



PennState

ADMINISTRATIVE FELLOWS PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated June 24, 2020

How old is the Administrative Fellows Program?

Developed by Penn State's Commission for Women and the Office of the President, the program began in 1986. To date, 93 employees have participated.

Who are the mentors?

Typically, three mentors are chosen annually from members of the President's Council.

Why should I apply? What difference may it make for me and the University?

If you are interested in expanding your understanding of the University and in understanding the ways in which decisions are made, then this program is for you. What you bring to the program is a fresh perspective that administrators appreciate as they strive to continuously improve Penn State. Personally, you will grow in many ways and achieve a better sense of your leadership abilities and interests. The program also may suggest new career possibilities for you.

In what kinds of activities are Fellows involved?

A key focus is the opportunity to "shadow" the mentor (e.g., going to meetings with the mentor and discussing observations about those sessions). Also, there is a core set of activities in which all Fellows participate, such as meetings of the Board of Trustees, Academic Leadership Council, Central Enrollment Management Group, and University Faculty Senate. Many Fellows also develop projects based on identified unmet needs in the administrative unit. For example, Fellows have been involved in planning for the College of Information Sciences and Technology, the Schreyer Institute for Innovation in Learning (now the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence), and the construction of the Bryce Jordan Center, as well as diversity strategic planning for the University's Commonwealth Campuses.

Can employees from locations away from University Park apply?

Yes, and they are encouraged to do so.

If I am away from University Park, who pays for living expenses?

A modest stipend based on University Policy TR02 and the GSA Lodging Rate is available to aid in covering living expenses.

What type of flexibility will I have?

With your mentor's guidance, you will develop a learning plan and goals, and then identify activities to meet those goals. Historically, mentors have been sensitive to needs for flexibility, such as family responsibilities. To enable you to get the most from the fellowship, it is important to leave your "old" position behind and thoroughly immerse yourself in your new experience.

How long does the fellowship last?

Fellowships generally start after August 1st and end following the Board Meeting in July. The start and stop dates are somewhat flexible.

What time commitment is expected of a Fellow?

That is up to the Fellow and the mentor, but the fellowship assumes a full-time commitment.

What if I find that I don't like administrative life?

That's what this program is all about: to provide a sense of what an administrator's life is like. You are not obligated to seek an administrative position in the future.

Can I return to my old position?

Absolutely. In fact, that is the assumption of the program, although it may lead you to consider new career opportunities.

From what backgrounds have previous Fellows come?

They have come from across the University, from Residence Life and the Corporate Controller's Office to various academic colleges and campuses. Former Fellows have been both faculty and staff members.

What interactions would I have with my mentor, and for how many hours per week?

Mentor-Fellow pairs have reported a variety of experiences. A recent evaluation of the program revealed that the relationships were positive and professional. In addition to attending meetings together, mentors and Fellows convene regularly.

What has happened for previous Administrative Fellows after their years in the program?

While this program aims to increase the pool of women and minorities qualified for administrative careers, there are no guarantees for new positions upon completion of it. Former Fellows have gone on to become deans, associate deans, vice provosts, and directors at Penn State and other colleges and universities.

Does it matter if you lack experience or a long-term interest in a position/career in the areas in which the fellowships are offered?

No. The program aims to offer learning opportunities and opportunities for growth, not a position in the office where a fellowship is completed.

Who pays my salary?

The Office of the President compensates your unit, which continues to pay your salary.

I hold a fixed-term appointment. Am I eligible to apply?

Faculty and staff interested in applying must hold a standing (full-time) appointment or a fixed-term appointment with at least five years of service to the University. Wage payroll appointments are not eligible.

How do I apply?

A call for applications is published in *Penn State Today* late in the fall semester and applications are available on the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs' website at <https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/administrative-fellows/>. Interviews are held in February, and selection announcements are made in April or May.

What information should I put in the cover letter?

Articulate specifically why you are interested in the program and what you would bring to it.

Who assigns the appropriate Fellow for each mentor?

The committee considers the applicant's stated preference and works to match the candidate's background and goals with the characteristics of the mentor's office.

How are Fellows selected?

A committee including former Fellows, the Chair of the Commission for Women, the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs evaluates each application. After the committee interviews candidates, recommendations are forwarded to the mentors, who then interview candidates and make final selections.

How should I prepare for the interview?

Think about the reasons for your interest in the program and consider issues facing higher education and Penn State. Also think about your strengths and weaknesses and about ways in which you have supported and contributed to diversity and inclusion at Penn State.

Can I apply again if I am not selected?

Yes. Individuals often apply more than once before they are accepted.

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