“Dreams are no novelty for any age, nor are they the unique possession of any individual.”

"Los sueños no son ninguna novedad para cualquier edad, tampoco ellos son la posesión de un solo individuo."
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The Whitney M. Young Graduate Fellowship Program

General Policy Statement

The University of Illinois at Springfield awards a number of Whitney M. Young Graduate Fellowships to qualified students each year. The program is a memorial to the late Whitney M. Young, Jr., former Executive Director of the National Urban League, educator, and activist. It is designed to help students achieve their educational and professional goals, and to complement their graduate-level academic studies with research and/or service opportunities in public affairs or public policy. The program is aimed at helping the campus achieve a rich and diverse educational environment and increasing opportunities in graduate education for highly motivated students who are underrepresented in graduate study at UIS. This includes, but is not limited to, ethnic/racial minorities, first generation college students, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The director and associate director of the WMY Graduate Fellowship Program oversee its operation.

Objectives

The fellowship is designed to help students pursue their graduate degrees full-time and to help them complete those degrees in a timely manner. The program also aims to enhance research and leadership skills through regular seminars and a Spring Symposium, and by involving students in public service projects that complement their academic disciplines.

Employment

Because of the academic focus of the program, the seminar/Symposium requirements, the service component, and the financial support provided by the fellowship, Fellows are advised to limit the number of hours employed during the academic semester. Any employment must not interfere with Fellows’ abilities to fulfill their academic, seminar/Symposium, and service obligations within the time frame established for degree completion under this program. Campus policy places strict limits upon on-campus employment of Fellows.

Eligibility for Appointment

To be considered for a Whitney M. Young Graduate Fellowship a student must:

- Have earned a baccalaureate degree with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (on a scale of 4.0).
- Satisfy the application and selection criteria of the WMY Graduate Fellowship Program.
- Be admitted to a UIS master’s degree program, and meet enrollment requirements defined in the Stipend and Benefits section of this manual.
- Be a U.S. citizen or a resident alien (international students on F-1 or similar temporary visas are not eligible).
- Be pursuing a first master’s degree, and have no fewer than two semesters of full-time required course work remaining to complete that degree.
- If applicable, have earned no less than a 3.0 cumulative grade point average in any graduate-level course work, and have earned no incomplete grades in any graduate courses.

Application Process

To be considered for a Fellowship, a student must complete and submit a WMY Graduate
Fellowship application. The application will be considered active once the following documents have been received in the Graduate Assistantship Office (PAC 518):

- Notice of admission to a master’s degree program at UIS
- Official undergraduate transcript(s)
- Graduate transcript(s), when applicable
- Completed application form
- Statement of goals for graduate study
- Three letters of recommendation dated within the year (at least two references must be provided by professors or academic advisors familiar with the applicant’s academic performance)
- A 500-700 word essay in which the applicant discusses one academic success and one difficult challenge faced as an undergraduate student. The essay should address how these experiences helped to prepare the applicant for graduate study at UIS, and for possible participation as a WMY Fellow.
- Current resume

The application for graduate study and a listing of graduate program application requirements can be found at http://www.uis.edu/graduateeducation/, or by contacting the UIS Office of Admissions at (217) 206-4847, at admissions@uis.edu.

Terms and Conditions

Verification of Employment Eligibility

Beginning fellows must complete an I-9 form by the first day of their specified appointment period to verify eligibility for employment. This process must be completed in the Graduate Assistantship Office (GAO) in PAC 518. It is recommended that the Fellow contact the GAO at (217) 206-6544 to make an appointment to complete this process. There are documents that must be provided at the time the Fellow visits the GAO to complete this process. The required documents are as follows:

- A valid passport, OR
- A current driver’s license and Social Security card, OR
- A current driver’s license and a certified copy of the Fellow’s birth certificate.

