GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Education Leadership Program

EDLE 635 , D01
Governance & The Independent School Boardroom
Summer 2020, June 1-August 8, 2020, 3 credit hours

PROFESSOR

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Course Description

Prerequisite(s):   EDLE 620 and EDLE 690
Corequisite: EDLE 792

Catalog Course Description:
635 Governance and the Independent School Boardroom (3:3:0) 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 School 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 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.

General Goals: Students enrolled in this course will:
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.

Course Delivery

This is a 100% online course using an asynchronous format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on May 25th.

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. Per university policy in compliance with federal law, the professor will only communicate with students via their GMU email accounts, and will be unable to respond to emails sent from other accounts (i.e., Gmail, Yahoo, work email, etc.). Any announcements regarding the course will be sent to your GMU account. I will respond to emails within 24 hours, excluding weekends.
- 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.
- **Group Work:** Blackboard Discussion Boards to participate in various learning activities throughout the semester.
- 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/]

On-line Expectations

- **Course Week:** Because online courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will **start** on Tuesdays and end on Mondays.
- **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 3 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.

Required Text

Batts, M. E. (2017). *Nonprofit financial oversight. The concise and complete guide for boards and finance committees.* Accountability Press.

Other readings as assigned and available on BB.

Learner Outcomes & Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
1. Understand the best practices in Independent School governance and general non-profit board conduct – the latter of which has far more applicability to Independent School boards than a similar study of public school systems board governance.
2. Help recruit board members and frame their organization and operating tempo.
3. Gain the perspective of a school board Trustee or Director and the division of roles and responsibilities, duties and obligations, between the board and the school leadership team.
4. Put into practice a board rhythm, communications framework, evaluation system, reporting methods and other frameworks that mark an effective relationship between board and school leadership team.
5. Understand financial accountability, fundraising, ethics, and regulatory issues at the school board level, as well as the board role in strategic planning and constituency management.

Relationship to Program Goals

The following Education Leadership Constituent Council (ELLC) standard elements are addressed in this course:
  1.1: Candidates understand and can collaboratively develop, articulate, implement, and steward a shared vision of learning for a school.
1.3: Candidates understand and can promote continual and sustainable school improvement.

1.4: Candidates understand and can evaluate school progress and revise school plans supported by school stakeholders.

   5.1: Candidates understand and can act with integrity and fairness to ensure that schools are accountable for every student's academic and social success.

5.3: Candidates understand and can safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity.

6.1: Candidates understand and can advocate for school students, families, and caregivers.

6.2: Candidates understand and can act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment.

6.3: Candidates understand and can anticipate and assess emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt school-based leadership strategies.

Grading and Evaluation Criteria

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/

Class Participation (30 points)
To maximize learning and engagement in the online environment, students are expected to participate actively in asynchronous class discussions, group activities, and serve as critical friends to other students. Each week there will be assignments, prompts and activities students must participate in. In this course, participation points are given by unit, rather than per learning activity. There will be three units of three weeks each starting in Week 2 and each unit will have 10 participation points. The assessment rubric for class participation can be found at the end of the syllabus.

1. *Independent School Trustee Interview (15 points)*
    Each student will endeavor to interview a currently serving or former school Trustee or Director about their governance experiences. Students will then produce a 3 page paper that addresses three important components – a) their motivation for serving on the board, b) a critical challenge they saw in relation to their experience on the board and how it was resolved, and c) their best advice for a school head on handling board/leader relationships. Each of those components is worth 4 points each. Three points will be reserved for the quality of the paper.

2. *Board Expansion Proposal (15 points).*
    This assignment is a simulation activity that requires you to think about multiple critical aspects of board development. Your task is to develop a pitch for board expansion, which your will present to your classmates. You will develop a two-part work product consisting of an infographic and a one page single spaced narrative. These documents must be shared with the class on the due date (see Class schedule).

3. *Case study synthesis (24 points)*
    At three points over the semester, in our online discussions, you will be provided with a case study to deconstruct and suggest a plan to defuse tensions. You will write a paper to address each dilemma individually, as well as your response to the situations and the collective (class responses). This paper should be between 3-5 pages long.

4. *Dear New Board Member (16 points).*
    This assignment requires you to write a two page formal letter to an incoming new board member. The letter must include a review of a minimum of four key financial responsibilities of which they need to be aware. Please remember this is someone that you want to be an effective board member, so you want to ensure that your letter is personable, welcoming and encouraging, while also clear and transparent about important fiduciary information so they can be cognizant of their responsibilities.

Assessment and Mastery Grading

All assignments will be evaluated be holistically using a mastery grading system; the general rubric is described, and a specific rubric provided with each assignment. A student must demonstrate "mastery" of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a "B" level score. Only if a student additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through quality, quantity, or the creativity of her/his work—will she/he be assessed with an "A" level score. With a mastery grading system, students must *choose* to "go above and beyond" in order to earn "A" level scores.

*   "A" level score = Student work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant component. Student supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified and extended to other contexts. Student work is exceptionally creative, includes additional artifacts, and/or intentionally supports peers' efforts.
*   "B" level score = Student work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Student supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified.

