



2021 INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

DEADLINE: May 1, 2021, 11:59 pm PST

INTRODUCTION

Since 1985, the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows program (formerly Fellows/USA) has attracted returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to graduate school programs across the United States. The RPCVs help globalize the scope of classroom discussions and research areas, bringing with them years of relevant, hands-on intercultural fieldwork and a wealth of curiosity, innovation, and grit.

In return, partner Coverdell Fellows programs offer the RPCV Fellows a financial award and facilitate the process of students securing germane professional internships in support of an impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged community. As students and interns, Fellows expand upon the skills and intercultural understanding they developed as volunteers, lifting the caliber of classroom dialog as they do. Since the inception of the Coverdell Fellows program, over 6,000 returned Volunteers have participated in the program and made a difference in communities across the country.

HOW THE PAUL D. COVERDELL FELLOWS PROGRAM WORKS

1. Interested graduate programs submit proposals to become Coverdell Fellows partners prior to the annual May 1st deadline.
2. If selected, the Peace Corps and the institution co-sign a memorandum of agreement, establishing a renewable five-year partnership.
3. New partners build the administrative infrastructure needed to manage and publicize the program, designating a coordinator to liaise with the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps simultaneously hosts profiles of each partner program on its own [website](#), encouraging future, current, and returned Peace Corps Volunteers to explore the options and apply to Fellows programs when they are ready.
4. At the institution's discretion, each year it awards Coverdell Fellowships to qualifying RPCVs, offering them a substantive financial award package and facilitating their placement in relevant internships.
5. Each year, partners submit an annual census and report. At the end of five years, successful partners may renew the partnership for another five year term, though they may first need to bring their program into alignment with updated Coverdell Fellows standards.

THE FINANCIAL AWARD

The Peace Corps now requires all new and renewing Coverdell Fellows programs to offer financial award packages equal to at least 25% of the program's tuition *and* mandatory student fees. When relevant, this applies to both in- and out-of-state students: *any* RPCV who is awarded the Coverdell Fellowship must receive a benefits package that reduces her or his obligatory financial burden by at least 25%.

Award packages can come from one or a combination of sources, such as tuition discount, scholarships, out-of-state tuition waiver, federal work study, graduate/research/teaching assistantship, health insurance premiums, campus housing, book or research stipends, etc.

Although the minimum is a 25% discount, many Coverdell Fellows partners offer much larger awards, including dozens that offer a full tuition waiver. Please check the [Peace Corps website](#) to ensure that the financial support package your school proposes is competitive with those offered by current Coverdell Fellows program partners in the same disciplines.

THE INTERNSHIP

Coverdell Fellows must complete an internship in support of an impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged community in the United States, allowing them to bring home and expand upon the skills they learned as volunteers. An impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged community is defined as individuals who live within the United States (including U.S. territories) who are living under the federal poverty line and/or who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control.

The internship should connect to the student's prospective degree, deepening their educational experience. It can, but does not need to, fulfill an internship or practicum requirement for the degree program. Internships may be ongoing through the program or may be condensed into an intensive semester or summer experience. Although the Peace Corps has not set a firm minimum number of hours that Fellows must complete, internships should be substantive, generally lasting at least a cumulative 150-300 hours.

The institution is responsible for:

- Facilitating the process through which Fellows secure internships
- Confirming that the details of the internships meet these two requirements:
 1. Support an impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged community in the United States (defined above)
 2. Connect to the Fellows' prospective degrees in a meaningful way
- Checking in with Fellows about their internships at least once per semester through the duration of the internship

Coverdell Fellows have:

- Worked with rural communities to secure employment opportunities
- Coordinated their university's Early College program for disadvantaged middle school and high school students
- Advocated for affordable housing for low income households
- Assisted refugee communities with access to affordable healthcare

ELIGIBILITY

For the 2021 submission cycle, the Peace Corps invites partnership proposals from accredited higher education institutions in the United States that grant graduate degrees in the following academic disciplines*:

- **Law—Juris Doctorate (J.D.) degree**
- **Nursing & Medicine**
- **International Affairs**
- **Peace, Justice & Conflict Resolution** (e.g. M.S. in Sustainable Peacebuilding, M.A. in Conflict Resolution, M.A. in Social Justice and Human Rights, M.A. in Peace and Justice)

***In addition, Peace Corps will accept proposals from permanent online and distance learning programs in any graduate discipline.**

PROPOSAL AND SELECTION

Applying to become a Paul D. Coverdell Fellows program requires the submission of a proposal that addresses all questions in the attached template. Please ensure that responses are numbered to correspond with the template questions, and do not include supplementary materials unless specifically requested within the proposal instructions. **Each separate program on a university campus must submit its own proposal.** In some instances, Peace Corps will work with a school in developing an institute-wide memorandum of agreement. Please contact your regional Program Specialist or submit an email request to fellows@peacecorps.gov for further details regarding an institution-wide agreement.

