

2025-2026 Dr. Dionel Avilés '53 and Dr. James Johnson '67 Fellowship Call for Nominations

Submission Deadlines*:

Monday, February 3, 2025, at 5 p.m. CST (Round 1)

Monday, March 3, 2025, at 5 p.m. CST (Round 2)

**Departments/Interdisciplinary Degree Programs must identify which round they wish to submit master's and doctoral nominations by Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at: u.tamu.edu/AJRoundSelection25*

PURPOSE

Texas A&M University is committed to promoting a culture that values and nurtures community, respect, and excellence for all. In line with our belief that a depth and breadth of perspectives, talents, experiences, and backgrounds are indispensable components of a world-class education, the Dr. Dionel Avilés '53 and Dr. James Johnson '67 Fellowship Program seeks to attract, recruit, and support the development of high-achieving graduate students.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Nominees must be a U.S. resident, U.S. Permanent resident, or an [eligible noncitizen](#) who will earn bachelor's or master's degrees no later than August 2025 and have applied for graduate admission to Texas A&M University for the summer or fall 2025. While it is not required that nominees be admitted at the time of nomination, the nominating unit is expected to offer admission to nominees and execute an "admit" decision code in the admission portal should they be awarded the fellowship. **Current undergraduate students (or those who have graduated with a bachelor's degree) are eligible for either master's or doctoral nominations. Current master's students (or those who have graduated with a master's degree) are only eligible for doctoral nominations.**

Nominees should have a superior academic record and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) Be a [first-generation student](#);
- 2) Have a disability defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, as described in [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#), as amended;
- 3) Be a veteran of the U.S. military; or
- 4) Come from a disadvantaged background, as defined by the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#), for those who meet **two or more** of the following criteria:
 - Were or are currently homeless, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act;
 - Were or are currently in the foster care system, as defined by the Administration for Children and Families;
 - Were eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program for two or more years;
 - Were eligible for Federal Pell grants;
 - Received support from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a parent or child;
 - Grew up in one of the following areas: (a) a U.S. rural area, as designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer (<https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/rural-health>), or (b) a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services-designated Low-Income and Health Professional Shortage Areas (qualifying zip codes are included [here](#)). Only one of the two possibilities (a or b) can be used as a criterion for the disadvantaged background definition.

The nomination letter must include a narrative, correlating with criteria items (1) - (4), about the basis of the nominee's eligibility. The nominee will be required to complete a personal statement that will be uploaded with the application. For more details regarding the requirements of the personal statement, please review the nominator checklist (pg. 6).

In addition to meeting the stated criteria of eligibility, nominees for the 2025-2026 Avilés-Johnson Fellowship must be applying for enrollment in the following colleges/schools or interdisciplinary degree programs:

- **Colleges/Schools**
 - Agriculture and Life Sciences
 - Architecture
 - Arts and Sciences
 - Bush School of Government and Public Service
 - Education and Human Development
 - Engineering
 - Mays Business School
 - Performance, Visualization and Fine Arts
 - Pharmacy
 - Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

- **Interdisciplinary Degree Programs**
 - Biotechnology
 - Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
 - Genetics and Genomics
 - Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences
 - Neuroscience
 - Toxicology
 - Water Management and Hydrological Science

FUNDING DETAILS AND BENEFITS

The Avilés-Johnson Doctoral Fellowship provides four years of funding for eligible doctoral students enrolling for the first time in a doctoral program in summer or fall 2025.

Avilés-Johnson Doctoral Fellowship Collaborative Funding Details
<p>Years 1-3: Grad School funds a \$20,000 annual stipend Grad School funds full-time tuition and required fees (9-9-6) College, department, or program funds a 25% or 50% assistantship</p>
<p>At a minimum, the assistantship must be at the employing department's standard assistantship rate.</p> <p>25% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship Grad School will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) insurance program for 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 Grad School will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount up to the cost of the employer contribution for the employee only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan. <i>Note: Dental and vision premiums are not reimbursable.</i></p> <p>50% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship After the 60-day waiting period, employing unit pays the employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.</p>

Avilés-Johnson Doctoral Fellowship Collaborative Funding Details (continued)	
Year 4:	College, department, or program funds a 50% assistantship College, department, or program funds full-time tuition and required fees (9-9-6)
At a minimum, the assistantship must be at the employing department's standard assistantship rate. 50% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship After the 60-day waiting period, employing unit pays the employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.	
Year 5: (optional)	College, department, or program funds a 50% assistantship College, department, or program funds full-time tuition and required fees (9-9-6)
At a minimum, the assistantship must be at the employing department's standard assistantship rate. 50% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship After for the 60-day waiting period, employing unit pays the employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.	

