

Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois 2025-2026 New Application

New Applicant Name _____



Link to the DFI Program page: <https://www.ibhe.org/dfi.html>

Link to DFI Institutional Representatives List: <https://www.ibhe.org/dfiinstRep.asp>

DFI Administrative Office
Illinois Board of Higher Education
1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 333
Springfield, IL 62701-1377
DFI@ibhe.org

Due Date: March 7, 2025

Note: New & Renewal Applications are available online this year at:

<https://www.ibhe.org/dfiapplicant.html>

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IMPORTANT DATES

FAFSA Application.....	February 14, 2025
DFI Application due to Institutional Reps.....	March 7, 2025
DFI Application due to IBHE.....	March 21, 2025
Dates of Illinois Residency.....	February 2021 to February 2024

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program (DFI) was established by the Illinois General Assembly and signed as Public Act 093-0862 on August 4, 2004. The purpose of DFI is to provide Fellowships to students pursuing post-baccalaureate degrees as part of the state's effort to diversify the faculties and professional staffs at Illinois higher education institutions.

The DFI Program Board is committed to full funding. Program funding for the 2025-2026 academic year (Fiscal Year 2026) is contingent on the availability of funds appropriated by the Governor and Illinois General Assembly.

Completed applications are to be submitted to the Institutional Representative at your participating institution (<https://www.ibhe.org/dfiinstRep.asp>) by the due date.

*Please note that information and requirements contained in this document are subject to modifications by the DFI Program Board, as incorporated in the DFI Program administrative rules.

DFI provides financial assistance, based on demonstrated financial need, for members of traditionally underrepresented groups who are pursuing full-time enrollment and completing graduate degrees at Illinois institutions of higher education. DFI is a program for graduate students traditionally underrepresented in higher education who have received high school diplomas or postsecondary degrees from educational institutions in Illinois and who have three or more years of residency in Illinois and are citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Applicants compete in a statewide competition for DFI awards at over 30 Illinois institutions.

Selection of award recipients in this rigorous competition is based on a comprehensive review of the application materials. All academic fields at the master's and doctoral level will be considered for this award, however, the DFI Program Board has established the following priorities: Applicants interested in obtaining a full-time instructional/administrative position in Illinois higher education; applicants pursuing degrees in any of the sciences, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) fields; and applicants pursuing a doctorate or other appropriate terminal degree. Stipend levels are subject to appropriations by the Illinois General Assembly. **Full-time enrollment is required while on fellowship.** Some participating institutions also provide a tuition waiver/scholarship. Applicants should check with the DFI Institutional Representative for specific information. The award is renewable for one year for master's students and up to three years for doctoral students, contingent upon the recipient making strong academic progress toward completion of the degree. Renewal definitions also are subject to revision by the DFI Program Board and administrative rules.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Terms of the Award

Upon graduation or separation from the DFI institution, an award recipient **must agree to accept (actively seek)**, when offered, a teaching or non-teaching full-time appointment at an Illinois postsecondary educational institution or accept a position as an employee of this state in an administrative, educational-related position equal to the number of years for which he or she receives the DFI fellowship. Students failing to fulfill this condition of the award shall be required to repay 20 percent of their cumulative award amount, subject to revision by the DFI Program Board.

The DFI Award is available for a maximum of four years:

- Master's (2) years, Doctorate (2) years; or
- Doctorate (4) years

A Fellow can only receive two years of Master's-level funding and two years of Doctorate-level funding, or four years of Doctorate-level funding. The DFI award is available for a maximum of four years.

Participant Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

ILLINOIS RESIDENCY: To be classified as an Illinois resident, an applicant must have received a high school diploma or postsecondary degree from an accredited educational institution in Illinois and have three or more years of residency in Illinois.

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS: "Traditionally underrepresented minority group" means any of the minority groups designated in the Act which are represented in Illinois post-baccalaureate enrollment at a percentage rate less than the percentage of the minority group's representation in the total Illinois population.

ACADEMIC ABILITY: Applicants must possess above average academic ability as evidenced by:

1. An earned baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning;
2. A minimum grade point average of 2.75 (scale 4.0 = A) in the last 60 hours of undergraduate work or over a 3.2 (scale 4.0 = A) in at least 9 hours of graduate study;
3. Unconditional admission to a post-baccalaureate degree program.

ACADEMIC PURSUIT: Applicants in all academic disciplines are eligible. Candidates pursuing degrees in any of the sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields are encouraged to apply and will receive priority consideration. Applicants must be pursuing a doctorate, terminal master's or master's degree.