EVALUATION/SELECTION CRITERIA

Due to a variety of constraints, the Peace Corps is not able to accept all proposals, even all strong proposals. The Office of University Programs evaluates and selects proposals through a competitive process, reviewing proposals thoroughly and giving particular weight to the following four factors:

- Level of financial support for Coverdell Fellows
- Capacity and strategy for providing Coverdell Fellows with appropriate internships
- Evidence of sufficient institutional capacity for effective program administration—including communication with the Peace Corps—through the five-year duration of the partnership
- The Peace Corps' level of need for a Coverdell Fellows program in the proposed academic and geographic areas, considering the [current lineup of Coverdell Fellows partner programs](#)

The Office of University Programs may or may not conduct brief follow-up communication with the proposed program coordinator prior to sharing the final disposition of the proposal.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

After the review and selection processes are complete, Office of University Programs staff will prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for each institution selected for partnership. The Peace Corps Director will sign the agreements, after which they will be sent to the universities for countersignature by their chief executives (an individual with the authority to sign on behalf of the institution—typically a chancellor, president, or provost). The length of the partnership is a renewable five-year term.

When the institution countersigns the MOA and returns a scanned copy of it to the Peace Corps, the partnership is formally established. The executed MOA serves as the formal record of understanding between the Peace Corps and the partner school. An MOA template is available for review and may be requested from Office of University Programs staff using the contact information below. **Note:** *As a federal agency, the Peace Corps is not able to allow edits to the MOA template outside of designated areas. Interested parties should review the MOA template in advance to assure that their institution would be able to approve the MOA without edits.*

The Peace Corps requires that school partners perform certain functions in order to fully implement and administer the program. The Peace Corps reserves the right to remove any school partner from the program that does not satisfy these requirements.

Requirements the partner must complete within 30 days of the MOA's execution:

- Submit a complete and accurate web marketing template, enabling the Peace Corps to advertise the new program on the Peace Corps [website](#). This is the primary Coverdell Fellows resource for potential, current, and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, with tens of thousands of views every year.
- Develop and upload a Coverdell Fellows web page to be hosted on the school's official website. This page should include sufficient and accurate information about the program, such as degrees offered, financial support provided, internship placements the school offers through the Coverdell Fellows program, and who to contact with questions. Content on this web page related to the Peace Corps and/or the Coverdell Fellows program must be approved by the Peace Corps' Office of University Programs prior to publication.
- Develop and implement an admissions process to identify applicants who may be potential Coverdell Fellows.

Ongoing requirements:

- Complete Coverdell censuses and annual reports each year within 30 days of receipt from the Peace Corps' Office of University Programs.
- Send, in writing, any change in coordinator, contact information, requested amendments to degrees offered, financial support provided, or other details central to the functioning of the program and/or the partnership to the Peace Corps' Office of University Programs within 30 days of such change.
- Provide financial support to all Coverdell Fellows, equal to at least 25% of tuition and mandatory fees for both in- and out-of-state students, adjusting as tuition and fee amounts change.
- Facilitate the identification of and Fellow placement into appropriate internships in support of an impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged community in the United States.
- Allow Coverdell Fellows to lightly assist the Peace Corps in relevant recruitment activities when called upon by Peace Corps.
- Provide administrative support for the program.

SUBMISSION

One electronic copy of the proposal in PDF format must be submitted to the Peace Corps online at [this link \(https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/university-programs/coverdell-fellows/proposal/\)](https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/university-programs/coverdell-fellows/proposal/) by **11:59 p.m. (PST), Saturday, May 1, 2021.**

NOTIFICATION

Submitters will receive an auto-confirmation of their submission. All submitters will be notified via e-mail of their proposal's final status on or before **July 15, 2021**. Decisions are final.

PROPOSAL FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

All proposals:

- Must be limited to 7 pages (maximum), not including a cover page or appendices as outlined below. Pages are defined as 8 ½ by 11 inches, with 12 point font and 1-inch margins.
- Must be based on the proposal template outlined on the following pages.
- Must include a cover page (not counted against page limit) with all information indicated in the template.
- Must include the following appendix (not counted against page limit):
 - A letter of support from the school's dean or department chair confirming the ability to offer the proposed scholarships
 - Two letters of support from community-based organizations working with impoverished and/or socially disadvantaged communities in the U.S. that are interested in hosting Coverdell Fellows as interns

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions related to the submission of a proposal may be directed to the Office of University Programs staff:

Office of University Programs, Fellows Program
Peace Corps
1275 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20526
Phone: 202.692.1643
E-mail: fellows@peacecorps.gov