



2020 SELI Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the 2020 SELI timeline?** [Applications](#) are due Sunday, Mar. 1st (5pm ET); Orientation (May 20-22, 2020); Placement (May 25-July 17, 2020); Closing Meeting (July 22-24, 2020).
- **What does the Orientation entail?** The training covers a range of education issues/strategies with panels and group discussions. Topics may include (but not limited to): addressing race and inequity, hearing from underrepresented voices in the education and social justice movement, and discussing community organizing, litigation strategies, and education policy agendas. Included in the training is time to engage with local alum as well as SEF staff. Participation in full by all fellows is required.
- **What are typical SELI placements and assignments?** Each student will have a set work plan they will work through over the 8 weeks in addition to completing reflection-based assignments for SEF. Placements are full-time (40 hours/week) for the entire 8-week fellowship. Students will likely research, convene, and develop communication tools on a number of topics, some may include: racial equity in education, early education access, the role of afterschool and summer school; voucher and charter school policies and their impact on public education; school finance trends, school climate, push out and juvenile justice issues, college access and completion trends for all students; developmental education at Minority Serving Institutions; HBCU effectiveness, MSIs and higher education accountability policies (ex. State performance funding policies); and teacher education programs.

In addition, students will complete small assignments throughout the summer. Before the Orientation they will read a selection of articles and reports to prepare them for the training and panelist discussions. They will also develop a communications tool, interview a series of stakeholders in their placement site community, write a final paper on the experience and present on lessons learned from the summer at the Closing Meeting. Often students have used their portfolio of work to receive credit from their universities after the summer.

- **How are placements made? Do students choose their own placements/locations?** Placements are determined by a number of factors. We use the personal statement, short answer response, interviews and general experience and background of the student to understand their individual interests in education equity issues. At the same time, we also have different school districts, education agencies, and nonprofit organizations applying each year to host a summer fellow. Some of the organizations have hosted students before but often they are new organizations. As part of their application process, organizations submit work plans describing the short and long-term projects they need assistance with during the summer. Based on the alignment of the projects, skills required, and the student's interests and capacities we make pairings. It should be noted that SEF chooses the placement organization and location for each students and the student does not self- select either of these. The students do also not select the projects they will work on but are assigned to them by their placement site and SEF. Students should only apply if they are willing to relocate to a different state for the summer and work on a variety of issues not of their choosing. **We will not know the exact placements or projects available until we have selected students in April.**
- **What does the Closing Meeting entail?** Students will give presentations to their peers on what they have worked on over the summer and what they have learned about impacting policy and practice. They will also think

collectively about how they can continue to work together to make change. Participation in full by the fellows is required.

- **How does the stipend, training and travel expenses work?** Undergraduate students receive \$4,500 and graduate students receive \$5,000. The stipend payments are broken into three parts through the 10-week experience and students are expected to pay for their own living expenses, housing, and daily transportation costs using the stipend and their own individual resources during the placement. SEF will pay and arrange for the student's airfare to and from their home to Atlanta for the Orientation, from the Orientation directly to their placement site city, and then at the end of the summer from the placement city to Atlanta for the Closing Meeting and then home. Students can choose to drive instead of fly and will be reimbursed for car mileage per the standard federal rate for miles driven, up to \$350. SEF cannot cover expenses for shipment of cars or car rentals during the summer placements.
- **What are the eligibility requirements and general desired attributes of a fellow?** There is no required major or grade point average for the program. Students should have completed 60 credit hours by June 2020 in an undergraduate program or be currently enrolled in a graduate level program. **Students who will graduate in June 2020 as seniors with no plans for graduate school are still eligible for the program.** We have had a range of students involved each year that generally include social work, law, public policy, sociology, education students among other disciplines. Students must be between the ages of 20-32 years old.

Our core criteria for a fellow is that they have demonstrated an interest in education equity issues and making change on a systems level. Most have had some prior experience researching education issues and/or working in the nonprofit sector. All are expected to have a strong interest in being a leader on these issues to their peers and communities. For a more complete list of eligibility requirements, please review the 2020 application instructions available on our website.

- **What does the application entail? Required application materials are due March 1, 2020 (5pm ET).** Required materials include the online form, resume, personal statement, short answer response, transcript, two letters of recommendation, and three references. Applicants will also be interviewed by phone. **Please see the 2020 application instructions for more information on particulars with these materials.**
- **When are selections announced?** April 20, 2020 announcements will be made. At the time of selection, students will be notified of their placement city and state where they will work for the summer and the kind of projects and issues they will be asked to work on but will not know the organization until a later date.
- **What is the housing process and do placements provide housing?** Fellows must find their own housing and pay for it using their stipend and resources. The placement site is responsible for working with students to determine the most convenient and safe housing options. Housing decisions and payments are ultimately the responsibility of the student, with them in charge of signing the lease and paying for their deposit and rent on their own.
- **What kind of policy experience have previous fellows gained through their placements?** All fellows gain some experience and understanding of education policy issues from early education through higher education, with assignments and our trainings focused on the entire spectrum. Each fellows' experience is extremely different but most have some intensive research project where they are asked to analyze an education policy issue through a qualitative or quantitative lens. Many fellows gain experience in learning how to explain complex policy issues to a broader set of stakeholders through the development of opinion editorials, fact sheets, white papers, or web portals.

- **What kind of expertise or skills/skillsets have previous fellows gained through their placements?** It varies. Fellows have been asked to conduct needs assessments of communities, complete grant requests and final reports, build out plans for community outreach events, create and administer survey instruments, and think through ways to increase partnership in their community. Many fellows have gained experience in presenting and explaining research to different audiences and community stakeholders.
- **Do the experiences vary in complexity for students based on experience, educational level?** Yes. The work plan for each student is unique and aligns with their skill set, experience, interests & educational levels, and varies in terms of difficulty based on these criteria. Each placement is very different and we work with each site before and during the summer to confirm the student is being challenged.

For additional information, please email: seli@southerneducation.org