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FINANCIAL NEED: Applicants must demonstrate financial need. A FAFSA, or the Illinois RISE Act/Alternative Application for Illinois financial aid, must be filed each year to maintain eligibility.

GENERAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. The DFI application and required attachments must be submitted directly to the DFI Institutional Representative at the institution the applicant plans to attend* no later than **March 7, 2025, or by the internal deadline set by the applicant's institution.**
2. Applications (or attachments) sent directly to the DFI Administrative Office in Springfield by the applicant will not be considered.
3. Applicants must respond to every item on the DFI Application Form.
4. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
5. Applicants should check with their DFI Institutional Representative for internal deadlines and any additional information on admission or application procedures.

*Applicants must be unconditionally admitted to the institution at the time of application.

Proof of Admission

Applicants must be unconditionally admitted to a degree-granting program at the time of application. Applicants admitted probationally or on limited status due to GPA or test scores will not be considered. Proof of admission is demonstrated by including an official letter of admission on institutional letterhead. (Copies are acceptable.)

Financial Need

1. Applicants must read and complete the Financial Information Form, the Notification of Special Circumstances Form, and provide federal tax forms upon request.
2. Applicants must complete a 2025-2026 FAFSA online no later than **February 14, 2025.**
3. **The applicant's financial need must be certified by the admitting institution.**
4. The DFI Program Board reserves the right to request additional financial documentation.

Required Essay Submission

Embarking on a career in higher education is a profound decision, influenced by a myriad of personal, academic, and societal factors. This essay aims to explore the motivations behind your choice to pursue a career in higher education, delving into the intrinsic passion that fuels your journey.

The applicant must submit an essay addressing the following:

State your professional goals and elaborate on what fuels your desire for a career in higher education. Explain how your underrepresented status shapes these professional goals and how they align with the Mission of the DFI program.

- ***Discuss your research interests and/or rationale for selecting your stated career goals.***
- ***Please include examples of projects and/or related research***

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Three Letters of Recommendation

The applicant must submit three (3) **signed** letters of **professional** recommendation written within the past 12 months. Letters should be addressed to the DFI Institutional Representative and speak to the applicant's potential to reach his/her intended professional goal(s), including ability to complete graduate work, and the potential to secure a full-time position in a State of Illinois institution of higher education.

Transcripts and Grades

Only **official transcripts** will be accepted. Transcripts are considered official if received by the Institutional Representative in a sealed envelope from the attending institution. Transcripts should be sent to your Institutional Representatives, not the IBHE office. It is the Fellow's responsibility to secure copies of transcripts, not the Institutional Representative's.

Due Dates

Applications should be submitted to Institutional Representatives on the date established by the Representatives no later than **March 7, 2025**. Contact Institutional Representatives for internal application deadline dates. Selection results will be distributed in writing via the IBHE DFI Administrative Office.

Selection Process

The DFI selection process has two major phases: institutional and statewide. The applicant initiates the first phase by submitting an application packet to a DFI institution no later than **March 7, 2025**. (The applicant must contact the institution he/she plans to attend to determine if there are internal application deadlines.)

Each campus will determine which applications to send forward to the statewide selection committee.

In the second phase, a state selection committee, consisting of DFI Board Members, will review the qualified applications and select awardees.

EXPLANATION OF REQUIRED ESSAY

One essay is required in support of the application for the DFI award this year.

1. In the upper right-hand corner include your name and intended institution.
2. Type a **300–500-word** essay on the following:

State your professional goals and elaborate on what fuels your desire for a career in higher education. Explain how your underrepresented status shapes these professional goals and how they align with the Mission of the DFI program.

- *Discuss your research interests and/or rationale for selecting your stated career goals.*
- *Please include examples of projects and/or related research.*

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Checklist

The following documents constitute a complete application:

- New Applicant Screening Form (see page 8);
- Official acceptance letter - (for degree program for which funding is being sought);
- Completed application form submitted through your Institutional Representative. All questions on application form pertain to the degree program for which funding is being sought, unless otherwise indicated;
- Completed financial form - (and FAFSA (**Due February 14, 2025**), or **RISE Act/Alternative Application deadline met**);
- Completed essay submission;
- Three letters of **professional** recommendation;
- Only official transcripts (**no copies**).

