Our Educational Leadership program currently uses the National ISLLC standards as a basis for curriculum in the MED, EdD, and PhD. As part of the next generation, EDL faculty members will expand the boundaries of the ISLLC standards to include a more explicit focus on equity, culture, and diversity. The University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), our professional organization, has gradually focused on issues of social justice and equity; however, the conferences have not yet fully addressed the complexity of sociocultural and political issues in relation to leadership.

We live in a time when our social world is increasingly characterized by complexity and uncertainty (e.g. globalization, cosmopolitanism). Traditional organizational boundaries structuring public spaces, policy networks and political arenas become blurred. In order to grasp this complexity in human and institutional social actions, the EDL Program faculty members conceptualize and study schools as living systems and microcosms of society. As a point of departure, for example, we consider schools as multi-level societal institutions, expressing what schooling should be with respect to society, including intermediate programmatic levels and classroom levels where students encounter educational and social events.

Thus, we also recognize the importance of research on school safety and prevention that improves the lives of all children, including a current project providing professional development for school resource officers across Arizona schools. Research and professional development on school culture, climate, and school safety is funded through the Smith endowment (with the Smith Endowed Chair for Education and Prevention located in the Educational Leadership Program) as well as federal (Department of Education and National Institute of Justice), state (Arizona Department of Education) university (Board of Regents) and local school district grants and contracts that support faculty and graduate students in working with some of the most challenging school sites. Leaders in these sites work with students from underrepresented groups in highly stressed communities dealing with issues of unemployment, poverty, immigration, race and ethnic prejudice, refugee status and violence. We provide interventions for leadership teams in these schools in order to build professional growth for leaders and teachers and capacity for culturally responsive pedagogy and school climate that strengthens education for all children. To date, educational leadership program initiatives have served 172 schools across Arizona.

Creating a diverse and inclusive community, capable of addressing complex social issues and interrogating persistent global issues, undergirds the programs in Educational Leadership (EDL). We do not believe that great minds think alike. The challenges facing us in the 21st century require diverse thinkers and educators who can work collaboratively, creatively, and with integrity to positively impact schooling and affect social change. That diversity extends to identities beyond just race, ethnicity, and gender to include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, life
experiences, religion, and political and ideological perspectives.

**A commitment to the value of diversity and better serving diverse communities.**

Given the magnitude of Arizona’s changing and shifting student demographics today and in the future, our EDL next generation becomes all the more vital in preparing the next generation of scholars and leaders for Arizona’s schools and beyond (Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010). We know that Arizona’s student body is composed of more students of color and fewer students who self-identify as Anglo; this has enormous ramifications for the university (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). We know that students coming out of the education pipeline have immense consequences for the future workforce in Arizona and beyond. We need more faculty members who are experienced and effective in working with diverse communities.

Our intellectual challenge, then, is to continue to reorient our programs to feature the range of theoretical and empirical scholarship that will enhance the ability of our graduates to effectively transform current structures and practices in the schools and in public policy. Our aim is to embed our students in the cultural, political, economic, and policy contexts of the global contexts, communities and regions in which their schools/districts are located. Our commitment is to educate and prepare the next generation of educational leaders who will make decisions about how education is delivered to all of our citizens locally, statewide, and sometimes nationally, who will hopefully learn from us not only how to “function” effectively in the workplace, but also how to set the agenda, how to reframe the way we approach so many of our educationally challenges. That requires a deeper grounding of all of our students in a richer range of intellectual traditions and research. Educational Leadership Program graduates serve in all major districts in the Tucson area, and a growing number of students serve in districts and other educational institutions beyond the Tucson area. As part of our new direction, we also seek to prepare a growing number of students for university faculty positions.

To achieve our aspirations for an EDL new generation, we recognize that all of our aims, ethics, and practices are interconnected and interdependent, and that we all share responsibility for equity and diversity in collaboration with colleagues in the college, university, schools, businesses, community colleges, and Arizona’s diverse communities.

- We affirm the importance of equity and diversity as core values.
- We believe we cannot achieve the widest and best range of equity and diversity without a diverse faculty and diverse students.
- We assert that diversity is “inextricably” linked to excellence – diversity (broadly defined to include a multiplicity of perspectives, life experiences and expertise, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) is a necessary condition for excellence in teaching, research, service, outreach, and day-to-day life in EDL.

These core EDL program values of equity and diversity will infuse and inform thinking, policies, and practices throughout the program, from mission to strategic plans, to student admissions, to hiring a new faculty member, to providing a context for that faculty member to be supported and successful in the promotion and tenure process.
In closing, the EDL program seeks a new faculty member with the conceptual grounding and abilities to meet the professional and intellectual challenges that the next generation of school leaders should be prepared to meet. We will be particularly interested in candidates who bring an understanding of the larger socio-cultural and political contexts and challenges, especially those embedded in the borderlands and borders worldwide, a strong disciplinary background (e.g., in cultural anthropology or sociology), strong methodological skills, and an interest in studying and working with school leaders and policy issues in the local, state, and Southwestern region. In addition, we seek a highly promising scholar with a history of active involvement with K-20 leaders.

The optimal candidates will enrich and expand the program through a research agenda that intersects with current faculty members’ work (e.g., on policy, the cultural politics of curriculum leadership, school-community partnerships, safe schools, college-going culture, educational change, and international perspectives on leadership), a commitment to good teaching and advising, and an ability to bridge their scholarly work in meaningful ways into educational leadership practice. The University of Arizona is a land grant university, and the EDL faculty seeks a colleague who will work with schools and school leaders in research and in practice. Further, a new faculty member with an interest in addressing issues of social equity and social justice will enhance our ability to merge teaching, research, and outreach interests of the department. With a new faculty member, the Educational Leadership (EDL) program will take an important step in positioning itself as a leader locally, statewide, and in the (inter)national academic field of educational leadership; it will, at the same time take a valuable step in positioning itself to better prepare the next generation of school leaders and educational leadership scholars in ways that enhance the needs of the local, southern Arizona, statewide, and national communities it serves.

References


