



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

2025-2026 BRAID Student Fellowship

Creating a new generation of interfaith bridgebuilders

Opportunity

The Bridgebuilders Relating Across Interfaith Differences (BRAID) Fellowship is an Interfaith America (IA) initiative focused on cultivating student leaders in interfaith and bridgebuilding work. In alignment with IA's commitment to promote religious and civic pluralism as foundational principles for achieving "the common good," the BRAID Fellowship seeks to develop a national network of undergraduate student leaders who will foster an ethos of respect, relationship building, and cooperation across difference in the U.S. Through IA's pedagogic expertise and extensive networks, student fellows are equipped with the vital skills, training, education, and experience they need to become interfaith bridgebuilding leaders on their campuses and in their communities. Particularly in this time, the value of student leadership in promoting pluralism is more essential than ever.

Program Overview

Through the BRAID Fellowship, student fellows develop fundamental literacy in interfaith leadership and bridgebuilding, cultivate meaningful connections with peers and mentors from a variety of backgrounds and institutions, and gain confidence in engaging and working collaboratively across difference. A defining program feature of the BRAID Fellowship is that student fellows learn *in community* (through specialized training and education), *from community* (through interpersonal dialogue and engagement), and *with community* (through collaborative program development and facilitation). Principles of interfaith cooperation and bridgebuilding are intentionally embedded into the design of the BRAID fellowship and the curriculum of the program will focus on developing a high level of interfaith skills and capacities. As well, students will be matched with mentors from across the higher education sector with deep expertise in interfaith engagement.

The fellowship program begins with pre-work (to be completed online), followed by an opening leadership retreat in Atlanta, Georgia. Student fellows then attend monthly virtual meetings and trainings, and they apply their developing leadership skills by planning and facilitating interfaith bridgebuilding projects on their campuses. The BRAID Fellowship will also encourage narrative collaborations between the fellows and Interfaith America and offer a concluding set of sessions at IA's annual Interfaith Leadership Summit in Chicago, IL.

Program Requirements

Eligibility

The BRAID Fellowship is open to undergraduate students in the U.S. with at least one full academic year remaining in their program. International students are welcome to apply if they attend a U.S.-based institution and demonstrate a commitment to pursuing interfaith bridgebuilding work in the U.S. Interested students will submit the following as a part of their online application:

- 1) Demographic information
- 2) Short essays focused on their interest and commitment to interfaith leadership
- 3) A brief description of a proposed interfaith bridgebuilding campus project
- 4) The contact information for an on-campus sponsor (staff or faculty member).
- 5) Agreement to fulfill all program requirements including participation in both in-person convenings and virtual meetings throughout the fellowship.

Funding Information

- Travel expenses up to \$700 will be fully covered for both the January Opening Retreat and the August Interfaith Leadership Summit. Additional funds are subject to approval.
- \$1,000 grants will be provided by February 2026 to support each fellow's approved campus project.
- A \$2,000 stipend for participation in the BRAID Fellowship will be split into two disbursements, one in March 2026 and one in August 2026.
- All lodging, meals, and program activities will be covered by Interfaith America during the opening leadership retreat and the Interfaith Leadership Summit.
- The grantee is responsible for understanding and navigating their institutional or organizational grant processes.
- Some forms of payment, such as stipends and reimbursements, may be considered taxable income by the IRS. Participants are responsible for understanding and reporting any income they receive. Those who receive funding may receive a 1099 tax form from Interfaith America at the end of each calendar year of participation, i.e. 2025 and 2026. This information does not constitute legal or tax advice. For questions about your specific situation, we recommend consulting a tax professional.

Restrictions

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Alcohol
- Expenses associated with political campaign activities, including directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to)

any candidate for elective public office; making contributions to political campaigns; or attempting to influence legislation (i.e., lobbying)

- Capital funds or expenses (e.g., endowments, capital campaigns, annual funds, tuition, or student fees)
- While not restricted, we generally don't fund grantees to use a large portion of their funds for Interfaith America's fee-for-service offerings, such as campus consultations or speaking engagement fees.

Deliverables

Throughout the implementation of the BRAID Fellowship, each student fellow is required to:

- Attend both in-person fellowship convenings (opening leadership retreat in January 2026 and the Interfaith Leadership Summit in August 2026);
- Attend virtual mentor and cohort meetings; most likely one required meeting per month from January to August 2026;
- Design and facilitate a campus interfaith bridgebuilding project;
- Participate, as requested, in narrative projects highlighting your project; examples could include speaking on a panel at the Summit, showcasing your project's work on social media, writing or sharing your story for Interfaith America Magazine, etc.
- Complete surveys, brief check-in assignments, and/or focus groups to assess fellowship learning and experiences; and
- Complete a final program evaluation and report survey, which includes a campus project budget report.

Proposal Review & Selection

Through its grant and fellowship programs, Interfaith America is committed to supporting initiatives that meaningfully engage people with a range of religious, philosophical, or ideological perspectives as well as diverse racial and ethnic identities. As such, a diverse cohort of 20 student fellows representing colleges and universities across the nation will be selected to participate in the BRAID Fellowship. Diversity among religious, spiritual, and secular identities will be prioritized.

The selection committee, comprised of IA staff members of diverse identities and perspectives, will convene to review applications and make final selections. IA reserves the right to cap the number of applications accepted based on interest in the fellowship. Applicants are encouraged to apply early.

Program Timeline

- October 1st, 2025: The application period is open.
- November 9th, 2025: The application period is closed.
- Mid-November 2025: Selection decisions communicated to applicants.
- January 2026: BRAID Fellowship Opening Retreat and project implementation period begins.
- Spring 2026: Fellows will implement an interfaith bridgebuilding project on their campus.
- March 2026: Fellows will provide a progress report on their projects.
- August 2026: Interfaith Leadership Summit: Fellows will provide a final report on their projects; fellowship concludes.

For further information, please contact Noa Nakao at nnakao@interfaithamerica.org

Project Examples

Projects can come in a variety of forms and we encourage unique or creative projects. For reference, some examples of projects could be:

- Connect with various campus religious student groups to organize a shared meal in which people share about their worldview, get to know each other, and lead a discussion-based activity. After the meal, the groups could coordinate on a concrete plan for how they could continue to offer each continual support, such as an interfaith student council.
- Plan a service project, or ongoing set of projects, that directly gives back to your community and also intentionally engages religious and/or ideological difference on your campus or community.
- Conduct a listening session to learn what the religious observance needs are on campus and then work with the Student Life office to create and supply an interfaith room that helps address those needs.

Additional Resources

- [Guide for Applying to Interfaith America Grants and Fellowships](#)
- [2024-2025 BRAID Fellows Announcement and Mentor Overview](#)