***All items must be responded to or submitted. Incomplete applications will not be considered and will be automatically disqualified.**

For additional information or questions, please contact:

DFI Administrative Office
1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 333
Springfield, IL 62701-1377
DFI@ibhe.org

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**Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois
2025-2026 New Applicant Screening Form
REQUIRED FOR NEW APPLICANTS**

1. Are you related to anyone currently serving on the DFI Board or anyone affiliated with the DFI Program? Yes ___ No ___

2. Dates of Illinois residency February 2021 – February 2024? Yes ___ No ___

3. Do you have a documented financial need? Yes ___ No ___
 - a. Will you receive assistance from your employer? Yes ___ No ___

 - b. Will you seek additional scholarship sources? Yes ___ No ___
(If 'Yes,' please explain).

4. Will you be a full-time employee while attending school? Yes ___ No ___
(If 'Yes,' please explain).

5. Will you be attending school full-time? Yes ___ No ___

Applicant Signature _____

Date _____

***Form must be submitted with application – no exceptions.**

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Attending Institution and Degree to be supported by this award:

Name/Location

Program Major/Discipline

Specific Degree Sought (PhD, EdD, MA, MS, etc.)

Note: Awarded applicants are required to enroll full-time while receiving this fellowship.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Place of birth: _____

Last 4 Digits of SS# _____

Current address: _____
Street/Apt. City State Zip Code

Telephone: _____ Cell/Other: _____

Academic E-Mail Address: _____

Non-academic E-Mail Address: _____

Permanent Address: _____
Street/Apt. City, State Zip Code

Telephone: _____

PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE DESIGNATION:

Black/African American (Non-Hispanic) _____

Mexican-American _____ Puerto-Rican _____ Central/South American _____

Other Latino (please specify): _____

American Indian/Alaskan Native _____ Tribe: _____

Asian American _____ (specify): _____

Languages Spoken (if other than English): _____

Languages Written (if other than English): _____

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Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: _____ (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands)

CITIZENSHIP OR ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ILLINOIS RISE ACT:

U.S. citizen: Yes ___ No ___ Permanent resident of the U.S.: Yes ___ No ___

Eligible for Illinois RISE Act: Yes ___ No ___

RESIDENCY:

(Please read carefully and check all that apply)

1. Did you earn an educational diploma (high school or postsecondary) at an institution located in the State of Illinois? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, specify Illinois high school and graduation date: _____

If yes, specify Illinois postsecondary institution and graduation date: _____

2. Have you resided in Illinois since February 15, 2021? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, list address and length of stay at each address for past three years:

_____ From: _____ To: _____

_____ From: _____ To: _____

_____ From: _____ To: _____

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

Dates (to/from)

Employer

Position Title

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Are you currently employed full-time? Yes No

If yes, please explain.

- Specify Work Interest (check only one): ___ Community College; ___ Four-year (research emphasis); ___ Four-year (teaching emphasis); K-12 ___

- Are you willing to relocate to other parts of the State of Illinois to accept full-time employment in a faculty or staff position? Yes ___ No ___

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ACADEMIC HISTORY INFORMATION

Beginning with the most recent degree completed or pursued (not including the one for which you seek funding), list all colleges/universities attended as a graduate/undergraduate student. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

<u>Institution/Location</u>	<u>Dates Attended</u> <u>From</u> <u>To</u>	<u>Degree</u> <u>Sought</u>	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Year Degree</u> <u>Received</u> <u>or Expected</u>
1. _____				
2. _____				
3. _____				

GRADE POINT AVERAGE:

Undergraduate (indicate scale if other than A= 4.0)

Overall G.P.A. _____ G.P.A. for last two years _____ G.P.A. in major _____

Graduate (indicate scale if other than A= 4.0)

Overall G.P.A. _____ Credit Hours Completed _____

(See page 4 for eligibility requirements).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING CURRENT ACADEMIC PURSUIT:

I am seeking funding for:

- ___ Doctorate-level (answer Doctoral section below)
- ___ Master's-level (answer Master's section below)
- ___ Master's/Doctorate combo (answer both sections below)

Are you actively pursuing other scholarship opportunities? Please identify.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Doctoral-level degree seekers:

- Date of entry into doctoral program (month/year): _____
- Anticipated preliminary exam date (month/year): _____
- Are you currently writing a dissertation? Yes ___ No ___
- Anticipated defense date (month/year): _____
- Will you have completed all requirements of your program, except the dissertation before the fall semester 2025? Yes ___ No ___
- Anticipated degree conferral date (month/year): _____

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Master's-level degree seekers:

- Date of entry into master's program (month/year): _____
- Are you currently writing a thesis or research paper? Yes ____ No ____
- Anticipated degree conferral date (month/year): _____

ADVISOR/MENTOR INFORMATION

Mentor's Name: _____

Mentor's Department: _____

Mentor's Telephone: _____

Mentor's E-mail: _____

**If you do not currently have a mentor and accept a DFI Fellowship, one must be determined and reported within the first six months of funding.*

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information on this application is correct. In the absence of a DFI award, I will not be financially able to pursue a graduate degree at this institution. I authorize the release of this and other important information to verify my eligibility for a DFI award. I agree to the conditions of the DFI award if one is offered and accepted. I understand that misrepresentation of any portion of this application may result in the cancellation of the financial award.

