

HSI Pathways to the Professoriate: FAQ

Applying to HSI Pathways

My major is not listed on the list of approved fields. Can I still apply?

Application eligibility is determined by the field in which you plan to pursue a PhD. You can major in anything at CSUN and still apply to HSI Pathways, as long as you intend to pursue a PhD in a field on our list. One of the things the selection committee will assess is whether you are prepared to pursue a PhD in that field, so you'll want to show coursework and/or experience in the intended field.

But I want a PhD in Psychology! Can I still apply?

We're sorry, but we are limited to the fields on the list. This program is supported by a grant, and the eligible fields were determined by the grant. Since they weren't determined by our team here at CSUN, we can't make any exceptions. We hope you'll look into other great opportunities on our campus, such as the [California Pre-Doctoral Program](#), the [workshops](#) offered by the LRC, and [Advancement to Graduate Education](#).

But I want an MFA instead of a PhD! Can I still apply?

Please see answer above. We're sorry, but we are limited to students who want to pursue a PhD.

I want a PhD, but I want to become a diplomat. Can I still apply?

HSI Pathways to the Professoriate aims to diversify the professoriate, and a requirement of the program is that you intend to become a professor.

Why do you have a 3.0 minimum GPA requirement?

The selection committee is assessing is your potential to be accepted to and succeed in graduate school. Graduate schools are looking for high GPAs, and we believe a 3.0 is the minimum we can accept, because this GPA could be raised in time for grad school applications. This being said, we certainly understand that many life circumstances can affect GPA. If you feel this is the case in your situation, and that you demonstrate potential for graduate school success in other ways, please contact us to discuss whether an exception can be made.

Do you only need my CSUN transcript?

We need the transcripts from every school you have attended past high school. These can be unofficial transcripts ([obtained online](#)).

This is my first semester at CSUN. Do you still need my CSUN transcript?

Yes.

Should my Statement of Purpose be written in the first person?

Yes! The SOP is about you and your research interests.

What kind of paper should I select for my writing sample?

The best papers to use are the ones which demonstrate both your writing skills and your research/analytical skills. Papers where you make a strong argument or thesis, and back up that argument with research and/or close reading will demonstrate your potential for graduate school success. Papers that just summarize the ideas of others don't highlight your own analytical thinking skills in the same way. We are also looking at the quality of a student's writing, in terms of clarity, mechanics, and structure.

I have a current professor who cannot get me the Fall Progress Report in time. What should I do?

First, we advise all applicants to give plenty of warning to their faculty, and to ask early—ask as soon as you are considering applying! If you are still unable to get the signed envelope back in time, ask the faculty member whether they could email the information to hsipathways@csun.edu prior to the deadline.

I'm a transfer student and am new to CSUN. Can my letters of recommendation come from faculty at my Community College?

Yes!

Why should I do the optional Statement of Purpose Consultation?

Writing a Statement of Purpose is new to many people. It may really help to get feedback from one of our faculty mentors on the content, tone, and direction of your draft. A large part of this program is mentoring, feedback and revision. This process allows you to see what that will be like.

The Statement of Purpose asks about research, but I just want to teach. Do I have to write about research?

A big part of being a professor is research. You'll be asked to do it in our program, in graduate school, and as a professor. We are looking for students with an interest in doing research, in addition to teaching. You might want to talk to current faculty or read some articles about what a professor does to learn more about the profession, in order to explore whether it is right for you.

If I am selected as a finalist, what will happen in the interview?

You'll be interviewed by a panel consisting of faculty and administrators who work with our program. The panel will be looking to learn more about you and your potential for success in our program and in a PhD program. All applicants are asked the same questions, and the interview varies in length depending on responses—generally, an interview lasts between 30 and 60 minutes.

When will I be informed about whether I have been accepted to the program?

If we are able to fill all 10 spots for Student Fellows from our pool of applicants who meet the priority deadline, you'll hear by the end of December. If we keep the application open for more applicants to apply beyond the priority deadline, we'll let you know we're doing that and have more information for you in January.

