

# Deidre Alexander



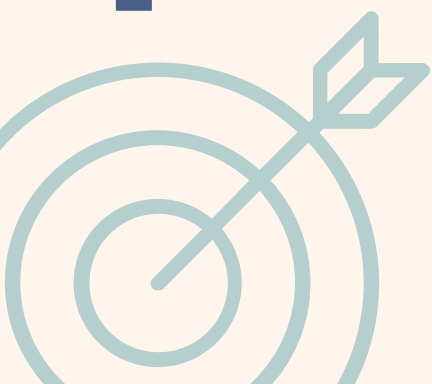
Deidre Alexander serves as the Legislative Director for Congressman Bennie Thompson of Mississippi. Her background in education laid the foundation for a career in public service that would eventually reach all the way to Congress. Now, Deidre brings the values of equity, reflection, and systemic thinking learned at SPA to one of the nation's most influential arenas: federal policymaking.

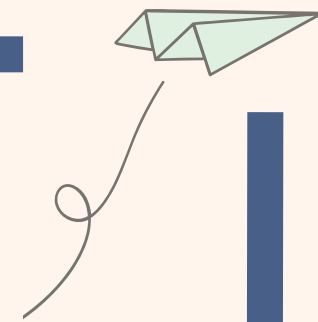
## Exploring Perspectives in Education

Deidre always felt called to teach, believing it was essential to gain an insider perspective within schools to examine the systems that shape them. "I wanted to be in the classroom, to understand the day-to-day experiences of students and educators, and to see how policy decisions actually impact schools," she said. While teaching, she began working on local campaigns and transitioned into education advocacy, where she focused on issues like funding, equity, and teacher pay.

The decision to join SPA stemmed from a desire for growth in leadership, grounded in both history and human connection. The program's legacy of educating Southern Black educators during segregation resonated with Deidre. "I chose Teachers College because of its commitment to equity and leadership development," she reflected. SPA's emphasis on self-reflection and self-awareness also stood out, helping her grow "as both a person and a leader."

SPA proved foundational in expanding Deidre's understanding of what educational leadership can look like. The program introduced models of leadership rooted in systems change, equity, and innovation, strengthening Deidre's desire to influence change on a broader scale.



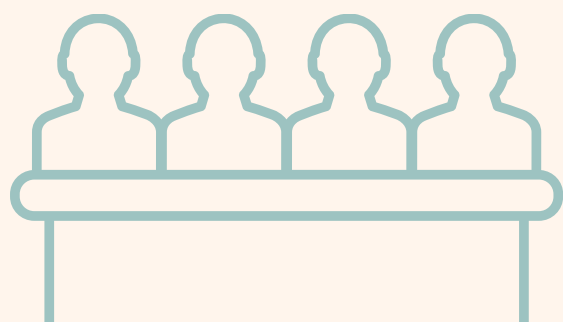


## Leading Policy

Today, Deidre is a Legislative Director in Mississippi, managing Congressman Bennie Thompson's policy portfolio and collaborating with local leaders to bring federal support to underserved communities. "I still get to serve the people of Mississippi, and I carry my time in the classroom with me every day."

In the halls of Congress, the leadership skills honed at SPA remain ever-relevant. Deidre highlights SPA's lessons in coalition-building, conflict resolution, and development of systems that are efficient and equitable. "Whether I am advocating for rural school funding or advancing environmental justice policy, SPA gave me the leadership tools to stay focused and effective while tackling complex problems."

Above all, Deidre appreciates the self-awareness that she developed at SPA. She detailed the challenges of learning her values, recognizing her triggers, and regularly reflecting. "SPA helped me develop the self-awareness and emotional intelligence to lead in high-stakes environments with clarity, integrity, and humility," she shared. That foundation has enabled her to lead policy efforts with the same intentionality she once brought to the classroom.



## Redefining Educational Leadership

Deidre exemplifies how educational leadership goes beyond titles like principal or administrator. To her, an educational leader is "anyone who makes decisions that impact students." That includes policymakers, advocates, and community organizers. She explains, "it's not about the title, it's about the responsibility to improve outcomes for students and the systems that serve them."

The commonality behind all effective leadership is self-awareness:

**"Strong leadership means being able to consider perspectives different from your own. That mindset is what allows leaders to grow and create lasting impact."**

## Looking Ahead

Deidre plans to continue working in spaces where she can influence policy, direct resources, and push for structural change. She encourages educators to consider how education intersects with broader systems such as policy and government. Reflecting on her formative experience at SPA, she offers the following advice to students:

**"Lean in. Lean on your cohort. Don't quit."**