_____ If awarded, I agree to forward a copy of the first two pages of my 2024 federal tax forms (if requested to do so).

Applicant's Printed Name _____

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PERMANENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Provide the name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of a person who **does not reside with you** and who will always be able to contact you, should we be unable to reach you directly. **DO NOT LIST YOURSELF.** (List a person that you assume will be at this address for approximately five years from this date.)

Name: _____

Last

First

Middle

Telephone _____

Address: _____

Street

City,

State

Zip Code

E-mail: _____

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION FORM

The Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program is a financial needs-based fellowship. All applicants are required to complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) **or Illinois RISE Act/Alternative Application**, which are standards among all postsecondary institutions in determining financial need.

You may complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete the form. Be sure to follow the directions carefully and have the required documentation on-hand that is necessary to complete the form correctly. You also may complete a FAFSA Renewal Application at this site if you submitted a FAFSA last year. If you choose to use a Renewal FAFSA, you will only need to provide current answers to financial and tax questions. You also must update any information that has changed since last year. According to the FAFSA website, you will need the following documentation to complete the form correctly:

- * Student's driver's license and Social Security card;
- * W-2 Forms and other records of money earned in 2024;
- * 2024 income tax return (IRS Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ; Trust Territory tax; return; or foreign country tax return);
- * Records of untaxed income, such as welfare, Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), or veterans benefits;
- * Current bank statements;
- * Current mortgage information for businesses and investments;
- * Business and farm records;
- * Records of stocks, bonds, and other investments.

You also may complete the FAFSA or FAFSA Renewal manually by obtaining an application from the financial aid office at your institution.

***APPLICANTS MUST COMPLETE THE FAFSA NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 14, 2025**, or have an SAR on file with your institution's financial aid office no later than February 14, 2025. *Information obtained through www.fafsa.ed.gov

***ILLINOIS RISE ACT/ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETED FOR SUBMISSION WITH APPLICATION MATERIALS BY MARCH 7, 2025.**

*Information obtained through <https://studentportal.isac.org/en/alternativeapp> and/or assistance from your Institutional Representatives.

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Student FAFSA or Illinois RISE Act/Alternative Application and Institutional Rep Need Certifications

If you receive this award, do you intend to (indicate one):

_____ Not work next year

_____ Work part-time next year*

_____ Work full-time next year*

*If you will be working part- or full-time next year, list your projected income
for 2025: \$ _____

*Spouse's projected earnings for 2025: \$ _____

(RESPONSE REQUIRED)

Expected contribution from employer _____

Expected contribution from other scholarships _____

Total outstanding balance(s) on your Stafford Loan: _____

Certification:

I have filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Illinois RISE Act/Alternative Application.

***All information is complete and true to the best of my knowledge. If any information is determined to be falsely reported or represented, it will result in the forfeiture of Fellowship funding. I agree to provide, upon request, proof of the information I have given on this form. I realize that this proof may require a copy of my income tax forms if requested.**

Applicant's Signature

Date

TO BE COMPLETED ONLY BY DFI INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Total Direct Expenses*: \$ _____ - EFC: \$ _____ = Student Need: _____

**Direct expenses are educational expenses that the student will incur after the application of any waiver, scholarship, aid or assistance (other than loans) provided to the institution and/or the student, and specifically designated for the sole purpose of defraying educational expenses directly related to the student's program of study.*

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***All information is complete and true to the best of my knowledge. If any information is determined to be falsely reported or represented, it will result in the forfeiture of Fellowship funding.**

Signature DFI Institutional Representative

Position

-
- *Please provide this page with each copy of the DFI application.*
 - *Only applications with student need of \$10,000 or greater will be considered.*

Institutional Representatives

Please click on the link below for a complete list of DFI Institutional Representatives at:

<https://www.ibhe.org/dfiinstRep.asp>