

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
College of Education and Human Development
Education Leadership Program
EDLE 635, D01 - Governance & The Independent School Boardroom
3 credit hours, Summer 2024, May 13-July 20, 2024

PROFESSOR

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Professor

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Prerequisite(s)

EDLE 620 and EDLE 690

Corequisite

EDLE 792

Catalog Course Description: **EDLE 635 Governance and the Independent School Boardroom** provides an overview of the best practices and workings of the independent school board and develops skills, insights, and understanding of how school heads/directors can “manage up” to accomplish their goals and objectives.

Overall Course Description

It is critical for Heads of Schools and their leadership teams to establish positive working relationships with their boards. This can be a complicated process, with communication, vision, and management challenges. This course provides current and prospective school leaders a practical overview of the best practices and workings of an Independent School board – drawing on the experience of nonprofit boards and the relevant lessons learned from board governance. It allows for Heads of School and senior school leaders to see the Board through the perspective of Trustees and other board constituencies. The course aims to equip Independent School leaders with the knowledge and tools they can use to help lead their board in the service of the school. It also seeks to understand how to handle board dilemmas as well as navigate the ways in which the timeline of the board experience draws on fiduciary responsibilities that board members must deal with.

Course Delivery

This course will be delivered online 100% using an asynchronous format via the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on May 10, 2023.

Every week as the instructor I will provide you with a detailed email with the work you are expected to complete that week. For a three credit class, students are expected to complete approximately 42 hours of classtime which does not include the time for you to complete the readings and assignments.

Three credit hours traditionally equates to three hours of class per week for 14 weeks, which equals 42 hours per semester. For an asynchronous class, my approach is to ensure that you are engaged in class work for about 4.2 hours per week since our class only runs 10 weeks. So, every week, you should plan on engaging with the work for the class that I will send you in a detailed email at the start of the week. As I mentioned before, this

does not take into account the time that you will spend doing the readings or completing the graded assignments, as those are expected outcomes of any class that are not part of the seat hours in the classroom.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Online Expectations

- **Course Week:** Because online courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will **start** on Tuesdays and end on Mondays. Your first assignments will begin on May 13th.
- **Log-in Frequency:** Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 2 times per week.
- **Participation:** Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- **Technical Issues:** Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:** Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

- **Instructor Support:** Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session.
- **Netiquette:** The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- **Accommodations:** Online learners who require effective accommodations to ensure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes & Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Understand the best practices among Independent School boards and other non-profit boards in terms of structure, responsibility, composition, and duties;
2. Learn techniques for recruiting Trustees, using board committees, best board operating principles and bylaws;
3. Study different approaches to the division of responsibilities between the board and the school leadership team, and the interaction of the two bodies. The financial responsibilities and accountability of the board will be explored, as well as the board's role in strategic planning and crisis management;
4. Learn how high-functioning boards evaluate themselves and the school leadership team, and how various school constituencies are managed through the board; and
5. Gain an understanding of the ethics and regulatory framework school board members face when serving as Trustees or Directors.

Relationship to Program Goals

The following National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standard components are addressed in this course:

- 1.1: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to collaboratively evaluate, develop, and communicate a school mission and vision designed to reflect a core set of values and priorities.
- 1.2: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to lead improvement processes that include design, implementation, and evaluation.
- 2.1: Program completers understand and demonstrate capacity to reflect on, communicate about, cultivate, and model dispositions and professional norms (e.g., equity, fairness, integrity, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, reflection, life-long learning, digital citizenship) that support the educational success and well-being of each student and adult.
- 4.4: Program completers understand and demonstrate capacity to collaboratively evaluate, develop, and implement the school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in a coherent, equitable, and systematic manner.
- 5.3: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to collaboratively engage the larger organizational and policy context to advocate for the needs of their school and community.
- 6.3: Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to reflectively evaluate, communicate about, and implement laws, rights, policies, and regulations to promote student and adult success and well-being.

Required Text

None

The instructor will have selected readings assigned by week in BB as per the course schedule.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students can earn a total of 100 points in this course.

General Expectations

Consistent with expectations of a master's level course in the Education Leadership Program, grading is based heavily on student performance on written assignments. Overall, written work will be assessed using the following broad criteria:

1. Application of concepts reflected in class discussion and readings
2. Original thinking and persuasiveness
3. The ability to write in a clear, concise, and organized fashion.

Additionally, due to the nature of this online course, a significant portion of the class grade will be based on participation and the contribution you make to class discussions. The overall weights of various performances are as follows:

Assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the dates listed on the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted except in emergency situations that have been discussed and approved by the instructor in advance of the due date. Please take advantage of instructor office hours and availability to get assistance prior to assignment deadlines.

Writing Guidelines: Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments should be formatted as follows: **double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins**. To cite and reference professional or academic sources, please use **APA style**. Specific instructions for in-text citations and referencing are found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 7th Edition or at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.

[Additional Program or Division content, supplemental materials, instructions, and graphics may be placed here, as appropriate.]

Other reminders:

GMU Add/Drop Policy: The last day to drop this class without any penalty is provided on the GMU academic calendar page <http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendar/>. It is the student’s responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled, as no credit will be awarded to students who are not.

Plagiarism Statement: Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism

is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting (Statement of English Department at George Mason University).

Plagiarism and the Internet: Copyright rules also apply to users of the Internet who cite from Internet sources. Information and graphics accessed electronically must also be cited, giving credit to the sources. This material includes but is not limited to e-mail (don't cite or forward someone else's e-mail without permission), newsgroup material, information from Web sites, including graphics. Even if you give credit, you must get permission from the original source to put any graphic that you did not create on your web page. Shareware graphics are not free. Freeware clipart is available for you to freely use. If the material does not say "free," assume it is not. Putting someone else's Internet material on your web page is stealing intellectual property. Making links to a site is, at this time, okay, but getting permission is strongly advised, since many Web sites have their own requirements for linking to their material.

If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor or utilize the GMU Writing Center.

Academic Integrity & Inclusivity: This course embodies the perspective that we all have differing perspectives and ideas and we each deserve the opportunity to share our thoughts. Therefore, we will conduct our discussions with respect for those differences, meaning we each have the freedom to express our ideas, but we should also do so keeping in mind that our colleagues deserve to hear differing thoughts in a respectful manner, i.e. we may disagree without being disagreeable. <http://integrity.gmu.edu/>

Diversity, Religious Holiday: Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations (<http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/>). It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

Student Privacy Policy: George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University's student privacy policy <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy/>

Gender identity and pronoun use: If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use she/her pronouns for myself.

Other Concerns: If you have concerns or issues relating to the content or conduct of the class, please talk with me directly. Although the specifics of these conversations are entirely confidential, they may provide me with useful suggestions that may be shared indirectly with the class to improve the learning experience for all students. As a matter of policy, I do not respond to anonymous e-mails.

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