



TCCAO Academic Executive Leadership Program: Guide for Fellows and Host CAOs

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Purpose of The TCCAO AEL Guide

This document provides a concise, practical overview of the TCCAO Academic Executive Leadership (AEL) program. It is intended to support:

- Fellows participating in the program, and
- Chief Academic Officers (CAOs), Provosts, and senior leaders at host (shadowing) universities.

The guide clarifies program goals, structure, expectations, and roles so that fellows and host institutions can engage productively and derive meaningful value from the experience.

Program Overview

The TCCAO Academic Executive Leadership Fellow Program is a statewide, cohort-based leadership development initiative sponsored by the Texas Council of Chief Academic Officers (TCCAO). The program is designed to strengthen the pipeline of future provosts and senior academic leaders across Texas higher education institutions.

The program combines executive-level leadership development, cross-institutional networking, and an immersive shadowing experience with provosts and senior academic officers at peer institutions.

Program Rationale

While Texas has invested in leadership development through initiatives such as the Texas Academic Leadership Academy (TALA), there has been a recognized gap in sustained, cross-institutional development opportunities for senior academic leaders who are “one step away” from provost-level roles.

The TCCAO AEL program addresses this gap by:

- Providing applied, executive-focused learning opportunities
 - Encouraging exposure to diverse institutional contexts across Texas
 - Facilitating mentorship with sitting provosts and chief academic officers
 - Supporting reflection on leadership practice at the executive level
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Participants

Fellows

Fellows are senior academic leaders at TCCAO member institutions, typically including:

- Deans
- Associate Provosts / Vice Provosts
- Comparable campus-wide academic leaders

Fellows are:

- Nominated by their home institution
- Supported by their Provost or Chief Academic Officer
- Selected through a TCCAO-led review process

Host Institutions and Mentors

Host institutions are TCCAO-affiliated universities that agree to provide an immersive shadowing experience. Mentors at host institutions are typically:

- Provosts or Chief Academic Officers
- Senior leaders with institution-wide academic portfolios

Participation as a host institution and mentor is voluntary.

Program Outcomes

By the conclusion of the fellowship experience, fellows are expected to:

- Demonstrate increased readiness for executive academic leadership roles
 - Gain insight into provost-level decision-making and institutional strategy
 - Build a statewide peer network of senior academic leaders
 - Complete a capstone project or leadership reflection with practical value
 - Broaden their understanding of current challenges and opportunities in Texas higher education
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Program Structure

The TCCAO AEL program uses a blended model consisting of three integrated components:

1. Cohort-Based Leadership Development

- Four leadership development workshops or sessions (April, July, October, January)
- Opportunities for peer learning, discussion, and reflection
- Aligned with TCCAO quarterly meetings (some in-person, some virtual) to encourage networking

2. Immersive Shadowing Experience (30–40 hours)

- Fellows are paired with a provost or senior academic leader at a *different* TCCAO institution
- Shadowing may occur through:
 - A single multi-day immersive visit, or
 - Multiple day-long visits over time
- Scheduling is flexible to accommodate institutional and leadership calendars

The shadowing experience is designed to expose fellows to:

- Executive decision-making processes
- Strategic planning and resource allocation
- Leadership styles and governance practices
- Cross-functional academic leadership responsibilities

3. Capstone Deliverable

Each fellow completes one of the following by the end of the program:

- A mini strategic project co-developed with the host institution, or
- A structured leadership reflection analyzing observed leadership practices

Capstone work should address a real institutional, state-level, or national issue related to academic affairs.

Shadowing Experience: Guidance for Fellows

Fellows are encouraged to:

- Enter the shadowing experience with clear learning goals
- Observe broadly across academic, budgetary, governance, and strategic functions
- Engage respectfully and confidentially in executive-level discussions
- Reflect on leadership approaches rather than institutional comparisons

Fellows should coordinate closely with their host mentor and the program coordinator regarding scheduling, expectations, and deliverables.

Shadowing Experience: Guidance for Host Institutions and Mentors

Host CAOs and mentors are asked to:

- Provide authentic access to provost-level work and decision-making
- Include fellows in meetings, briefings, and discussions where feasible
- Share context about institutional structures, challenges, and priorities
- Engage in reflective conversation with fellows about leadership practice

Host institutions may indicate interest in:

- Co-developing a small strategic project with the fellow, and/or
 - Receiving a reflective analysis on executive leadership practices
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Roles and Program Oversight

TCCAO AEL Committee

- Oversees program design, launch, continuity and continuous improvement
- Reviews and recommends fellows and shadowing matches
- Participates in and supports workshops and program activities

Program Coordinator

- Manages communications and scheduling
- Coordinates nomination, selection and matching processes
- Supports fellows and host institutions
- Leads program evaluation and improvement

TCCAO Executive Committee

- Reviews and approves committee recommendations
 - Provides strategic oversight and support
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Timeline (Pilot Year Example)

- **January:** Open fellow nominations and host interest declarations
- **March:** Fellow selection and host matching
- **April:** In-person TCCAO AEL workshop (aligned with TCCAO meeting)

- **May–December:** Shadowing experiences
 - **July & October:** Virtual TCCAO AEL workshops
 - **January (following year):** Final workshop and capstone sharing (aligned with TCCAO Winter Retreat)
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Value of Participation

Participation in the TCCAO AEL program:

- Enhances leadership capacity across Texas higher education
 - Supports institutional succession planning
 - Builds durable cross-institutional relationships
 - Adds professional prestige for fellows, mentors, and institutions
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Conclusion

The TCCAO AEL program is a collaborative investment in the future of academic leadership in Texas. Through intentional development, mentorship, and experiential learning, the program prepares senior academic leaders to step confidently into executive roles while strengthening the statewide higher education community.