



THE COLLEGE FELLOWSHIP GUIDE

#DWYCT

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my story.

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It was freshman year of college when one of my English professors pulled me to the side after class. She was inviting me to attend a meeting she would be having in her office later that week, and briefly shared that the meeting was about a program for

students interested in pursuing a Ph.D. Now I'll be honest, at the time I had no idea what it meant to get a Ph.D. I planned on using my English degree to become a journalist. I wanted to write for major magazines, and while I wasn't entirely sure of what that would take I thought that I would figure it out along the way.

That being said, when Dr. Carmines asked me to meet I was curious. What was

this program she thought I was a good applicant for? What could I do with a Ph.D.?

Going to that meeting turned out to be the best decision I made in my entire college career. Learning about, applying to, and being accepted in the Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program literally changed my life's trajectory. Now, as a fifth year Ph.D. candidate working on her

dissertation I can honestly say that receiving fellowships as a freshman undergraduate student (and then later as a graduate student) not only shifted my perspective in college, but also shifted my career aspirations after.

This guide is meant to share all that I learned out about college fellowships with you. I hope that, if it is applicable to you, you will take advantage of those

opportunities. The amount of resources waiting for students that look, think, and believe just like you is tremendous. I want you to tap into all of them in the same way I, and many of my peers, did.

Enjoy, and let's get to work!

what is a fellowship?

So let's start with the basics. A fellowship is defined as the financial support, provided for a research or community outreach project, professional development, or graduate school. For example, the Ford Foundation Predoctoral

Fellowship is a highly competitive program that provides a \$24,000 stipend for three years of Ph.D. study along with access to their network of Ford fellows, and an invitation to their annual conference.

Another competitive program that supports individual research is the Fulbright U.S. Students Program. Recipients are invited to participate in international study

alongside top scholars in their respective fields. Financial support is provided through Fulbright.

My fellowship program, the Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, also provided financial support to its students in the form of a stipend each semester (junior and senior year), summer funding for research, and funding for GRE prep. This was all with the expectation that

students would work on and ultimately present a research project approved by their on-campus mentor.

Along with funding, fellowships provide access to a network that is incomparable. That network, and any subsequent conferences, forums, etc., are all part of the fellowship's goal to provide professional development. Believe it or not, this is just as important as the

financial benefits of a fellowship.

I'll tell you what most people won't: your relationships matter as much as your intellectual ability so the networks you are able to cultivate in most fellowship programs is priceless. As a fellow with Mellon, I learned how to build relationships with professors I wanted to work with in prospective Ph.D. programs (not always an easy feat),

how to present my research at conferences (this is definitely much different than your normal class presentation), and that I could negotiate my stipend in the same way you might negotiate a salary (a bit of information that was new to me at the time).

Also keep in mind that your school might have some fellowship program offerings that others do not have.

The McNair Scholars Program, which is very similar to Mellon, also provides support for undergraduate students interested in pursuing a Ph.D., but was not available at my undergraduate institution. Make sure to check out what fellowship opportunities are available at your particular college or university. There may be something unique to your school that will provide

financial support for your
additional research or to
study abroad.

should i apply?

So now that you have a better understanding of what a fellowship is, the next question you may be asking is whether or not you should apply. Here's the short answer: if you believe that the financial, institutional, and professional developmental

support provided by a
fellowship could be
beneficial for you, then
apply for a fellowship!

Please note that these are
not easy programs to get
into, but they are completely
worth it if you secure them.

the application process

The application process for most fellowship programs is pretty lengthy so we strongly encourage you to reach out to the office on your campus that assists students with that application process. If you don't already have a professor mentoring you,

then we also suggest connecting with a trusted mentor to help you through the process.

That being said, here are a few quick tips to help you with the application process:

01 Research the Program

Do your due diligence in researching the program. What is the language the fellowship uses to describe its ideal applicant? What is the fellowship's mission and goals? What is its history? What are the research projects of past winners? It is extremely important to research before you apply. The more you understand about the

fellowship the more you can
tailor your application to
meet the qualifications.

02 Focus on Your Statement of Purpose/Proposed Plan of Study

Spend a considerable amount of time putting together a focused, concise, and coherent statement of purpose. Your statement of purpose should clearly articulate your proposed research project and explain how it can be situated in the scholarship that has already been published on the

subject. You might also need to show research or community projects you have worked on in the past to show that you have a history of scholarship. You should show how the fellowship would benefit you by stating which professors you will do research with, or the program you will enter, and why. We suggest reaching out to a trusted friend who has won a fellowship, or even get a

sample statement of purpose, and use that as a template for your own statement. THIS IS NOT FOR YOU TO COPY. This is simply to provide you with a benchmark for success. Use your resources wisely.

03 Personal Statement

If your fellowship asks you to give a personal statement focus on being as intentional as possible with how you tell the story of who you are. Be honest and be thoughtful. If there is a/are prompt(s), make sure you are answering the appropriate question as clearly as possible.

04 Letters of Recommendation

Request a letter from your recommenders early, and send reminders leading up to the deadline. Make sure you have set with these recommenders a few times to explain your proposed research and how this fellowship will be beneficial to you. You want them to have a good amount of information to work with

when they are writing your letter. Also, if you need three letters, secure four just in case.

any other questions?

So, there you have it. We provided the shortlist for advice we would give to anyone interested in a fellowship program. If you have any other questions of course feel free to reach out. We are more than willing to help in any way that we can! Happy applying!

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