Graduate Fellows are not staff members. They are graduate students receiving a stipend for a specific appointment period. They are entitled, however, to the same holidays and vacation periods as our faculty and staff during the academic year.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Academic progress will be checked each semester for which WMY tuition waiver and/or stipend benefits are awarded. Fellows must earn a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 each semester, and must not receive any incomplete grades. Additionally, a semester grade point average cannot reflect a 0.00 level if comprised of all F grades, all NC grades, all I grades, or a combination of any of the above, including a W grade. (Note that DFR grades assigned to closure course work do not count against the Fellow as this grade is awarded for closure requirement courses until all requirements for that course are met, including, if needed, continuing enrollment courses linked to the closure course.) If the cumulative GPA reflects a 3.0, but the semester GPA reflects a 0.00 resulting from F, NC, I and/or W grades, the Fellow is not considered to be making satisfactory academic progress. Failure to meet satisfactory academic progress can result in termination (see page 6).
Fellowship Requirements

Seminars:

Attendance at Fellows' seminars is required. A Fellow who is unable to attend because of illness or an emergency must notify the Director prior to the seminar meeting.

Symposium

Each year, the WMY Fellowship hosts a symposium in February to highlight the achievements, research, and service projects of the Fellows. All Fellows must participate in this event, and some will be selected to make public presentations. To be eligible to present, a Fellow must be making satisfactory academic progress, and must have participated in all rehearsal sessions. Priority selection for presenters will be given to those Fellows who are completing their final semester of Fellowship service.

Service Project

Fellows are required to participate in a service project approved by the Director.

Academic/Service Plan

Each Fellow must submit an academic/service plan for the year by the date determined by the Director. The plan should contain academic and service goals for the coming year.

Mid-Year Evaluation

Each Fellow must submit a mid-year performance evaluation. It will be formative in nature and must be completed by the date determined by the WMY Director. This evaluation is intended to identify both progress and areas of concern related to the academic and service components of the program.

End-of-Year Evaluation

Each Fellow must submit an end-of-year evaluation, which must be completed by the date determined by the Director. The year-end evaluation must include the following:

- original work plan
- mid-year evaluation
- if applicable, a supervisor's evaluation
- if applicable, comments from program or unit faculty and/or staff
- if applicable, examples of projects (i.e., brochures, publications) or other documentation
- A discussion of the academic progress and service activities during the year

The Director is responsible for monitoring mid-year and year-end progress, and will provide additional information about the academic/service plan, mid-year evaluation, and end-of-year evaluation to the Fellows.
Resignation

A Fellow who cannot complete the period of appointment must submit a letter of resignation. The letter should be filed with the WMY Director at least 10 working days before the mutually determined resignation date.

A Fellow who resigns the appointment before serving 91 calendar days, but continues as a graduate student at UIS will be assessed tuition for the term. Tuition payment is not required if the Fellow officially withdraws from UIS at the same time as resigning the appointment. A Fellow will be required, however, to pay UIS fees and any withdrawal surcharges. Note: If the resignation is effective at the end of the fall semester, the termination date will be December 31. If the appointment begins in the spring rather than the fall, the starting date will be January 16, or the effective date of the appointment, whichever is later.

Termination

UIS may terminate a Fellow’s appointment. If this should happen, the Fellow will be given 30 calendar days written notice. Termination is possible if the Fellow:

- Fails to attend two consecutive seminar sessions or three seminars during the academic year without formal permission of absence granted by the WMY Director. Seminar schedules will be announced at the beginning of the academic year. Fellows should arrange their schedules accordingly.

- Fails to meet satisfactory academic progress during any semester during the appointment as a Fellow. This includes the Fellow receiving a 0.00 grade point average for the semester, or having the cumulative GPA drop below the minimum 3.0 required level.

- Violates University regulations or policies.

- Fails to maintain eligibility for continuing enrollment in the master’s program (e.g., fails to meet conditions of conditional admission, or is placed on academic suspension), and/or fails to maintain graduate fellowship eligibility.

The Fellow has the right to appeal the WMY Director’s decision. Appeals should be filed with the Graduate Assistantship Office in PAC 518.

Renewal for Subsequent Academic Year

Fellows will be eligible for reappointment provided they:

- Are in good academic standing at UIS, and have successfully completed at least six degree-required graduate level courses during the academic year.

- Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale.

- Have received no incomplete grades.

- Have not violated University regulations or policies.

- Attend all Fellowship meetings and seminars during the year.

- Remain enrolled full-time in three degree-required graduate-level courses each fall and spring semester at UIS.

- Participate in approved service projects that are selected in conjunction with the WMY Director.

- Have submitted all required reports during the academic year in a timely manner.
All incomplete grades that have been awarded during an academic year must be completed before a Fellow can be reappointed. In addition to application materials and academic records, end-of-year performance evaluations will be considered in making reappointments.