The Avilés-Johnson Master's Fellowship provides two years of funding for eligible master's students enrolling for the first time in a master's program in summer or fall 2025.

Avilés-Johnson Master's Fellowship Collaborative Funding Details	
Years 1-2:	Grad School funds a \$15,000 annual stipend Grad School funds full-time tuition and required fees (9-9-6) College, department, or program funds a 25% or 50% assistantship
At a minimum, the assistantship must be at the employing department's standard assistantship rate. 25% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship Grad School will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) insurance program for 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 Grad School will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount up to the cost of the employer contribution for the employee only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan. <i>Note: Dental and vision premiums are not reimbursable.</i> 50% FTE college, department, or program-funded assistantship After for the 60-day waiting period, employing unit pays the employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.	

For both the master's and doctoral level awards, work effort for the graduate assistantship should be consistent with FTE (e.g., standard work effort for 25% FTE equals 10 hours/week). The type of graduate assistantship will be determined by the department/program and outlined in a graduate assistantship offer letter. Health insurance reimbursement and employee benefits is for 12 months, regardless if on 9- or 12-month assistantship.

Some exceptions may be approved by the Grad School for a department/program to offer a scholarship instead of an assistantship. **In these cases, the department/program must also provide payment for the student health insurance plan.** The request to offer a scholarship instead of an assistantship must be submitted to and approved by the Grad School **before** the nomination is submitted.

Approved scholarships, to date, are noted below.

Avilés-Johnson Fellowship - Approved Scholarship Collaborative Funding Details
Mays Business School (Full-Time MBA)
<p>Years 1 – 2: Grad School funds a \$15,000 stipend per year (Disbursed over 9 months) Grad School funds up to \$10,000 towards tuition and required fees per year (\$5,000 per fall/spring semester) Mays funds a \$28,750 scholarship per year (\$14,375 per fall/spring semester)</p>
<p>At a minimum, the scholarship must be equivalent to the department’s 25% FTE assistantship rate.</p> <p>Health Insurance Mays will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) insurance program for 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, Mays will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount up to the cost of the employer contribution for the employee only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan.</p>
The Bush School of Government and Public Service (INTA and MPSA)
<p>Years 1 – 2: Grad School funds a \$15,000 stipend per year (Disbursed over 9 months) Grad School funds up to \$10,000 towards tuition and required fees per year (\$5,000 per fall/spring semester) The department funds a \$10,000 scholarship per year (\$5,000 per fall/spring semester)</p>
<p>At a minimum, the scholarship must be equivalent to the department’s 25% FTE assistantship rate.</p> <p>Health Insurance The department will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) insurance program for 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 department will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount up to the cost of the employer contribution for the employee only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan.</p>

In addition to the described funding packages, the Graduate and Professional School will award recipients with a one-time scholarship (\$5,000 for doctoral, \$2,000 for master’s) that will be disbursed during the first month of enrollment.

RESTRICTIONS

If a student has been nominated and selected for multiple fellowships, they must choose which fellowship to accept by April 15, 2025. Fellows may not accept other financial support or awards (assistantship, fellowship, scholarship, employment, etc.) providing duplicate benefits from any other source. Fellows may not be enrolled in another academic degree program at Texas A&M University or elsewhere during their fellowship tenure. Additionally, fellows must obtain approval from their department and the Graduate and Professional School before seeking outside employment beyond their associated graduate assistantship or scholarship.

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

This fellowship is intended to provide fellows an opportunity to concentrate on coursework, research, and professional development, free of financial stress. To maintain award eligibility, fellows are required to maintain satisfactory academic progress (3.0 graduate GPA each semester of the first year and a 3.25 cumulative GPA for the remaining years of the fellowship), participate in professional & academic development and support activities, and submit annual reporting requests.

