



August 5, 2022

Dr. Mark Rudin  
President  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
2600 West Neal Street  
P. O. Box 3011  
Commerce, TX 75428

Dear Dr. Rudin:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**New Program-Approval**

**Graduate Certificate in Urban School Leadership (GCUSL)**

Submission date:

**1/10/2022**

Intended Implementation date:

**8/29/2022**

Case ID:

**SC017361**

Texas A&M University Commerce requests approval for a new program, the Graduate Certificate in Urban School Leadership, effective fall 2022. The graduate certificate plans to admit up to 15 students per year. The certificate program can be completed in four semesters. The certificate will be offered 100% online. The University was approved to offer distance learning January 24, 2003.

The Urban School Leadership Certificate Program (GCUSL) has been developed for critical and reflective educators seeking to improve urban schools through research and practice. The GCUSL will be offered 100% online, which includes all classes, exams, and seminars, continuing to utilize the recognized strengths of the university in meeting the educational needs of students where they are living and working.

The goal of the new program is to gain specific knowledge and skills to identify, develop and implement with fidelity evidenced based strategies to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for all students in urban settings. The need was determined based on the growing need to provide aspiring school leaders with tools needed to be successful in urban school contexts, which currently offered degree programs does not address. Some alumnae have shared with



Dr. Mark Rudin  
August 5, 2022  
Page 2

faculty in other educational programs at A&M-Commerce that addressing the unique challenges of urban schools is not currently covered within the current curricular offerings.

The target audience for the Urban School Leadership Graduate Certificate are persons who are interested in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to mitigate urban school level issues with proven effective research-based leadership practices.

The College of Education and Human Services (CoEHS) and the Department of Educational Leadership (EDL) are uniquely equipped to deliver this program. The EDL faculty have expertise in school leadership from extensive research and professional experience in school leadership settings, and a vast professional and alumni network of scholar-practitioners in school leadership.

The offering of a graduate certificate in Urban School Leadership aligns with the mission and strategic goals of the university, specifically with the A&M-Commerce identity as a uniquely urban-rural serving university. Located in a rural area adjacent to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, the university as a whole and the Educational Leadership Department in particular draws many students from the urban and urban-esque school districts in Dallas Fort Worth (DFW). While the currently offered degree programs prepare school leaders to serve successfully in any school setting, the GCUSL will address the specific challenges and resources of urban schools.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), employment of elementary, middle, and high school principals is projected to grow 8 percent from 2020 to 2030. The GCUSL is designed to better prepare existing and aspiring school leaders to meet the challenges of the urban school environment. In Texas there are 11 urban school districts which represent less than 1% of all school districts; however, 19% of the students in Texas are enrolled in schools in urban districts, equating to roughly 1 million students.

Requests for approval of the certificate offering are not required from the A&M University System or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, given that the offering is a 12-semester credit hour (SCH) graduate certificate. The University's curriculum committee approved the new certificate program September 29, 2021. Minutes of the meeting are included with the plan.

The University identified nine student learning outcomes. The University provided the course mapped to each outcome. Learning outcomes will be assessed by the satisfactory completion of assignments within the courses, including weekly discussion boards, research projects, other



Dr. Mark Rudin  
August 5, 2022  
Page 3

projects, response to case studies, School District Policy Analysis, School Policy Analysis and Equity Audit, white paper, and Urban School Leadership Program Student Portfolio.

Every year, each academic program and divisional support unit engages in institution-wide, ongoing efforts of continuous improvement by identifying expected student learning outcomes and goals, assessing the extent to which these outcomes and goals are achieved, and providing evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of these results.

The program coordinator, with the support and guidance of the leadership of the College of Education and Human Services and the Department of Educational Leadership has oversight of the graduate certificate program. The coordinator and faculty will review annually the program's assessment reporting and offer guidance on how to improve student learning as needed. Each course will be evaluated each offering, and collectively, those evaluations can be used to ensure quality instruction. The Department Head and the coordinator will also review student evaluation of instruction annually with a focus on continuous improvement and implementation. The Educator Preparation Program Advisory Council will have collaborative oversight of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the certificate programs within the department.

Admission requirements include graduate student status with undergrad degree grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75. Preference will be given to certified school administrators. Admission requirements for all graduate certificate programs include, all official transcripts, Bachelor's degree, including all transcripts used towards bachelor's degree. Any master's degree transcript or transcripts with graduate coursework (if applicable).

Graduation requirements include earning a 3.0 GPA on all required coursework (no course substitutions may be applied on graduate certificates) and a Completion of Certificate Request while taking final graduate certificate courses.

In developing academic courses and making changes to the curriculum, the University follows standards of good practice (Standard 10.4 of the *Principles of Accreditation*) and the guidelines established by A&M-Commerce Procedure, Academic Approval Procedures for Courses. Determinations of credit awarded must adhere to the University's definition of the semester hour.

The University provided course descriptions and a proposed schedule of courses for the certificate program.

Faculty qualifications and resources appear to be adequate. The University provided qualifications for two full-time faculty in the Educational Leadership department with the



Dr. Mark Rudin  
August 5, 2022  
Page 4

education and research experience for the offering of this graduate certificate. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC reaffirmation review.

Library and learning resources appear to be adequate. A breakdown by subject of the library's journal, book and video collections and a list of research databases pertinent to a graduate certificate in Urban School Leadership was provided with the proposal. In addition to housing the physical collections, the library also provides space to Academic Success and Tutoring Services, Student Disability Services, Assistive Technology Lab, the College of Innovation and Design.

Student support services and resources appear to be adequate. Students enrolled in the graduate certificate in Urban School Leadership will have access to the full range of academic and student support services available to all A&M-Commerce students through the divisions of Academic Affairs, Campus Life and Student Development (CLSD), and Enrollment Management. Information about services is published in the Student Guidebook, Graduate Catalog, and on the University's website. Specific services of relevance to USL Graduate Certificate students. Services described include advising, writing center, tutoring, and technology services.

Physical resources appear to be adequate for this online certificate. Administrative support positions and faculty are housed in the Young Education North Building and the Sowers Education South building on the A&M Commerce campus. Library services are located in the Velma K. Waters Library for online students and student support services are housed in Craddock Hall and the Halladay Student Services building.

Financial resources appear to be adequate. The University provided a five-year cost and funding model, based in part from projected student attrition and graduation rates. The institution's revenues appear to exceed the program's expenses. The Graduate Certificate in Urban School leadership will function with a reallocation of faculty course load, accomplished within the normal financial obligations of the college and the department.

Required instructional staff and resources are available in the event of needing a contingency plan, since initial funding is modest.

**The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Graduate Certificate in Urban School Leadership (GCUSL). It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of the current accreditation.**



Dr. Mark Rudin  
August 5, 2022  
Page 5

Thank you for including a check for \$500 to help defray the costs of the prospectus review.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Denise Y. Young at (404) 492-5386 or via email at [dyoung@sacscoc.org](mailto:dyoung@sacscoc.org).

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.  
President

BSW/DDG:lp

cc: Dr. Ricky Dobbs, Associate Provost, Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Dr. Denise Y. Young, Vice President, SACSCOC