



Graduate School

## Graduate School Founder's Fellowships

The Graduate School Founder's Excellence Fellowships contribute to our commitment to advancing Cornell's founding principle of "... any person ... any study."

*The concept of "... any person" meant that people from all walks of life, all income levels, races, religions, and genders could attend Cornell University. Similarly, "... any study" underscored the freedom to pursue academic interests wherever they lead. For more than 150 years, talented scholars representing the full, diverse spectrum of humanity have come to Cornell for a world-class educational experience unlike any other.*

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The Founder's Excellence Fellowships include a portfolio of recruitment fellowships that are available on a competitive basis to nominated domestic doctoral students from all backgrounds applying for Fall admission who are U.S. citizens, U.S. permanent residents, or Indigenous peoples of Canada eligible to register as domestic students under the Jay Treaty who have demonstrated commitment and potential to significantly contribute to Cornell's founding principle and [core value](#) to provide a community of belonging where scholars representing different backgrounds, perspectives, abilities, and experiences can learn, innovate, and work in an environment of respect.

Applicants who wish to be considered for these fellowships must indicate their interest within the Graduate School application. Admitted students awarded any of the fellowships within the Founder's Excellence Fellowship portfolio are recognized as [Graduate School Dean's Scholars](#) and invited to participate in community and professional activities sponsored by the Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement and its partners.

Through the Personal Statement, applicants should provide information on how their background and experiences influenced their decision and ability to pursue a graduate degree. They should also provide insights into how they will contribute to advancing Cornell's founding principle and institutional [core value](#) to provide a community of belonging. Applicants may draw from their service, leadership, scholarly activities, or other personal experiences that address:

- Expanding access to education and opportunity
- Cultivating collaborative learning and research environments
- Fostering community engagement

Applicants may also include any relevant context around barriers they have encountered to make graduate education accessible to them as well as ways in which they have demonstrated resilience and persistence in navigating these challenges.

The personal statement should reflect an applicant's unique perspective and experiences while illustrating how they have shaped their potential to contribute meaningfully to Cornell's academic and community life.

## How to apply:

- Prospective doctoral students apply for Founder's Excellence Fellowships through the Graduate School admissions application.
- To be considered for nomination for a Founder's Excellence Fellowship, eligible applicants must respond "yes" to the question on the admissions application asking whether they would be interested in being considered for a Founder's Excellence Fellowship.
- The director of graduate studies for the graduate field to which the applicant is applying must submit a letter of nomination and a mentoring plan to support the nominee's transition into and progression through their graduate studies.