NOMINATION MATERIALS

As part of the nomination process, nominators must submit the student's admission application materials; a letter of nomination clearly describing the applicant's 1) basis of eligibility, correlating to items (1)-(4), 2) superior academic performance, 3) relevant experiences outside the classroom, and 4) other indicators of future success; **and** the nominee's personal statement. **Attached is a checklist of items that MUST be included in the nomination packet (See Appendix A).** Failure to follow guidelines and/or instructions may result in nomination(s) not being formally reviewed. If a nomination needs to be withdrawn, please email grad-award-admin@tamu.edu. Withdrawn nominations will not be reviewed.

Departments or Interdisciplinary Degree Programs may submit **up to five (5) master's nominations in either round 1 or round 2 and up to fifteen (15) doctoral nominations in either round 1 or round 2.** The award selection committee will complete reviews following each submission deadline. Nominators, graduate advisors, department heads, and graduate deans will be notified of which nominees have been selected for the Avilés-Johnson Fellowship within three (3) weeks of the nomination deadline.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Reviewers will evaluate master's and doctoral nominations separately, considering all aspects of each nominee's experiences. The evaluation will focus on academic excellence and the nominee's qualifications for eligibility. The review elements noted below may be gauged in multiple parts of the nomination application. Such measures include but are not limited to: cumulative grade point average in the wider context of the academic record; the maturity and sophistication of the personal statement; the extent and quality of prior research experience; recommendations from faculty; and correspondence between research interests and available faculty expertise.

- **Evidence of superior academic achievement** such as class rank; GPA; honors or other awards; etc.
- **Relevant experiences outside of the classroom** such as extracurricular experiences related to course of study; leadership experiences; work experiences; military experiences; internships; personal history; international experiences (study abroad, semester at sea, etc.); research experiences (either at their own university or in summer undergraduate research opportunities at other universities); oral or poster presentations; publications; etc.
- **Non-cognitive and personal attributes** that speak to the nominee's research potential, adaptability, creativity, and collegiality; motivation and experience; persistence in and commitment to educational success; social and emotional skills and character traits; etc.

TIMELINE

- Nomination links will be available on the [Avilés-Johnson website](#) by mid-December 2024.
- **January 21, 2025:** Departments/Interdisciplinary Degree Programs must identify which round they wish to submit master's and doctoral nominations: u.tamu.edu/AJRoundSelection25
- **February 3, 2025, 5pm CST:** Round 1 Deadline (Master's and Doctoral).
- **March 3, 2025, 5pm CST:** Round 2 Deadline (Master's and Doctoral).

Questions about this fellowship should be directed to: grad-award-admin@tamu.edu

APPENDIX A

2025-2026 Dr. Dionel Avilés '53 and Dr. James Johnson '67 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM NOMINATOR CHECKLIST

All nominations will be submitted via the InfoReady application submission system and **MUST** include the items noted below.

1. Nomination application entry fields regarding nominee.
2. A **nomination letter** clearly describing the nominee's: 1) basis of eligibility, correlating to items (1) - (4); 2) superior academic performance; 3) relevant experiences outside the classroom; and 4) other indicators of future success (**no more than two (2) pages**).
3. **Personal statement** from the nominee, addressing one of the following (**no more than two (2) pages**):
 - a. How has your background influenced your life or lived experience, impacted your development, motivation, academic interests and/or aspirations?
 - b. Have you encountered any unusual circumstances, challenges, or obstacles in your educational journey? If so, discuss how you persisted through them.
4. **Letters of Recommendation:**
 - a. For nominations of students **NOT** currently enrolled at Texas A&M:
 - At least one, but no more than three (3), letters of recommendation for the nominee (**no more than six (6) total pages**).*
 - b. For nominations of students **currently enrolled in a Texas A&M undergraduate program**:
 - At least one, but no more than three (3), letters of recommendation for the nominee (**no more than six (6) total pages**).*
 - c. For nominations of students **currently enrolled in a Texas A&M master's program**:
 - Two (2) **new** letters of recommendation for the nominee (**no more than four (4) total pages**).
5. Student's resume or curriculum vitae.
6. Copy of transcripts from all colleges or universities attended (excluding community colleges).
7. **Financial Commitment** details noting the department/program's financial offer to complement the collaborative funding package.**

Items 2-6 will be individually uploaded into the InfoReady submission system.

**Letters of recommendation included in GraduateCAS, EngineeringCAS, or BusinessCAS application materials are sufficient.*

***Information from the Financial Commitment will be entered directly into the InfoReady nomination application. A Financial Commitment document should not be uploaded with the supporting documents.*