Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
Allison Davis Research Fellowship

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who should apply to MMUF and ADRF?
We are looking for sophomores who are strongly considering pursuing a PhD and an academic career and who are from groups historically and currently underrepresented in academia and/or are committed to increasing minority representation in higher education. If you love doing research and are enthusiastic about committing time to a sustained research project and to the fellowship activities, you should apply.

2. What are the differences between MMUF and ADRF?
There are two main differences between the programs. The first has to do with eligibility, and we recommend that you read over the criteria for both fellowships and decide if one is a better fit for you. The second difference is that while ADRF is unique to Williams, the MMUF is a national program and it continues to provide support through graduate school and beyond in the form of conferences, grants, and a wide network of fellows. You can apply to both programs if you think you are eligible for both.

3. Can I apply to either MMUF or ADRF if I am from Division 3?
ADRF is open to students in any field of study. MMUF is open to students planning to go on to graduate study in certain fields, so please look over the list to see if you are a match.

4. Is there a minimum GPA requirement?
There is not a minimum GPA requirement, but it is rare for us to accept someone with below a 3.0. We look for signs of academic promise, intellectual engagement, and the work habits that sustained scholarship requires.

5. Is it the program’s responsibility or mine to find a mentor for me? How do I find a mentor?
It is your responsibility to find a mentor, but the Director of Special Academic Programs will be happy to help you identify faculty members who would be a good match. You’ll want a mentor who has the expertise to guide your project and with whom you feel comfortable working closely. Start by talking to professors you know about your research interests. If you have a possible mentor in mind, give him or her a chance to learn what MMUF/ADRF mentoring entails before asking for a commitment. You can give point prospective mentors to information for them on our website.

6. Does the fellowship allow me to study abroad? How do I stay involved if I am abroad?
Yes, fellows often study abroad. Obviously, it takes extra effort to stay in touch with the program and with your mentor if you are abroad, so it works best to set up regular email and Skype sessions. We recommend that you strongly consider spending at least one semester of your junior year on campus because that is a time when you really become a part of your department.

7. What is required of fellows?
Being an MMUF or ADRF fellow requires a significant commitment – one you should be sure you are ready to make. The fellowships provide a stipend so that you won’t need a campus job during the semesters or a summer job after sophomore or junior year. That time is freed up so that you can spend time on research. You are also expected to participate fully in fellowship activities: meetings, guest speakers, GRE preparation, conferences, etc. The commitment should add up to approximately eight hours per week, and most fellows find that they need to cut back on
extracurricular activities. Additional requirements include research proposals for each funded term and reports at the end of each term. Substantial research papers and oral presentations are required at the end of each summer.

8. What if I am not selected?
Don’t despair if you are not selected. There are many opportunities to do research and learn about graduate school, both at Williams and on university campuses across the country. Please look at the sections of our website where those opportunities are listed, and don’t hesitate to seek advice from the Director of Special Academic Programs.

9. What is it like being on campus for 6 weeks in the summer?
The Summer Research Colloquium has been a highlight of the fellowship experience for almost all of the fellows. Summer at Williams is different from the school year, and the change of pace, the chance to focus on a project of your design, and the experience of living in a college house with a cohort of similarly serious peers combine to make for a great summer. If you are itching to get away, the fellowships actually provide funds for travel for research once the Colloquium ends.

10. Will we be required to purchase books, materials for the program?
No. All costs associated with being here for the summer will be covered by the fellowships. Additionally, there are modest funds available to support your research.

11. What is expected of me after the six-week summer colloquium?
Fellows are funded for ten weeks during the summer. After the Summer Research Colloquium ends, fellows can stay on campus or take their research elsewhere and work more independently, although still under the guidance of their faculty mentors.

12. If I am granted a fellowship, at what point do I start thinking about applying to graduate school?
The fellowships include activities to help you start thinking about graduate school right away, so that when the time comes, you are well prepared. That said, many fellows take time off after Williams before entering graduate school.