



Excellent school leaders are essential for quality schools: Even the best teachers struggle at schools with poor leadership. Yet, as a 2005 report by Arthur Levine found, most of the nation's principals and superintendents are prepared in education schools' least selective programs, with little rigor, low admission standards, irrelevant coursework, and limited practical experience.

Two gaps, two tracks

With support from committed funders, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation has begun to address this issue by launching a new MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership at the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) and the University of Indianapolis. The program recruits and prepares outstanding leaders who will be placed in schools and districts in Wisconsin and Indiana. The goal: to address the United States' twin educational achievement gaps—the one between the nation's lowest-performing and its best schools, as well as the one between the nation's best schools and their top international competitors. The new MBA programs will be held accountable for preparing leaders who can bring all American schools up to world-class levels of performance, and for developing a new gold standard for education leadership recruitment and preparation nationwide.

The need for the program

As crucial as school and district leadership is in ensuring quality education, the majority of the nation's principals and superintendents still receive weak preparation even for some of the education challenges of the late 20th century—and yet they must lead in a global 21st-century education arena.

The United States desperately needs the kind of education leaders who can guide genuine and profound change. Too many of our country's high-need schools still lag far behind in preparing students for college, careers, and life. Even the nation's top-performing schools show mediocre performance compared to average student achievement at schools in countries such as Finland, Singapore, South Korea, China, Japan, the Netherlands, and Canada. These education systems are outperforming us in almost all measures of achievement in math, science, technology, reading, and languages. Meanwhile, in many urban and rural schools, fewer than half of all students even graduate, and many have profound deficits in knowledge areas—reading, math, science—that the contemporary workforce, at home and abroad, demands.

These twin achievement gaps—domestic and international—hamper the nation's technological, economic, and social competitiveness. Addressing these gaps in performance, particularly at a moment in history when education is changing from an industrial-era, process-based model to a digital-era, outcomes-based model, requires a new kind of school leadership.



Design of the program

The Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership draws on the best available research and practical expertise in the fields of business and education to prepare leaders with the knowledge, skills and tools to improve systems, schools, and, ultimately, student achievement. This program also distinguishes itself by recognizing that systemic conditions and processes are key to the long-term impact and success of individual leaders.

To that end, the Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership program collaborates with districts to help identify and establish conditions that will enhance the effectiveness of program participants and drive sustainable gains in student achievement. Key components of the program include integrated clinical and academic instruction that draws on the most innovative thinking on leadership preparation in the fields of business and education; three years of executive coaching for graduates once they enter their leadership positions.

At both UIndy and MSOE, the program began in late 2013 with an 18-month planning period; the first class of 15 Fellows at each campus was also recruited during this time. In summer 2014, the first class of Fellows enrolled; by summer 2015, they will graduate and assume positions as principals at targeted schools. A second class will begin in 2015, and a third class in 2016. Other design principles of the program include:

- Under Woodrow Wilson guidance, the MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership will work closely with the host institution's business school.
- Approximately ten highly ranked suburban school districts in Wisconsin and a like number in Indiana have been invited to become partners in an initiative seeking to raise their performance to world-class levels. In addition, a number of turnaround and charter schools in Indiana will be selected to nominate candidates to the MBA Fellowship.
- Fellows will receive \$50,000 to cover tuition for the MBA program and other expenses. They will be required to serve in leadership positions in the identified schools for at least three years.
- The program provides specialized preparation in areas such as leadership, quality management, talent management, data analysis, and organizational change—all focusing on education.
- In Wisconsin and Indiana the program requires 13 to 15 months of full-time study, depending on the institution—two summers and an academic year.
- Evaluation of the new MBA program will be tied to progress towards the goal of closing the achievement gaps at those schools where Fellows are placed as principals. Student test scores and graduation rates, among other measures, will be compared to the best schools nationally and internationally.
- While it is likely that most program participants will move into school leadership positions immediately upon graduation, the mission of this program is to prepare education leaders who will gain the knowledge, skills, expertise, and tools to progress into district and/or state leadership positions or go on to lead other education entities. As a result, sitting principals with a desire to move into district (or other organizational) leadership positions may also participate in this program.
- The program and the Fellows will be promoted—through press coverage; reports to policymakers, superintendents, and other stakeholders; speeches at professional associations and universities; and other such public venues—as models for other universities and school leader preparation programs.

Why Woodrow Wilson?

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation has been successfully developing and implementing selective fellowship programs for nearly 70 years. The Foundation's 21,000 Fellows have won remarkable awards and honors: 14 Nobel Prizes, 32 MacArthur "Genius" Awards, 16 Pulitzer Prizes, and more. Today the Foundation offers some 500 fellowships a year in fields like foreign affairs, secondary school teaching, and ethics and the humanities.

The Foundation's experience with its state Teaching Fellowships is critical to this project. In 2007, recognizing the urgent need for well-prepared teachers, the Foundation launched the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship, which recruits highly able candidates for teaching careers in high-need subjects such as math and science and prepares them to teach in the schools that most need them. Now operating in five states, with 28 universities, the Teaching Fellowship also helps to transform teacher education, as participating universities strengthen their teacher education programs based on Woodrow Wilson standards. The MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership will be informed by the Foundation's experience with creating new teacher education programs through the Teaching Fellowship, and by its experience in recruiting, mentoring, and placing outstanding Fellows.