HSI Pathways at CSUN

How much will it cost me to participate?

Our goal is for you to pay nothing to be a part of this program. Your travel costs, books, housing and food over the summer will all be paid by the program. We will cover your GRE Prep course, writing tutor, and other assorted costs. You will receive a stipend during the Summer Seminar, so you can focus all your time and attention on the process of the Summer Seminar. There may be some tangential costs, such as the need for business casual outfits for conferences and networking, but your summer stipend should be plenty to cover these costs.

Am I required to be here for the Summer Seminar?

Yes, this is a required element of the program.

Am I required to be available for the Friday class?

Yes, that is where we deliver important content and where you'll build important skills. You are not required to register for the Spring 2020 course if you are short on units, but you are required to attend class. In Fall 2020, you are required to register for the course. The application process will be more than three units of work, so earning units for this will help you balance your time and school workload. Many majors and minors work with our program to give you credit for this class.

Will HSI Pathways take much of my time?

Preparing yourself for a PhD program is extremely time intensive. You'll likely have to dedicate a great deal of time to this process in order to be successful. In addition to our class meetings, your meetings with your mentor, and your own research, you'll be trying to gain valuable experience for your CV (by doing service on campus, working as a Research Assistant or Supplemental Instructor here at CSUN, or going to conferences to present your research, for example). This process will take time and will sometimes feel stressful. But if you love research and your chosen field, you'll find much of this time is deeply fulfilling and exciting! Even at their most stressful moments, many of our Student Fellows report a great deal of excitement that they are being given these great opportunities and receiving help and support in this process.

How many PhD programs will I have to apply to?

The program requires you to apply to 8 PhD programs. We will encourage you to aim for around 12-14 applications, as this is the advice we've received from the graduate programs we partner with.

The Grad School Experience

How much does it cost to earn a PhD?

Most schools in the country offer you a funding package that includes your tuition and a stipend to cover your living expenses. Sometimes, you receive a fellowship—that is, the tuition and a stipend in order to focus entirely on your doctoral work. Sometimes, you are assigned work as a Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, or other employment relevant to your CV, in return for this tuition and stipend. When you receive your acceptance to a doctoral program,

that program also tells you your financial “offer” so you can use these offers to help select the program you will attend. All of our Student Fellows in past cohorts have received funding for their PhD. Most have received full funding (that means full tuition and living expenses) for five or six years.

How long does it take to get a PhD?

You should look at average time-to-completion rates in your chosen field, as it varies somewhat by discipline. Most doctoral programs claim to take 5-7 years to complete, but some have a longer time-to-completion average than that. Your first few years are spent on coursework, and your last years are spent researching and writing your dissertation. Many students write their dissertation in a different location than their doctoral program. Earning a PhD is a huge time commitment and could take you anywhere in the country, so you should definitely do some research regarding whether you want and need a PhD.

Don't you need to get a Masters degree prior to applying to PhD programs?

No. Some students get a Masters first in order to build skills, gain valuable experience, or simply to explore whether they like graduate school. These are all great reasons to apply to a Masters program first. However, Masters programs offer limited financial aid, and generally take two years to complete in the United States. A PhD program is often fully funded, and you usually get a Masters degree at a certain point as part of your doctoral program. This is why HSI Pathways is trying to help build needed skills and support students in preparing to apply directly to doctoral programs.

Can I pick a school in Los Angeles for my PhD?

PhD programs take a very small number of students and receive many applications. You'll want to apply to many programs in order to increase your odds of being accepted. You'll also want to take into account hiring trends, which we'll review in the program. There is no question you will have to apply to schools outside of Los Angeles, since you must apply to at least eight schools. Once they understand the job market, most of our Student Fellows end up deciding to apply to schools largely outside of Los Angeles, and aim to attend school outside of Los Angeles. Some plan to come back to Los Angeles to write their dissertation, and aim to be a professor in the Los Angeles area.