History & Background

Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program

- Exists to counter the serious shortage of faculty of color in higher education by encouraging minority students and others with a demonstrated commitment to racial diversity to pursue academic careers in a Mellon-approved field.
- Its name symbolically connects the mission to the stellar achievements of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, educator, college president, and civil rights activist.
- Consists of 41+ institutions, a consortium of UNCF schools, and 3 South African universities.
- As of June 2014: 506 PhDs earned, 665 PhDs are in progress, 85 fellows with tenure, and 61 MFAs, 578 terminal masters degrees, and 339 professional degrees earned.

MMUF at Harvard

- Began in 1990, co-funded by both Mellon Foundation and Harvard funds.
- Fellows study or plan to pursue study in one or more of the Mellon-approved fields.
- 20 students participate in the 2-year fellowship throughout their junior and senior years, with 10 sophomores selected through an application process each January.
- As of June 2014: 26 PhDs earned, with 20 more currently enrolled in graduate school.

The Fellowship Experience

Research Project with Faculty Mentor

*Mentorship.* As mentors, faculty members have the knowledge and responsibility to demystify the formal and informal aspects of earning a doctorate. Mentors also give fellows insight into the fulfillment and rewards of a career in scholarship and teaching. In the mentoring relationship, the sharing of personal experience and the transmission of knowledge intersect in a trusting learning environment that provides opportunities for both mentor and student to stretch beyond his or her boundaries. Mentors and fellows usually meet twice a month.

*Guidance.* Mentors also guide the fellow’s individual research project. The guidance provided to fellows in their individual research projects is an important component of this demystification. From project conception to completion, faculty mentors support fellows with their research in a variety of ways, helping to: frame the research question, guide the methodology, aid in the identification and selection of research materials, or provide structure to the overall project – faculty mentors support fellows.
Biweekly Seminars

The cohort of 20 students meets on a biweekly basis throughout the fall and spring terms. Meetings involve formal and informal discussions led by faculty speakers and experts on topics ranging from “Choosing Your Research Focus,” to “Applying to Graduate School.” In addition to gaining practical skills and knowledge, these meetings provide a platform for students to share their research, engage in a robust community, and prepare for a life in academia.

Financial Benefits

Financial benefits are provided with the aim of enabling students to devote time to research and academic pursuits. All MMUF participants receive a monthly $400 stipend and are eligible to receive up to $3,900 for summer research. Select Mellon-designated fellows are also eligible for up to $10,000 in academic loan forgiveness, provided they enroll in and complete a PhD program.

Additional Opportunities

Fellows may further expand their exposure to academic life through such opportunities as: presenting at the annual Harvard MMUF Research Symposium, attending MMUF Regional Conferences with MMUF students from campuses across the Northeast, and submitting an article for inclusion in the annually-published MMUF Undergraduate Research Journal.

Eligibility & Qualifications

Applications are particularly encouraged from African-Americans, Latinos and Latinas, Native Americans, and other underrepresented minorities.

Eligibility

• Students in their sophomore year of study at Harvard who are in good academic and disciplinary standing
• Students considering graduate study toward the PhD in fields where minorities have been most severely underrepresented, primarily the humanities and natural sciences

Selection Criteria

• Academic performance and promise
• Interest in pursuing graduate study toward the PhD in one of the Mellon-approved fields. (NB: your undergraduate concentration need not correspond directly with the approved graduate fields of study)
• Demonstrated commitment to the goals of MMUF
• Availability for, and commitment to, full and enthusiastic participation in all aspects of MMUF
• Preferred: students who have a faculty mentor and specific research topic identified at the time of application