



2021 SELI Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the 2021 SELI timeline?** [Applications](#) will be available December 1, 2020, and are due March 1, 2021 (5pm ET); Orientation (May 19-21, 2021); Placement (May 24-July 16, 2021); Closing Meeting (July 21-23, 2021).
- **What does the Orientation entail?** The training covers a range of education issues/strategies with panels and group discussions. Topics may include (but are 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 alumni as well as SEF staff. Participation in full by all fellows is required.
- **What are typical SELI placements and assignments?** Each SELI fellow will have a set work plan they will follow during the 8-week placement in addition to completing reflection-based assignments for SEF. Placements are full-time (40 hours/week, in-person at the placement site) for the entire fellowship. Fellows' assignments are likely to include researching, convening stakeholders, and developing communication tools on a number of topics, such as: 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, developmental education at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), HBCU effectiveness, MSIs and higher education accountability policies (ex. State performance funding policies), and teacher education programs.

In addition, fellows will complete small assignments for SEF 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 stakeholders in their placement site community, write a final paper on the experience, and present on lessons learned through the fellowship at the Closing Meeting. Often fellows have used their portfolio of work to receive credit from their universities.

- **How are placements made? Do fellows 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 each fellow to understand their individual interests in education equity issues. At the same time, different school districts, education agencies, and nonprofit organizations apply each year to host a fellow. Some of the organizations have hosted fellows before, but we also have many new organizations hosting each year. As part of their application process, organizations submit work plans describing the short- and long-term projects

they need assistance with during the summer. We make pairings based on the alignment of the projects and skills required, and the fellows' interests and capacities. It should be noted that SEF chooses the placement organization and location for each fellow. Fellows do not select their own placements or locations, nor do they select the projects they will work on. Those are determined by their placement site and SEF. Students should only apply if they are willing to potentially 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 fellows in April.**

- **What does the Closing Meeting entail?** Fellows 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 all fellows is required.
- **How do the stipend 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 (including Orientation and the Closing Meeting). Fellows are expected to cover their 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 travel 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. Fellows who choose to drive instead of fly 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 generally 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 2021 in an undergraduate program or be currently enrolled in a graduate or professional program. **Students who will graduate in June 2021 as seniors with no plans for graduate school are still eligible for the program.** We have had a range of academic majors represented each year, often including social work, law, public policy, sociology, and education among other disciplines. Students must be between the ages of 20-35 years old to be eligible.

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 fellows have had some prior experience researching education issues and/or working in the education or nonprofit sectors. 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 2021 application instructions available on our website.

- **What does the application entail? Required application materials are due March 1, 2021 (5pm ET).** Required materials include the online Google form, resume, personal statement, short answer responses, transcripts from all institutions attended, two letters of recommendation, and three references. Applicants will also be interviewed by phone. **Please see the 2021 application instructions for more information on particulars with these materials.**

- **When are selections announced?** Announcements will be made in April 2021. At the time of selection, fellows will be notified of the placement city and state where they will work for the summer and the kinds 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 fellows to determine the safest and most convenient housing options. Housing decisions and payments are ultimately the responsibility of the fellows, who are responsible for signing the lease and paying for their deposit and rent on their own. In the past, summer housing at local universities has been a good option for many fellows.
- **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 Orientation trainings focused on the entire spectrum. Each fellow's 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 broad 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 placement site's community. Many fellows have gained experience in presenting and explaining research to different audiences and community stakeholders.
- **Do the experiences vary in complexity for fellows based on experience or educational level?** Yes. The work plan for each fellow is unique and aligns with their skill set, experience, interests and education level, and varies in difficulty based on these criteria. Each placement is very different and we work with each site before and during the summer to confirm the fellow is being challenged appropriately.

For additional information, please visit [our website](#). If you have any questions, please feel free to email seli@southerneducation.org.