



LSA First Fellows

A New Program Supporting First-Gen Students' Success in LSA

Many first-generation students experience tremendous financial stressors, often cobbling together multiple jobs to close the gap between financial aid and demonstrated need. Opportunities—from unpaid internships or research work to extracurricular activities—remain out of reach for many first-generation students on our campus. National trends also point to alarming disparities in GPA, graduation rates, sense of campus belonging, and use of university resources.

LSA First Fellows is a new cohort-based program that will expand resources for first-generation students through academic exploration, mentorship, community-building, and summer opportunities.

LSA First Fellows is designed to support first-generation students during their sophomore year, a pivotal time in students' college journeys. During sophomore year, students begin exploring majors and careers, deepening their sense of identity and belonging, and making decisions about their future. Grounded in mentorship, community, and experiential learning, LSA First Fellows connects students to the people, resources, and opportunities that help them thrive academically, professionally, and personally at the University of Michigan.

Building on LSA's longstanding commitment to first-generation student success through programs such as the Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP), Kessler Scholars, and LSA First-Gen Commitment, LSA First Fellows reflects a broader vision for ensuring that first-generation students feel connected, supported, and empowered throughout their time in the College. LSA First Fellows is designed to ensure first-generation students do not navigate their college experience alone.

How LSA First Fellows Supports Students

LSA First Fellows combines academic exploration, mentorship, community-building, summer opportunities, and financial support into a connected student experience grounded in the strengths, talents, and aspirations of first-generation students.

First Fellows Funding Opportunities

We have about 800 first-generation sophomores, including transfer students, in the College of LSA. Our goal is to invite each and every one of these students to take part in the First Fellows Program and to endow the program so that we can sustain this level of support and commitment to first-generation sophomores for years to come. **An endowed gift of $50M would partially endow the First Fellows Program in LSA.**



"I'm a first-generation student from Connecticut. I love LSA because I don't feel like a number here, I actually feel like someone they're excited to see come in every day. They participate in my spirit of wanting to learn. I know that whatever questions I have, someone is going to help me get there as long as I stay curious. I've never felt so limitless."
–Krista Schrader, class of 2027

Course Support

A one-credit course will provide First Fellows with a cohort-based learning experience designed to foster academic exploration, reflection, and community. Classes will discuss research opportunities, navigating campus resources, selecting majors/minors, and planning for summer opportunities. **A gift of $100,000 will cover the instructional cost of courses for one year.**

Team-based Mentoring Support

Every First Fellow will be connected to people whom they can rely on—personally, academically, and professionally. Faculty, staff, and graduate students will be recruited to serve as trained mentors, helping students navigate and access the vast resources available at U-M. **A gift of $15,000 will fund one graduate student's participation as a First Fellows mentor.**

Community and Belonging Support

First Fellows will be invited to participate in events and experiences designed to strengthen students' sense of belonging, pride, and connection to the broader Michigan community. The LSA First-Gen Commitment and other campus partners will create opportunities for students to celebrate milestones, engage with alumni and mentors, and build lasting relationships across the university. **A gift of $50,000 will fund one cohort's events for a year.**

Summer Stipend Scholarships

Every First Fellow will be awarded a $4,000 summer stipend scholarship to support experiential learning opportunities in the summer following their sophomore year. Students may use funding for research assistantships, internships, community-engaged projects, and study abroad opportunities—ensuring that financial barriers do not limit access to transformative educational experiences. **Every gift of $4,000 will support one student's summer stipend. A gift of $100,000 will endow and name one summer stipend scholarship. An expendable gift of $3.2M will fully fund all First Fellows' summer stipends for one year.**

for what's next ▸
Look to Michigan

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