

Aspiring Leaders Program

This document contains frequently asked questions related to eligibility requirements, the admissions process and tuition/financial aid for the cohort beginning Summer 2022.

Eligibility Requirements

What is required for me to be eligible for this program?

- 2 years of teaching experience completed by June 2022
- Strong desire to step into a school leadership role in the Dallas-Fort Worth area
- Commitment to working in a partner district or charter
- Alignment with the program's core values of educational equity, disciplined action, courage & resilience, entrepreneurial mindset, and reflection & growth
- Demonstrated capacity to lead adults
- Must meet [admission requirements](#)

Do I need classroom experience to apply?

Yes, applicants must possess a minimum of two years teaching experience as of June 2022.

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) – visit

https://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/Out-of-State_Certification/Out-of-State_Certified_Educators/.

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 2022. 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 2022-2023 school year.

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Can I apply if I have an H-1B visa?

An H-1B visa is specific regarding the occupation its holder has been sponsored to possess. We have learned that H-1B visa holders must remain in the position as listed in their work documents, and are unable to move into a different role (e.g., assistant principal, instructional coach). However, if a position is coded as a teacher but includes significant instructional leadership responsibilities (e.g., Instructional Lead Teacher, in which no more than half the responsibilities are for classroom instruction), then this position would be compatible with our residency design. If you have an H-1B visa, then you would have to commit to obtaining such a position for the 2nd year of the residency.

The application asks for a copy of my prior year Teacher Evaluation. What should I use?

If you were a teacher last year, include your summative evaluation:

- Dallas ISD: TEI Summative Scorecard (no need to include your observation scores)
- 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 kmilligan@smu.edu.

Admissions Process

When is the application deadline?

Early Deadline: Monday, November 8, 2021 @11:59 PM CST

Final Deadline: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 @ 11:59 PM CST

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.

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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.

If I completed a principal certification program at a different institution, can I still apply to this program?

Though we appreciate your interest, unfortunately, according to the Texas Education Code, we may not admit an applicant who has completed all requirements by another education preparation provider in the same certification category. However, if you have only started another program and wish to re-start from the beginning, you are welcome to apply. Please note that no credits will be eligible for transfer as a result of the integrated nature of the program.

How soon can I expect to receive a response after submitting my application?

If you applied by the Early Deadline, you will most likely be notified of your application status (advancement in the process) by the first week of December. Candidates will be notified of their status regardless of if they are moving forward or not. For those advancing in the process, final decision notifications may vary by district/CMO and are typically made by mid-January.

If you applied by the Final Deadline, you will most likely be notified of your application status by early March. For those advancing in the process, final decision notifications are typically made by early April.

References

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 kmilligan@smu.edu.

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.

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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.

Selection

What does the selection process entail?

- **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.

Acceptance

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 are Summer Intensive classes?

The program starts with an immersive experience called Summer Intensive consists of three weeks of courses. Due to the change in school schedules due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dates have shifted accordingly. The summer schedule is being finalized and this FAQ will be updated when available. The schedule seeks to coordinate with each district/CMO partner schedules, including all three of the Dallas ISD calendars. Here is a tentative schedule:

- Course 1: June 25th, June 28th – July 1st
- Course 2: July 11th- July 15th
- Course 3: July 18th – July 22nd

Classes meet each day from 8am-5:30pm. At present, summer courses are scheduled to meet in-person on the SMU campus.

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

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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.”

Tuition and Financial Aid

What is the cost of tuition?

For the cohort starting Summer 2022, the 2-year Master’s degree tuition is **\$13,000** based on scholarships granted through SMU. Based on current published tuition rates for SMU, available on the [Enrollment Services website](#), this program would normally cost over \$27,000.

What is the schedule of tuition payments?

Students commence tuition payments in the summer semester of their first year. The projected payment and number of course hours per semester are charted below.

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>Tuition</i>
Summer 2022	8	\$750
Fall 2022	8	\$3,200
Spring 2023	8	\$3,200
Summer 2023	4	\$2,100
Fall 2023	5	\$2,175
Spring 2024	3	\$1,575
Total	36	\$13,000

Is financial aid available?

No additional financial aid application is required to receive the scholarships resulting in the two-year program tuition of **\$13,000**. 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.

Are payment plans available?

Yes. Anyone in need of a payment plan is encouraged to contact the Office of the University Bursar to explore options. For more information please visit:

<https://www.smu.edu/EnrollmentServices/Bursar/Payments/PaymentPlanOptions>.

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Residency

What happens during the 2nd year residency?

During the second year of the program, Residents receive individualized coaching while serving in a leadership role. Residents focus on practicing the skills necessary to be an effective instructional, managerial, and transformational leader – with the majority of time committed to instructional leadership. The Resident uses the residency to apply the knowledge and skills learned in coursework. This requires a mid-management position that aligns with this learning.

What are the position requirements for residency?

The Resident's position has the following three key requirements:

1. Has no more than 50% of classroom instruction responsibilities – in order to have sufficient time to engage in instructional leadership responsibilities – and serves on the school's leadership team
2. Is responsible for coaching & leading a team of teachers on a campus
3. Has a principal who accepts the role of a mentor and actively supports the resident in their leadership growth and collaborates with the program's leadership coach

Do I need to change my job for residency?

If you are a classroom teacher, you can maintain your position while enrolled in the first year of the program. However, for the second year of the program (residency), you will need to apply and obtain a role that meets the minimum residency requirements. While you have primary responsibility for applying for and obtaining an appropriate position, we support you in this process in varied ways depending on the district/CMO partnership.

If your current position, such as instructional coach, allows you to meet the minimum residency requirements, you do not need to change your position for the residency year, though you are welcome to do so (e.g., seek an assistant principal role).

Can I serve as an assistant principal during residency?

Upon successful completion of coursework and passing of the state's 268 exam, you can obtain Texas probationary principal certification during the first year, which may allow you to serve as an assistant principal – depending on partner district policies.