships resulting in a reduced program cost. Applicants may choose to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to qualify for financial aid (e.g., loans). To be eligible for FAFSA, you must be a citizen or eligible noncitizen of the United States (e.g., U.S. Permanent Resident). Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov to start your application and enter SMU’s Federal School Code: 003613.



BECOME A STRONG LEADER AND ACTIVE CONTRIBUTOR

Lead with excellence and efficiency.

Aspiring Leaders will work with other like-minded educators to problem-solve and action-plan through challenges, to share best-practices, and to provide feedback and support that will last throughout your career. Learn and grow together, both personally and professionally.

Ready to learn more? [Click here](#) to visit our website, or [click here](#) to start your application.

For more information about the Aspiring Leaders program, please call our office at (214) 768-3354 or email the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at edpolicyleader@smu.edu.

