

## **Program Leadership & Faculty**

### **Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership**

Sul Ross State University

### **Program Director**

**John Decman, Ed.D.**

### **Professor of Educational Leadership**

### **Ed.D. Program Director**

Dr. John Decman serves as the founding Program Director for Sul Ross State University's first doctoral program in its 103-year history. He brings extensive experience in educational leadership preparation, improvement science methodology, and commitment to serving rural and borderland educational communities.

Prior to joining Sul Ross, Dr. Decman served as Executive Director of the Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration (TCPEA) from 2020-2026, where he built networks and partnerships across Texas educational leadership programs. He previously held a tenured faculty position at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, where he prepared educational leaders and conducted research on superintendent practices and organizational improvement.

Dr. Decman holds degrees from Ball State University, Indiana University, and Purdue University. His scholarly work focuses on educational leadership development, superintendent practices, improvement science in education, and leadership preparation in underserved contexts. He is an active member of the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) Executive Board and received the James A. Vornberg TCPEA Living Legend Award for sustained contributions to the field.

Dr. Decman's commitment to this program extends beyond administration. He teaches in the program, chairs dissertation committees, and works directly with students throughout their doctoral journey. His vision for the Ed.D. is grounded in the belief that rural and borderland communities deserve doctoral education designed specifically for their contexts, led by faculty who understand their realities and are committed to their success.

### **Contact:**

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[Faculty Profile](#)

## **Program Faculty**

The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is supported by a carefully selected faculty team combining deep expertise in improvement science, rural and borderland education, and practice-focused doctoral education. Faculty members bring both scholarly expertise and extensive practitioner experience, ensuring students learn from scholar-practitioners who understand the complexities of leading in real organizational settings.

## **Core Faculty**

Faculty teaching in the Ed.D. program hold terminal degrees in educational leadership or related fields and demonstrate expertise in improvement science methodology, CPED-aligned doctoral education, and commitment to serving rural and borderland communities. All core faculty teach in the program, advise doctoral students, and serve on dissertation committees.

### **Dr. Jane Cooper**

Faculty Profile coming soon

### **Dr. Kevin Badgett**

[Faculty Profile](#)

### **Dr. Shelly Landreth**

[Faculty Profile](#)

### **Dr. Gayle White**

[Faculty Profile](#)

### **Dr. Jeanne Qvarnstrom**

[Faculty Profile](#)

### **Dr. Diana Rodriguez**

[Faculty Profile](#)

### **Dr. Jennifer Miller Ray**

[Faculty Profile](#)

Detailed information about individual faculty members, including their research interests, teaching areas, professional experience, and contact information, is available on their individual faculty profile pages.

[All College of Education Faculty and Staff](#)

## **Dissertation Committees**

Each doctoral student works with a dissertation committee consisting of:

**Committee Chair:** A core program faculty member with expertise relevant to the student's Problem of Practice and improvement work. The chair provides primary guidance throughout the dissertation process.

**Committee Members:** Additional faculty (typically 2-3 members total) representing diverse expertise relevant to the student's work. Committee members may include core program faculty, Sul Ross faculty from related disciplines, or external members with specialized expertise.

Committee composition is finalized during Year 2 as students' Problems of Practice and improvement initiatives become clearly defined. Students work closely with the Program Director to identify committee members whose expertise aligns with their scholarly and professional needs.

## **Practitioner and Community Partnerships**

While faculty provide the scholarly and methodological foundation for doctoral education, the program also draws on the expertise of educational practitioners and community leaders who:

- Serve as guest speakers sharing insights from leadership practice
- Provide feedback on improvement initiatives and dissertation work
- Offer perspectives on problems of practice in rural and borderland contexts
- Connect students with professional networks and leadership opportunities

These partnerships ensure the program remains grounded in the realities of educational practice and responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

## **Faculty Commitment to Student Success**

Faculty in the Ed.D. program are committed to supporting students through a rigorous and rewarding doctoral journey. This commitment includes:

**Accessibility:** Faculty maintain regular office hours, respond to student communications promptly, and are available for consultation on coursework and dissertation development.

**Mentorship:** Faculty serve as mentors who guide students' professional and scholarly growth, not just evaluators of academic work.

**Collaborative Learning:** Faculty model collaborative scholarship and improvement-focused inquiry, demonstrating the scholar-practitioner approach students are developing.

**Individual Support:** Faculty recognize that doctoral students are working professionals with competing demands and provide flexible, responsive support that respects students' contexts.

**Continuous Improvement:** Faculty engage in ongoing professional development to strengthen their capacity to support practice-focused doctoral education and improvement science scholarship.

### **Advisory and Leadership Support**

In addition to teaching faculty, the program benefits from:

**College of Education Leadership:** Dean and associate deans providing institutional support, resources, and strategic guidance for program development and sustainability.

**ICPEL and CPED Networks:** Connections to national networks of educational leadership faculty and CPED member institutions, providing access to best practices, professional development, and collaborative learning opportunities.

**Rural, Statewide, and Regional Partnerships:** Relationships with rural school organizations, Texas educational leadership programs, school districts, and professional organizations that enrich students' learning and create pathways for impact beyond graduation.

These networks ensure the program remains connected to broader conversations about educational leadership preparation, improvement science, and practice-focused doctoral education.

### **Questions About Faculty?**

For questions about program faculty, committee formation, or connecting with specific faculty members:

**Program Director:**

Dr. John Decman

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**Program Email:**

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*Sul Ross State University*

*The Frontier University of Texas*