

All Things Possible

Kelvin L. Smith, CPA, MBA



Kelvin L. Smith's upward trajectory has always been fueled by his dedication to family and community.

"I am continually motivated by my family members. My daughter recently became the first person in our family to earn a doctorate, and it compelled me to do the same," said Smith, a financial professional who is a student in the current Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) cohort in the School of Business and Management at Thomas Edison State University. As a tireless advocate for higher education, Smith understands better than most that a long shot becomes more feasible through positive influences.

"It has always been important to me to show others in my community that all things are possible regardless of how your story begins. I am also motivated by the inner-city youth I meet who are committed to self-improvement," he noted. "I believe they are doubly inspired by seeing people, like me, who came from similar beginnings."

Those beginnings centered in east Trenton, N.J., to where Smith's family had moved from his childhood home in Detroit. His parents and siblings initially struggled to adapt to comparatively tighter quarters and the challenging environment.

"I got into a fight while walking with my sister to our first day of school," he recalls. That unfortunate initiation would later take a positive turn when he met his soulmate and future wife, Delores, while both were attending Trenton Central High School.

Today, Smith serves as the assistant superintendent of Business and board secretary for a southern New Jersey school district while overseeing his own Certified Public Accountant (CPA) practice. Over time, his nonprofit clientele has included higher education institutions, childcare centers, women's shelters, housing authorities, and small area organizations in need of professional fiscal oversight. He also serves as a TESU mentor for introductory, intermediate-, and graduate-level accounting

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and fundraising courses while serving as an adjunct professor at Mercer County Community College and Rider University in Lawrence Twp., N.J.

"I selected the DBA degree in general management track because it fits my goals of pursuing my second career in higher education and the potential expansion of my CPA practice," said Smith, who is slated to graduate from the program in August 2022. "Our curriculum follows a logical sequence in critical thinking, global business, economics and finance, organizational leadership, strategic planning, marketing and entrepreneurship, data analytics, law and ethics, teaching, and consulting - culminating in a scholar-practitioner field project. All courses are mentored by highly regarded professors from various industries and institutes of higher education. As a CPA and businessperson, the

instructional delivery, progression, and support throughout the program have exceeded my expectations. It represents an academic pinnacle for me and will add a tremendous credential to what God has already favored me with in this life."

With each doctoral candidate bringing their unique expertise to group assignments, Smith noted that the learning experience is made even more enriching. "I feel so blessed to be part of this extraordinary inaugural DBA cohort and am deeply impressed at the scholarly and professional pathways represented."

According to Smith, course discussions include lawyers, engineers, senior-level public servants, IT and human resource professionals, and others in nonprofit, for-profit, and educational leadership roles. Each brings a rich perspective and discourse to the table that helps members of the cohort learn volumes from one another.

"Mr. Smith is a consummate professional. He is an exemplary scholar-practitioner demonstrating the essence and engagement of a high-caliber academician and seasoned accounting and finance professional," noted Dr. Michael Williams dean of the School of Business and Management at TESU. "He epitomizes the idea of lifelong learning, and, as an interdisciplinarian, he aligns with the degree program's vision, mission and academic structure. It is a pleasure and a privilege to have him as a member of our inaugural DBA class."

Smith came into the program with an MBA degree in organizational management from Eastern University in St. David's, Pa., and a bachelor's degree in commerce with a concentration in accounting from Rider University. In addition to his CPA certification, he is a Registered School Business Administrator, a Qualified Purchasing Agent, and a Certified Public Housing Manager for the state of New Jersey.

"My CPA practice primarily focuses on not-for-profit organizations in and around the Trenton, N.J., area. I believe they are the backbone of a vibrant and successful community and plan to expand my endeavors in this area while pursuing a full-time leadership role in higher education and interim administrative work with the New Jersey Department of Education."

Off the clock, Smith enjoys reuniting with childhood friends and fraternity brothers from whom he says he continuously derives knowledge, strength, wisdom, and motivation. However, his "main attraction, the pride of his life, best friend of 50 years, and wife for 41 of them," is Delores, who earned both her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) and Master of Science in Management (MSM) degrees from Thomas Edison in 1993 and 2000, respectively.

To learn more about the programs offered in TESU's School of Business and Management, visit: www.tesu.edu/business.



DBA student Kelvin L. Smith and wife Delores Smith, BSBA '93, MSM '00.

