

**GRADUATE EQUITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
GUIDELINES 2026-2027**

Graduate Equity Fellowship grants range from \$500 to \$2,000 per year. This program seeks to increase the number of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds completing graduate degree programs at the CSU, encourages continuation toward doctoral programs, and promotes consideration of university faculty careers. It provides fellowships for economically disadvantaged CSU students who have had success in overcoming educational disadvantages and promotes faculty mentoring and research opportunities.

Please direct any questions regarding the Graduate Equity Fellowship to graduate.studies@sonoma.edu

Eligibility

Eligible students are those who are economically and/or educationally disadvantaged. They must also meet and maintain the following criteria:

1. Be a California resident for the purposes of fees or have an AB540 affidavit on file with your CSU campus.
2. Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA). To be eligible for the Graduate Equity Fellowship this application must demonstrate a minimum financial need of \$1,000 using Federal Methodology.
NOTE: If you meet all other criteria and have missed the deadline for the FAFSA or CADAA you are still encouraged to submit your FAFSA or CADAA application late and apply for the Graduate Equity Fellowship. You will be eligible for the fellowship if you meet all other criteria and your FAFSA or CADAA are processed by the time fellowship applications are reviewed.
3. Be admitted to the University and to a graduate degree program (i.e., be classified or conditionally classified).
4. Enroll at least half-time, or a **minimum of 4 units per semester**, in an eligible graduate degree.
NOTE: Students whose enrollment drops below 4 units during a semester will forfeit eligibility and may be required to repay the amount of the award.
5. Demonstrate potential to succeed in graduate school and to complete a graduate degree program in no more than two years as evidenced by undergraduate coursework and letters of recommendation.

6. Students may receive the Graduate Equity Fellowship for a maximum of two years.

Application Materials to be submitted no later than Friday, May 15, 2026:

1. Graduate Equity Fellowship Application Form, 2026-2027 submitted via Google Forms ([Link to Google Form](#))
2. Narrative (3 pages maximum). Narrative essay should be uploaded to your Google Form Application or emailed to the Office of Graduate Studies (graduate.studies@sonoma.edu). Please address all relevant criteria clearly in your narrative. This should be in essay format, not numbered answers. (Note: financial need will be determined using federal methodology based on the FAFSA or CADAA). Please use the following checklist to ensure you address all of the relevant criteria in the essay.
 - Economic hardship or disadvantaged background
 - Description of overcoming educational disadvantages
 - First generation college or graduate student
 - Performance and potential. (Note: this is also evaluated using transcripts and letters of recommendation).
 - Please address your academic and/or career goals.
 - Professional development. What relevant professional development activities (e.g., conferences, workshops and trainings, projects and publications, clubs and student government) have you participated in and how have they shaped you?
3. If not a recipient of an undergraduate degree from SSU, please submit unofficial transcripts from your undergraduate institution. Unofficial transcripts should be uploaded to your Google Form Application or emailed to the Office of Graduate Studies (graduate.studies@sonoma.edu). Students who received their undergraduate degree from SSU will have their transcripts pulled by Graduate Studies and do not need to submit undergraduate SSU transcripts.
4. Letter(s) of Recommendation (one required, two maximum) from faculty member recommenders and submitted directly to graduate.studies@sonoma.edu. Indicate who will submit faculty recommendation(s) on the appropriate lines in the Application Form and ensure the recommender(s) submit their recommendation via email by **Friday, May 15, 2026**. If you are not a recent graduate of your undergraduate institution, professional recommendations are accepted and will be given equal weight to faculty recommendations.

Purpose of the Graduate Equity Fellowship According to California State University:

The intent of the fellowship is to minimize the debt burden and time to degree completion by replacing loans with grants. Preference will be given to those who are likely to complete master's

degrees in a timely manner. Graduate Fellowship recipients are encouraged to continue on to doctoral programs, and to consider university faculty careers. The continued funding of the program will ultimately depend on success in achieving these goals.