

### Merit Fellowship

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will select and award the Texas A&M University Merit Fellowships for FY25 (admission in Fall 2024). The goal is to recruit and matriculate the highest quality domestic Ph.D. and M.S. (thesis option) students with a clear career objective to pursue a Ph.D. Fellows will have the potential to make unique and diverse contributions to the College’s graduate programs. Master’s students currently enrolled at Texas A&M University who have not received a Merit or Excellence Fellowship previously are eligible for a doctoral Merit Fellowship. The offer letter must designate the recipient as a “*Texas A&M University Merit Fellow*”. While it is not required that nominees be admitted at the time of nomination, the nominating department is expected to offer admission to nominees and execute an “admit” decision code in the admission portal should they be awarded the fellowship. Fellowship recipients must be enrolled full-time (9 hours fall and spring, 6 hours summer) and be eligible for 12 months of medical insurance. Fellows are required to attend the New Fellow’s Socials in the Fall and Spring semesters of their first year.

### Merit Fellowship

College and department support must be noted as a multi-year commitment in offer letters.

**Year 1 (2023-2024) Merit Fellowship from the college** includes a fellowship, tuition, required university and college fees for full-time enrollment, and an insurance reimbursement. College/departments are responsible for posting commitments using FY25 Graduate Merit (GM) allocation. The college will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) health insurance program for 12 months of medical insurance at an amount equivalent to the cost of the employer contribution for the same premium category on the A&M Grad Plan. For fellows participating in a non-TAMUS insurance program, the college/department will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount equivalent to the cost of the employer contribution for the student-only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan. If you enroll in a graduate student medical health insurance plan, keep your receipt and contact your department’s business administrator to learn how to be reimbursed.

- For **Doctoral students**, a minimum \$30,000 fellowship stipend. If the department’s base stipend is \$30,000 or higher, the Merit Fellow stipend will be at least 10% higher than the base stipend.
- For **Masters students**, a minimum \$20,000 fellowship stipend. If the department’s base stipend is \$20,000 or higher, the Merit Fellow stipend will be at least 10% higher than the base stipend.

**Subsequent years Assistantship:** Departments will post commitments using department/research funds.

**Years 2-4 (2025-2026 through 2027-2028) for Doctoral students** will include a **0.5 FTE assistantship** equal to the first-year fellowship or the department’s base stipend, whichever is greater, tuition, required university and college fees for full-time enrollment, and insurance<sup>1</sup>. Except for the 60-day waiting period, the employing unit pays 12 months employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.

**Year 2 (2025-2026) for Masters students** includes **0.5 FTE assistantship** at same amount as first-year fellowship or the department’s base stipend, whichever is greater, tuition and required fees for full-time enrollment, and insurance<sup>1</sup>. Except for the 60-day waiting period, the employing unit pays 12 months employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.

**Department match:** a) student with Master degree pursuing a 64-hour Ph.D. – the department must fund years 2-4; b) students pursuing 96-hour direct to Ph.D. – the department must fund years 2-4; c) student pursuing a Master degree – the department must fund year 2.

<sup>1</sup>Recipients employed in a 9-month or 12-month Graduate Assistantship must remain eligible for 12 months of Graduate Student Employee health insurance.

### Criteria and Selection

- Nominees must be US citizens or permanent residents enrolling for the first time in the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Final review and selection will be made by an *ad hoc* committee of the COALS Graduate Program Council or COALS graduate faculty.
- Merit Fellows cannot receive another large fellowship or assistantship of similar or greater value. Recipients may have the option of deferring other fellowships. In cases where the recipient is selected for a prestigious external fellowship or training grant, the College Merit Fellowship may be deferred for one year. In either case, contact Jamie Norgaard or Mary Bryk for additional information.

**ENHANCING GRADUATE PROGRAM MERIT**  
*“Recruit and Matriculate the Best”*

- Preference will be given to Ph.D. students; a maximum of 15% will be allocated to MS (thesis option) awards.
- Students have until April 15 to accept/decline, but will be asked to respond within 2 weeks, if possible.

Awards will be made on a competitive basis using a scoring rubric that considers:

- **Grades** (weight 20%)
- **Other Academics** (weight 25%): Based on the University or program the nominee attended, clarity of career objectives, statement of purpose, commitment to pursue a Ph.D., class rank, academic awards and honors, etc. This reflects your impression of the overall academic training and potential of the student.
- **High Impact Experiential Learning** (weight 20%): Based on research experiences (REU, honors research, graduate research, independent study, etc.), study abroad, internships, special projects, etc. Emphasis is on independent research experiences that resulted in presentations, posters, abstracts, publications, etc.
- **Demonstrated Leadership, Contribution to College Diversity, and other attributes that engender your strong support** (weight 20%): Based on leadership experiences, involvement in societies, organizations, departments/university (e.g., clubs, scientific societies, officer positions), contribution to diversity in the college, other attributes.
- **Strength of letters of recommendation** (weight 15%): Based on strength of letters of recommendation. Indicate overall quantitative (e.g., top 1%, top quartile, etc.) or qualitative ranking (e.g., best, above average, etc.).

**Nomination link in AGLS InfoReady Portal:** <https://tamu-agls.infoready4.com/#freeformCompetitionDetail/1926843>

**Due date: February 1, 2024**

**The Scoring Rubric is provided for your information only; nominators should not complete the scoring rubric.** After the nomination package is submitted to InfoReady, your department’s associate head for graduate programs will complete the scoring rubric. If the associate head does not provide written comments to justify their scores in each rubric category, the nomination package will not be considered.

**Additional Information (these documents are to be uploaded into the InfoReady Portal by the due date; templates for the nomination package are available in the InfoReady Portal):**

1. **Nomination application entry fields** information on the nominee (entered directly into InfoReady).
2. **Nominee’s Statement of Purpose or Career Objectives** - Provide a Statement of Purpose from the Nominee. This may be taken from the student’s graduate school application, or you can request a Statement of Purpose from the nominee.
3. **Nominating Statement from Department or Faculty Advisor** - Provide brief evaluative comments describing why this individual is one of your top applicants. Include how the applicant will uniquely contribute to your department and the college. **DO NOT** exceed one page.
4. **Nominee’s CV.**
5. **Nominee’s Transcripts** from all colleges or universities attended.