

## **Fellowships Nomination Committee AY 2024–2025 Report**

### **Membership**

**Chair(s): Phil Frana, University Studies, co-chair**

**Leslie Pusey, Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI), co-chair**

#### **Members:**

Rob Alexander, College of Arts and Letters

Susan Halsell, College of Science and Mathematics

Nusrat Jahan, College of Science and Mathematics

Kevin Molloy, College of Integrated Science and Engineering

Tomás Regalado-Lopez, College of Arts and Letters

Laura Ryman, The Graduate School

Amanda Sawyer, College of Education

Eric Stark, College of Business

Trevor Stokes, College of Health and Behavioral Studies

Karin Tollefson-Hall, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Felix Wang, Honors College

### **Charge: (Updated in Fall 2024)**

The committee is charged with identifying, promoting, preparing, evaluating and selecting JMU students and alumni for nationally competitive fellowships, scholarships and awards.

### **Summary of Annual Activity:**

The Fellowships Nomination Committee has begun its planning based on the revised charge adopted in August 2024. Here is a summary of our key activities:

#### ***College representatives and/or departmental liaisons***

Planning has begun to collaborate with college representatives and departmental liaisons to increase awareness of fellowships and streamline the nomination process.

#### ***Classroom visits and outreach activities***

Leslie Pusey has visited classes across campus by request in order to provide students with information about fellowship opportunities, application processes, and STAIR resources.

Sessions include regular hours in the Honors College, first year honors courses, events with The Reddix Center (First Gen, Centennial Scholars, etc.), Center for Global Engagement (Study Abroad, Global Learning & Partnerships Peace Corps session, YSEALI host), Community Engagement and Volunteer Center (ABP Learning Partner), Department of Modern Foreign Languages, Center for Stabilization & Recovery (CISR) International Week programming, hosted Fellowships Fridays in Lakeview Hall, and more.

### ***Website enhancements***

In recent months/years STAIR has made efforts to improve the website to make fellowship information more accessible. With the addition of STAIR's graduate assistant, a WRTC master's student and graphic designer, STAIR has updated its database to reflect more accurate and timely information. After receiving faculty feedback, updates to the faculty tab are planned for summer 2025.

### ***FYRE mentor matches***

STAIR monitors students matched with faculty mentors and aims to connect some of these students with fellowship opportunities. This year, Office and Fellowships & Awards (OFA) worked with 13 former and current FYRE participants applying for awards such as the Goldwater Scholarship, US-UK Fulbright Summer Institute, DAAD-RISE, Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Peace Corps, Boren, etc. Beginning Summer 2025 (and into AY 2025-2026), OFA is already working with 5 applicants on the Fulbright Canada MITACS Globalink Research Internship (deadline Sept 2025).

### ***Collaborative workflow***

The Fellowships Nomination Committee is in the process of developing a more collaborative workflow to improve communication and efficiency within the committee. Items include rubrics for awards, calibrating scores, surveys, feedback forms, etc.

### ***Practice review/interview panels***

Due to unforeseen challenges with federal agencies and policies, committee members were not involved this year in organizing mock interview panels and practice review sessions to help students prepare for fellowship interviews. For example, applicants for the Boren dwindled from 12 interested, eligible candidates to one. The sole applicant was able to put forward a compelling application without a panel. Government-related award processes are in transition. Leslie anticipates clarity in these processes during discussion with professional colleagues at the July 2025 Biennial NAFA Conference (National Association of Fellowships Advisors).

### ***Post-selection debriefs***

The Fellowships Nomination Committee is developing mechanisms for post-selection debrief sessions to reflect on the annual promotion, preparation, evaluation, and selection process and gather feedback for future annual cycles of activity.

### ***Future Work Planned:***

The Fellowships Nomination Committee also has begun to outline future activities based on the revised charge adopted in August 2024.

### ***Faculty nomination postcards***

Distribution of postcards to faculty to encourage the nomination of outstanding students for upcoming fellowship cycles. This is a revisited outreach initiative.

### ***Federal policy update sessions***

Organizing communications to keep faculty and staff informed of changes to federal policy that could affect fellowship opportunities. (Ongoing)

- *Boren & other IIE programs (Gilman, Fulbright, Freeman-ASIA, etc.)*
  - With reduced staffing (furloughs, dismissals) to IIE programs, the usual process transparency was slow-paced and unclear.
  - Boren Awards and DLNSEO representatives shared with reviewers/panelists that recommended candidates will undergo an additional review in accordance with Executive Orders.
  - Additional reviews for EO compliance are assumed for other IIE-managed programs.
- *Truman Scholarship*
  - The Truman Foundation Board is under scrutiny for its selection processes, with recommendation that members be Senate-approved. This complicates on-campus recruiting and nomination processes.

### ***Prospective student database***

Aiming to streamline a shared, collaborative space/repository for promising student applicants. This “database” would include: year, major/minor, GPA, campus and community activities, anecdotes about student-faculty interactions, anecdotes/comments about the potential candidate’s academic engagement, etc. Organizing and maintaining the confidentiality of such a database—one that includes qualitative data—requires more thought and discussion

### ***Social media and other informational announcements***

Continuing to update our Instagram regularly with congratulatory posts celebrating fellowship winners and nominees. Further expanding our email outreach efforts to target students early in their academic careers, informing them of potential fellowships. Similarly, we want to highlight student success stories in additional media (e.g. Madison Magazine, JMU News, etc.)

### ***Student success stories***

Highlighting student success stories in our outreach materials. These profiles are shared across our communication platforms to inspire other students to pursue similar opportunities. STAIR recently launched its first newsletter which has been met with positive feedback. Student success stories include:

- JMU’s first Charles B. Rangel Graduate Fellow
- JMU’s first Fulbright Canada MITACS Globalink Research Internship Awardee and JMU’s third NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Scholar
- JMU’s first Public Policy & International Affairs Junior Summer Institute awardee (PPIA-JSI)
- A Fulbright ETA to Spain, MAT 2025 graduate

- Current Fulbright SR grantee in Kosovo who received the inaugural Fulbright-John Lewis Civil Rights Fellowship, an enhancement award which includes dedicated lecture series, leadership training, and more.

***Writing workshops/class***

In development with Phil Frana, we are looking to offer writing workshops or a fellowships class for students to help them craft stronger applications. Syllabus proposals are available for review.