Students normally will not be considered for a fellowship appointment that exceeds four semesters alone or in combination with other comparable fellowships and graduate internships. Exceptions to this policy can be considered under extraordinary circumstances. To request this exception, the Fellow must complete a student petition. Written approval of the WMY Director is required.

Students must apply for reappointment through the WMY Graduate Fellowship Office. This includes completion of a reappointment application.

**Stipend and Benefits**

**Stipend**

The fellowship provides a monthly stipend during the appointment period that is subject to federal and state income taxes.

**Taxability of Stipends and Waivers**

Because the stipend is subject to income tax, Fellows may want to make arrangements with the Payroll Office to have taxes withheld. If so, call the Payroll Office at (217) 206-7211 for an appointment.

**Course Load and Tuition Waivers**

Fellows are eligible to receive tuition waivers. **Please note:** UIS fees are not waived.

To maintain eligibility for the fellowship, Fellows are required to be enrolled as full-time students each fall and spring semester. Fellows must enroll in a minimum of three degree-required, graduate-level courses each fall and spring semester and meet minimum enrollment requirements as follows:

1) Fellows whose master’s degree programs are comprised of three-hour courses must meet a minimum required enrollment level of 9 hours each fall and spring term; and  

2) Fellows whose master’s degree programs are comprised of four-hour courses must meet a minimum required enrollment level of 12 hours each fall and spring term.

Courses taken on an audit basis do not count toward meeting the minimum load and are not eligible for a tuition waiver.

The Fellow's academic program determines whether courses taken on a credit/no credit basis may be counted toward the degree and, therefore, counted toward meeting the minimum course load for the fellowship. If the academic program does not define its grade policy for credit/no credit course, then no more than three such courses will be covered by the WMY Fellowship tuition waiver. Courses taken on a credit/no credit basis that are counted toward the degree will also be eligible for a tuition waiver. Fellows must notify the WMY Director at the beginning of each semester for which WMY tuition waiver funds are being requested if they are using the credit/no credit grade option for any courses.

During a fall and spring semester, a Fellow who remains in good standing will receive a tuition waiver for 9 or 12 semester hours, for an academic year total of 18 or 24 semester hours. If the course load exceeds 12 or is below 9 credit hours in any semester, the Fellow
must complete a student petition form. That petition must be approved by the academic program and by the Director.

Those serving as Fellows during a semester preceding a summer session are eligible to request a tuition waiver for a maximum of 6 hours during that summer session, and one stipend during the summer term. That request must be approved by the Director and is contingent upon funding.

**NOTE:** Fellows may receive a maximum of 30 hours of tuition waived during the academic year (fall, spring, and summer). Any course taken beyond 30 hours is billed to the Fellow according to residency status (in-state or out-of-state). A Fellow who is enrolled in an accelerated degree program that requires taking more than 30 hours in a year should consult with the Director as soon as possible.

Fellows may pursue a certificate or professional concentration in conjunction with their graduate degree programs, provided they consult closely with their academic advisers, complete their graduate degree programs and any certificate or professional development programs in a timely manner, and stay within the maximum of 30 hours of tuition waived per year. The Fellowship does not support completion of certification or professional development sequences after a student has completed the graduate degree, nor does it support independent pursuit of certification or professional development apart from the graduate degree program.

If a fellowship appointment is a replacement or a late appointment that begins before the 30th calendar day of the semester, the Fellow will receive a full tuition waiver. If service begins between 31 and 60 calendar days into the semester, one-half of the tuition will be waived. If service begins after the 60th calendar day of the semester, tuition will not be waived for that semester.

**University of Illinois Nondiscrimination Statement**

The commitment of the University of Illinois to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity requires that decisions involving students and employees be based on individual merit and be free from invidious discrimination in all its forms.

The University of Illinois will not engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran and will comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action laws, orders, and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in the University programs and activities.

University complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and students with the means for the resolution of complaints that allege a violation of this Statement. Members of the public should direct their inquiries or complaints to the appropriate equal opportunity office.

**Student Grievance Procedures**

Copies of the student grievance procedures are available through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

**Sexual Harassment and Human Rights Policies**

Copies of the sexual harassment and human rights policies are available through the Office of Access and Equal Opportunity. Fellows are expected to be familiar with these policies.