

PD Soros Fellowship Guide

Fellowships Advising and Study Abroad
Center for Student Services, RM. 319
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PD Soros fellowship: <https://pdsoros.org/why-become-a-fellow/>

Timeline & Key Dates

- Application **opens on April 9, 2025** (11 AM EDT)
- **Deadline: October 30, 2025 at 2 PM Eastern Time**—strict, no exceptions
- Finalists announced mid-January 2026
- Virtual interviews held in late January–February 2026
- **Fellows notified in March 2026**, publicly announced in April 2026
- **Fellowship begins in fall 2026**

Eligibility & Benefits

Who Is Eligible?

- You must be 30 years old or younger by October 30, 2025 (cannot have reached your 31st birthday)
- Must be a “New American”: either an immigrant or a child of immigrants
 - Immigrants must hold U.S. citizenship, green card, DACA, asylee or refugee status
 - Alternatively, if born abroad, having graduated from both high school and college in the U.S. may qualify
- Must be starting or continuing full-time graduate degree in the U.S. in 2026–2027
- Current graduate students must be in the first or second year, not already in year three

What the Fellowship Provides

- Up to \$90,000 total—\$25,000 per year in stipend, plus up to \$20,000 per year toward tuition/fees over up to two years
- A nationwide community of over 800 alumni with shared immigrant or New American experiences
- Two annual fall conferences in New York City (all expenses paid), and executive-level campus visits by the Fellowship director

Selection Criteria: What They're Looking For

The Fellowship evaluates candidates holistically, and does not have GPA/test-score cutoffs. What matters more is how you’ve maximized your opportunities, demonstrated resilience, and defined meaningful goals

Main criteria include:

- Creativity, originality & initiative in your personal, academic, or professional life
- Sustained accomplishments reflecting drive and perseverance
- Commitment to U.S. civic values: support for human rights, the Constitution, individual liberties
- Promise of significant future impact—evidence you will influence your field or community
- Graduate training aligned with long-term goals, and able to enhance your creativity and impact

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Application Components & Strategy

Required Materials

- Personal data: education history, demographics, intended graduate programs
- Résumé / CV
- Two essays (each up to 1,000 words):
 - Your experiences as a New American—how your identity has shaped you
 - Your near-term activities and career goals, and how graduate school supports them
- Unofficial transcripts (undergrad and graduate, if applicable)
- Standardized test scores, if required for your graduate program
- Letters of recommendation: minimum of 3, up to 5 accepted
- Optional exhibits: sample work or artifacts (art, publications, portfolio, etc.)—first few entries matter most

Tips for Writing Strong Essays

- **Essay #1** (New American story): share vivid, personal reflections—not just actions. Convey the impact of immigration on your identity, values, or opportunities. Link these to your civic engagement and belief in constitutional principles
- **Essay #2** (Goals & academic fit): articulate why your chosen graduate program matters for your immediate and future aspirations. Highlight how you've already pursued those goals. PDSoros appreciates clarity of purpose and ambition
- **Optional exhibits:** include the most relevant and compelling work first—committees may not review all artifacts
- **Letters of recommendation:** choose recommenders who can speak about your creative drive, academic or professional excellence, and character. If you submit more than three letters, ensure each adds distinct insight.

Additional Advice & Reflections

- It's a highly competitive fellowship—typically about 2,600 applications for only 30 awards (~1.2–1.5% selection rate)
- Selection is holistic; having a lower GPA or coming from a less privileged background won't rule you out—what matters is initiative, creativity, and the trajectory you're forging
- From applicant discussions online, successful candidates are those who:
 - “challenge themselves, and work hard to overcome obstacles”
 - “speak about their story in a way that connects and is meaningful”
- Rejection may not reflect your capabilities—it may reflect the strong pool. Many applicants have applied multiple times before succeeding

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Summary Checklist

- Confirm eligibility: Under 31 by Oct 30, 2025; New American; planning full-time U.S. graduate study in 2026-2027
- Prepare Timeline: Draft essays and gather materials well before early autumn; plan for application by Oct 30, 2025
- Essays: Reflect deeply; connect identity and ambitions; show vision and clarity
- Letters of Recommendation: Choose recommenders who know you well and speak to initiative, impact, and potential
- Exhibits: Optional, but choose and bold relevant items that convey your voice or accomplishments
- Research: Attend webinars, reach out to advising offices or former applicants for mentorship and feedback

Final Thoughts

The PD Soros Fellowship is about amplifying immigrant stories with purpose, emergent leadership, and civic-minded creativity. If you can show how your background informs who you are—and how you intend to serve and contribute as a graduate student and beyond—you're demonstrating the core of what they're looking for.