- "C" level score = Student provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is typically not provided.
- "F" level score = Student work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible.

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to students who are passing a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ninth week of the next semester, not including summer term, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Faculty may grant an incomplete with a contract developed by the student with a reasonable time to complete the course at the discretion of the faculty member.

Assignments/Possible Points

Attendance and Participation	30 points
Trustee Interview	15 points
Board Expansion proposal	15 points
Case study synthesis	24 points
Dear New Board member letter	16 points
Total	**100 points**

GRADING POLICY

At George Mason University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	GRADING	Grade Points	Interpretation
A+	=100	4.00	Represents mastery of the subject through effort beyond basic requirements
A	94-99	4.00	
A-	90-93	3.67	
B+	85-89	3.33	Reflects an understanding of and the ability to apply theories and principles at a basic level
B	80-84	3.00	
C*	70-79	2.00	Denotes an unacceptable level of understanding and application of the basic elements of the course
F*	<69	0.00	

Note: "C" is not satisfactory for a licensure course; "F" does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

HONOR CODE & INTEGRITY OF WORK

Integrity of Work: TCLDEL students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (http:/oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/). The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated as such.
Violations of the Honor Code include:
1. Copying a paper or part of a paper from another student (current or past);
2. Reusing work that you have already submitted for another class (unless express permission has been granted by your current professor **before** you submit the work);
3. Copying the words of an author from a textbook or any printed source (including the Internet) or closely paraphrasing without providing a citation to credit the author. For

examples of what should be cited, please refer to:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/

4. You may also not "reuse" fieldwork hours. Each placement must have 20 documented hours that are solely for each course that you are in; you may be at the same site, but the same hours may not be counted towards the same course.

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 http://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 http://ods.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 Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/.

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, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, 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 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/ .

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/**

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.

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

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EDLE 635. DL1 Weekly Course Schedule

Note: Please refer to the Weekly Schedule and Announcements on Blackboard for the Weekly Reading List and the most up-to-date version of the Course Schedule.

Lesson	Class Topic	Readings and Due Dates
Week 1 **June 2-8**	Introductions and class welcome Who are we and what are our stories? Why do we need boards and how can we use it to build strength for our schools?	Review/read all the infographics in the Week 1 Board Source Folder (Bb)
Unit 1		
Week 2 **June 9-15**	Introduction to School/Non-Profit Governance	Review at least 5 blogs in the Board Source Blog https://blog.boardsource.org/blog/all Library Reading (Bb) Case Study 1 (Bb)
Week 3 **June 16-22**	The Boardroom, Trustees, & Setting Up a High Functioning Boards	**Complete the Batts book by June 23rd.** Supplemental readings presented in Bb Folder Trustee Interview **(Due June 22nd)**
Week 4 **June 23-29**	The Interaction Between Board and Leadership/Management Team	Web search readings – Assignment and readings will be provided on June 22nd
Unit 2		
Week 5 **June 30-July 6** **ABbreviated week due to holiday**	Capital, Fundraising, Financial Management & Oversight at The Board Level	Library Reading (Bb) Case Study 2 (Bb)
Week 6 **July 7-13**	Governance Ethics	Web search readings – Assignment and readings will be provided on July 6th. Dear New Board member letter **(Due July 13)**
Unit 3		
Week 7 **July 14-20**	Constituency Management Via the Board	Case Study 3 (Bb). Organizational Websites review Board expansion proposal **(Due July 20th)**
Week 8 **July 21-27**	Strategic Planning & Strategic Culture Board Performance & ation	Library Readings (Bb).
Week 9 **July 28-August 3**	(cont.) Board Performance & Evaluation	
Final paper due August 8th. – Case study synthesis		

Participation Rubric

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs improvement	Not acceptable
Relevance	The candidate always or almost always submits material aligned with topics/guiding questions and provides appropriate references to support ideas.	The candidate often submits material aligned with topics/guiding questions and provides appropriate references to support ideas.	The candidate occasionally submits material aligned with topics/guiding questions and provides appropriate references to support ideas.	The candidate seldom or never submits material aligned with topics/guiding questions and provides appropriate references to support ideas.
Leadership	The candidate always or almost always leads by initiating discussion, bringing in new ideas, and facilitating group progress.	The candidate often leads by initiating discussion, bringing in new ideas, and facilitating group progress.	The candidate occasionally leads by initiating discussion, bringing in new ideas, and facilitating group progress.	The candidate seldom or never leads by initiating discussion, bringing in new ideas, and facilitating group progress.
Engagement	The candidate always or almost always contributes to discussions, justifies assertions, and acts respectfully to others.	The candidate often contributes to discussions, justifies assertions, and acts respectfully to others.	The candidate occasionally contributes to discussions, justifies assertions, and acts respectfully to others.	The candidate seldom or never contributes to discussions, justifies assertions, and acts respectfully to others.
Quantity	The candidate always or almost always contributes appropriate discussion or work product in a timely fashion.	The candidate often contributes appropriate discussion or work product in a timely fashion.	The candidate occasionally contributes appropriate discussion or work product in a timely fashion.	The candidate seldom or never contributes appropriate discussion or work product in a timely fashion.