

Texas A&M University System Research Excellence Fund (REF)

Graduate Fellowships Program

The Texas A&M University System REF Graduate Fellowships Program aims to attract and retain outstanding doctoral students who will drive innovation and discovery in areas of state and national strategic priorities. The program limits proposal submission to one per A&M System member university (may include up to 10 doctoral student fellowships) submitted by the Vice President for Research (VPR). Proposals may request up to \$50,000 per fellow per year (options for renewable funding for up to 4 years). Detailed program requirements and application instructions can be found on the final page below.

Texas A&M University (TAMU) Internal Selection Process

1. Each interested college/unit conducts its internal process and uploads (by the URC Dean) the recommended number of nominations (up to 2 for colleges/units with ≥ 250 Tenured/Tenure Track faculty and 1 for < 250 Tenured/Tenure Track faculty) to InfoReady by January 20, 2026.
 - *Note: Nominated students must be outstanding incoming PhD students and/or current students in the first year of their PhD program (preferably named), whose research is aligned with one of the following six strategic research themes identified in the Texas A&M University [Research Enterprise Strategic Plan \(2023-2030\)](#): i) Emerging Technologies and Innovations (including AI/Machine Learning and Quantum); ii) Health and Quality of Life; iii) Sustainability and Environment (including Food-Energy-Water-Health Nexus); iv) National Security; v) Space Exploration; and vi) Community and Economic Resilience.*
2. The VPR Office is notified and reviews the nominations for compliance check (if any issues, VPR requests additional information from the college/unit).
3. VPR collaborates with Graduate & Professional School (Grad School) to organize a review committee for the nominations. The review committee may include representatives of the following offices/groups: VPR, Grad School, Graduate Operations Committee (GOC), University Research Council (URC), and Council of Principal Investigators (CPI).
4. Based on the review committee's recommendation (note that reviews must be completed within one week), VPR will work with Grad School to prepare an application packet for submission to the System.
5. VPR will obtain the President's signature on the Memo of Support from the University President.
6. VPR will create a single PDF version of the application for submission to the System via email by February 1, 2026.
7. For nominations not selected for submission to the System, VPR (via InfoReady) will notify the colleges/units of the status of their nominations.
8. For nominations submitted to the System, VPR will notify Grad School and colleges/units of the outcome of the nominations as soon as a notification is received from the System.

Important Deadlines:

- January 20, 2026: Deadline for Submission of College/Unit Nominations (by URC Dean or equivalent) to InfoReady.
- February 1, 2026: Deadline for Submission of Application (by VPR) to the System.

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The following will be requested in InfoReady.

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- Nominator First Name
- Nominator Last Name
- Nominator Primary Title
- Nominator Email Address
- Nominator Primary Organization
- Nominator Department
- Program's Home College/School
- Is the nomination for an incoming or existing student?
- A&M System Collaborators
 - List all collaborating A&M System institution faculty mentors

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- Application Title
- Cover Page (*1 page - Word File Only*)
- Project Summary (*1 page - Word File Only*)
- Project Description (*up to 3 pages - Word File Only*)
- Evaluation and Sustainability Plan (*1 page - Word File Only*)
- Budget and Budget Justification (*1 page - Word File Only*)
- Letters of Support (*2 letters, 1 page each - Word or PDF*)
 - A maximum of 2 letters may be submitted, each limited to 1 page, from a faculty mentor and, if applicable, from a faculty mentor or collaborator at another A&M System institution.
- Draft Memo of Support (*1 page - Word File Only*)

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- **Additional Requirement (for internal review):** Recruitment and Alignment of High-Caliber Students (*1 page - Word File Only*)
 - *Describe the criteria used to identify nominated students as outstanding incoming PhD candidates or first-year PhD students and explain how their research aligns with one of the six strategic research themes identified in the Texas A&M University Research Enterprise Strategic Plan (2023-2030: i) Emerging Technologies and Innovations (including AI/Machine Learning and Quantum); ii) Health and Quality of Life; iii) Sustainability and Environment (including Food-Energy-Water-Health Nexus); iv) National Security; v) Space Exploration; and vi) Community and Economic Resilience.*